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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

## श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता

त्रयोदशोऽध्यायः - क्षेत्र-क्षेत्रज्ञ विभाग योगः

*trayodaśo'dhyāyaḥ - kṣetra-kṣetrajñā vibhāga yogaḥ*

### Chapter 13

Volume 1

अर्जुन उवाच

*arjuna uvāca*

प्रकृतिं पुरुषं चैव क्षेत्रं क्षेत्रज्ञं मेवच ।

*prakṛtiṁ puruṣaṁ caiva kṣetraṁ kṣetrajñā mevaca ।*

एतत् वेदितुं इच्छामि ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं च केशव ॥

*etat vedituṁ icchāmi jñānaṁ jñeyaṁ ca keśava ॥*

श्री भगवानुवाच *śrī bhagavān uvāca*

इदं शरीरं कौन्तेय क्षेत्रमित्यभिधीयते ।

*idaṁ śarīraṁ kaunteya kṣetramityabhidhiyate ।*

एतद्यो वेत्ति तं प्राहुः क्षेत्रज्ञ इति तद्विदः ॥ 13-1

*etadyo vetti taṁ prāhuḥ kṣetrajñā iti tadvidaḥ ॥*

क्षेत्रज्ञं चापि मां विद्धि सर्व क्षेत्रेषु भारत ।

*kṣetrajñāṁ cāpi māṁ vidhdi sarva kṣetreṣu bhārata ।*

क्षेत्र क्षेत्रज्ञं योज्ञानं यत् तत् ज्ञानं मतं मम ॥ 13-2

*kṣetra kṣetrajñāṁ yojñānaṁ yat tat jñānaṁ mataṁ mama ॥*

The Distinction between क्षेत्र *kṣetra* and क्षेत्रज्ञ *kṣetrajñā* - शरीर *śarīra* and आत्मा

*ātmā* - The Body of Oneself and The Self in oneself

This chapter opens with a question from Arjuna to Sri Krishna. Arjuna says:

अर्जुन उवाच

*arjuna uvāca*

प्रकृतिं पुरुषं चैव क्षेत्रं क्षेत्रज्ञं मेवच ।

*prakṛtiṁ puruṣaṁ caiva kṣetraṁ kṣetrajñā mevaca ।*

एतत् वेदितुं इच्छामि ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं च केशव ॥

*etat vedtuṁ icchāmi jñānaṁ jñeyaṁ ca keśava ॥*



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## ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

Some ancient versions of भगवत् गीता *bhagavat gītā* do not have this verse. Therefore, we do not assign a sequential number to this verse. Let us simply understand this verse, just as it is. In this verse, Arjuna tells Sri Krishna

केशव *keśava* - O! Lord

एतत् वेदितुं इच्छामि *etat veditum icchāmi* – I want to know this

प्रकृतिं पुरुषं चैव, क्षेत्रं क्षेत्रज्ञमेव च, ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं च *prakṛtiṁ puruṣaṁ caiva, kṣetram kṣetrajñameva ca, jñānaṁ jñeyaṁ ca* – I want to know what exactly is meant to be communicated by these three pairs of words, namely प्रकृति *prakṛti* and पुरुष *puruṣa*, क्षेत्रं *kṣetram* and क्षेत्रज्ञं *kṣetrajñam*, ज्ञानं *jñānaṁ* and ज्ञेयं *jñeyaṁ*.

These words are used frequently, both in भगवत् गीता *bhagavat gītā* and in other Upanishads in different contexts, but what precisely they indicate, especially the distinctions between them, are not always clear. Therefore, Arjuna wants to know what they indicate. They being Upanishad words, what is sought is not the dictionary meaning of the words, but what they indicate in terms of Upanishad knowledge. For that question, this entire chapter is the answer. Sri Krishna changes the order of the pairs of words in the question, and talks about क्षेत्रं *kṣetram* and क्षेत्रज्ञं *kṣetrajñam* first, then about ज्ञानं *jñānaṁ* and ज्ञेयं *jñeyaṁ*, and finally about प्रकृति *prakṛti* and पुरुष *puruṣa*. At this point, it is enough for us to understand that

- ✓ anything that can be objectified is क्षेत्रं *kṣetram*, and क्षेत्रं *kṣetram* is also प्रकृति *prakṛti*
- ✓ any person who knows a क्षेत्रं *kṣetram* as an object of knowledge, that person is a क्षेत्रज्ञं *kṣetrajña* – knower of क्षेत्रं *kṣetram*, and such क्षेत्रज्ञं *kṣetrajña* is also पुरुष *puruṣa*.
- ✓ the means for making one's mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* fit for gaining ईश्वर ज्ञानं *īśvara jñānaṁ* – knowledge about the true nature of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, is called ज्ञानं *jñānaṁ*, and that ईश्वर ज्ञानं *īśvara jñānaṁ* itself is called ज्ञेयं *jñeyaṁ*.

More about these words we will see as we progress in this chapter. It is particularly important for us to understand that this chapter is not merely about the meaning of some Upanishad words. It is far more than that. The main purpose of this chapter is ईश्वर तत्त्व



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## ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

ज्ञान निर्धारणं *īśvara tatva jñāna nirdhāraṇam*, which means to reestablish, firmly and beyond doubt, in one's mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*, ईश्वर ज्ञानं *īśvara jñānam* – knowledge about the true nature of परमेश्वर *paramēśvar*, which also involves knowledge about the means by which अन्तःकरण शुद्धि *antaḥ karaṇa śuddhi* – purity of mind and clarity of बुद्धि *buddhi* can be established, so that one becomes fit for gaining ईश्वर ज्ञानं *īśvara jñānam* and also knowledge about the overriding purpose of this शरीर *śarīra* – the body-mind-intellect complex that every human being is blessed with. Consequently, this is by far the most crucial chapter in the entire भगवत् गीता *bhagavat gītā* in terms of Upanishad knowledge.

Sri Krishna has been talking about ईश्वर ज्ञानं *īśvara jñānam* in every one of the last eleven chapters, in the last six chapters in particular. When that is the case, what is the need to reestablish that knowledge?

The need is always there, because no matter how many times our Upanishads say "तत् त्वं असि *tat tvam asi* – That you are, That परमेश्वर *paramēśvar* you are", it is practically impossible for us, at least for most of us, to recognize परमेश्वर *paramēśvar* in oneself, by oneself, as ONESELF Itself. It seems impossible, and even meaningless, for one to try to identify oneself as the very embodiment of परमेश्वर *paramēśvar*, as the very embodiment of सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म *satyam jñānam anantaṁ brahma*, when one is constantly experiencing the tribulations, distresses and sufferings of everyday life. It seems impossible, and even meaningless for one to try to identify oneself with अमृतत्वम् *amṛtatvam* – Immortality, when one is constantly witnessing mortality every day everywhere. That being the nature of everyday life, there is certainly a need for ईश्वर तत्त्व ज्ञान निर्धारणं *īśvara tatva jñāna nirdhāraṇam* in one's mind and बुद्धि *buddhi*.

The fact of the matter is, the identity of oneself with परमेश्वर *paramēśvar*, oneself being the very embodiment of ब्रह्मानन्द *brahmānanda* and Immortality, is a matter of knowledge that needs to be understood by one's बुद्धि *buddhi*, even while apparently experiencing all kinds of tribulations and mortality in everyday life. Such understanding is independent of one's everyday transient experiences in worldly life.



## ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Now, one might ask, "What is the use of such understanding?" Such understanding, when recognized beyond doubt, does uplift one from one's सुख दुःख *sukha duḥkha* style of - pleasure and pain style of everyday life, to one's real identity with परमेश्वर *parameśvar* Itself, which means such clear understanding releases one from the world of all transient experiences, even while being fully engaged in worldly activities of various kinds. Such upliftment, such release from संसारित्वं *saṁsāritvaṁ* – the ups and downs of worldly life, is indeed the purpose of ईश्वर तत्त्व ज्ञान निर्धारणं *īśvara tatva jñāna nidhāraṇam*.

How is such निर्धारणं *nidhāraṇam* – reestablishment of ईश्वर ज्ञानं *īśvara jñānaṁ* – Self Knowledge accomplished in this chapter? As we may recall, in chapter 7, Sri Krishna revealed himself as प्रकृति द्वय *prakṛti dvaya* – as the two-fold प्रकृति *prakṛti*, as the two-fold cause for this entire creation, including everything in this creation, the two-fold cause being पर प्रकृति *para prakṛti* and अपर प्रकृति *apara prakṛti*.

The स्वरूप *svarūpa* - the very nature of पर प्रकृति *para prakṛti* is परमेश्वर *parameśvar* Itself, the ultimate, unchanging, ever existent cause for this entire creation. The inherent power of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, called स्वभाव *svabhāva* of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, is the very nature of अपर प्रकृति *apara prakṛti*, which is माया *māyā*, constituted of the three गुण *guṇas* – सत्त्व *satva*, रजस् *rajas* and तमस् *tamas* गुण *guṇa*, and their various combinations, themselves variegated eight-fold, as पञ्चमहाभूत *pañca mahābhūtas* – the five great elements, together with मनः *manaḥ* – mind, बुद्धि *buddhi* – the faculty of discrimination and decision, and अहंकार *ahaṁkar* – ego, the notion of doership and enjoyership, in all their infinite, ever-changing combinations and modifications, resulting in this entire creation as we see from time to time.

अपर प्रकृति *apara prakṛti* – the Maya, the inherent power of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, being ever inseparable from पर प्रकृति *para prakṛti* – The परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, it is clear that this entire creation, together with every being in this creation, is ever inseparable from परमेश्वर *parameśvar*. Since everything in this creation, including the creation itself can be objectified by one's thought, word or deed, it



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## ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

is called here as क्षेत्र *kṣetra* – an object of one's knowledge. The knower of क्षेत्र *kṣetra*,  
The क्षेत्रज्ञ *kṣetrajñā* – the only one who independently knows every क्षेत्र *kṣetra* in full,  
That क्षेत्रज्ञ *kṣetrajñā* is only परमेश्वर *parameśvar*.

Therefore, the प्रकृति द्वय *prakṛti dvaya* – the two-fold प्रकृति *prakṛti* of परमेश्वर *parameśvar* is only क्षेत्र क्षेत्रज्ञ लक्षण *kṣetra kṣetrajñā lakṣaṇa* – this beautiful, extraordinary, inseparable, unchanging combination of क्षेत्र *kṣetra* and क्षेत्रज्ञ *kṣetrajñā* in every being that exists in this creation, including the creation itself. By understanding the nature of क्षेत्र *kṣetra* and क्षेत्रज्ञ *kṣetrajñā* both individually and collectively, one understands the nature of परमेश्वर *parameśvar* itself. That is how ईश्वर तत्त्व ज्ञान निर्धारणं *īśvara tatva jñāna nirdhārṇam* is accomplished in this chapter, as we will see.

In this chapter, Sri Krishna talks about क्षेत्र *kṣetra* and क्षेत्रज्ञ *kṣetrajñā*, and their combinations, and thereby helps us to understand the truth about परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, and also the truth about one's own self. Every human being is naturally endowed with a शरीर *śarīra* – a live body-mind-intellect complex, with varying degrees of capabilities for cognition and action. Thus one's शरीर *śarīra* itself is an extraordinary manifestation of परमेश्वर's क्षेत्र क्षेत्रज्ञ लक्षण *parameśvar's kṣetra kṣetrajñā lakṣaṇa*.

By understanding the क्षेत्र क्षेत्रज्ञ लक्षण *kṣetra kṣetrajñā lakṣaṇa* of one's own शरीर *śarīra*, one gains an immediate appreciation of the sanctity and the incomparable utility of one's own शरीर *śarīra* – one's own physical body, both as कर्मफल भोग आयतनं *karma phala bhoga āyatanam* - as a counter for experiencing and exhausting one's प्रारब्ध कर्मफल *prārabdha karma phala*- already fructified results of one's own past actions, and as मोक्ष साधनं *mokṣa sādhanam* – as the means for gaining मोक्ष *mokṣa* – recognizing one's identity with परमेश्वर *parameśvar* already in oneself.

Therefore, first focusing attention on one's own शरीर *śarīra* – one's own physical body, Sri Krishna opens this discourse on क्षेत्र क्षेत्रज्ञ लक्षण *kṣetra kṣetrajñā lakṣaṇa* of परमेश्वर *parameśvar* with these words:



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## ब्रह्मविद्या Brahma Vidya

श्री भगवानुवाच *śrī bhagavān uvāca*

इदं शरीरं कौन्तेय क्षेत्रमित्यभिधीयते ।

*idaṁ śarīraṁ kaunteya kṣetramityabhidhīyate ।*

एतद्यो वेत्ति तं प्राहुः क्षेत्रज्ञ इति तद्विदः ॥ 13-1

*etadyo vetti taṁ prāhuḥ kṣetrajña iti tadvidaḥ ॥*

Please note that this is Verse number 1 in this discourse. In this verse, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna:

कौन्तेय *kaunteya* – O! Arjuna, please listen

इदं शरीरं *idaṁ śarīraṁ*, क्षेत्रं इति *kṣetram iti*, अभिधीयते *abhidhīyate* – This

शरीरं *śarīra* - this physical body, is called क्षेत्रं इदं शरीरं *kṣetram idaṁ śarīraṁ* –

This physical body. Sri Krishna points to his own physical body and says इदं शरीरं

*idaṁ śarīraṁ* – This physical body. Every person can likewise direct his attention to

one's own physical body and say इदं शरीरं *idaṁ śarīraṁ* – this physical body, not a

physical body remote from oneself, but the physical body closest to oneself, and that is one's own physical body.

इदं शरीरं *idaṁ śarīraṁ*, क्षेत्रं इति *kṣetram iti*, अभिधीयते *abhidhīyate* – this

physical body, one's own physical body, is called क्षेत्रं *kṣetram*. Later on, Sri Krishna is

going to point out that क्षेत्रं *kṣetram* includes all physical bodies, and indeed everything in this creation, including the creation as a whole.

For now, भगवान् *bhagavān* – Sri Krishna is calling attention to one's own physical

body for a particular reason, which is the following. Even though every person naturally

recognizes one's own physical body, one also entertains a continuing confusion about

one's own physical body. Everyone treats one's own physical body sometimes as an

object of one's knowledge, and sometimes as identical with oneself, as the subject,

oneself itself, as I itself. In order to dispel this subject-object confusion with reference to

one's own physical body, Sri Krishna opens the discourse with the statement

इदं शरीरं *idaṁ śarīraṁ*, क्षेत्रं इति *kṣetram iti*, अभिधीयते *abhidhīyate* – This

physical body, one's own physical body, is called क्षेत्रं *kṣetram*, which means one's

शरीरं *śarīra* one's own physical body must be understood as क्षेत्रं *kṣetram*, as an

object of one's knowledge, not as oneself itself, not as "I" itself.



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## ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

क्षेत्रं *kṣetram* is a beautiful Upanishad word. In Vedantic tradition, क्षेत्रं *kṣetram* indicates a holy place, especially a place for pilgrimage. One's own शरीर *śarīra* – one's own physical body, is indeed a holy place, just like a temple is a holy place. For any person, the holiest of all places is one's own शरीर *śarīra* – one's own physical body, because it is the only one capable of doing holy actions.

Holy action means proper action, action in accordance with धर्म *dharma*, which is the only means for gaining the ultimate goal of life, namely मोक्ष *mokṣa* – Total Fulfillment in life. In an agricultural society, a fertile plot of land fit for cultivation, where one can sow the seeds and reap the fruits, is also called क्षेत्रं *kṣetram*. One's शरीर *śarīra* – one's physical body is a धर्म क्षेत्र *dharma kṣetra*, which means कर्म क्षेत्र *karma kṣetra*, where one does पुण्य कर्म *puṇya karmas* and पाप कर्म *pāpa karmas*, and reaps the fruits of such कर्म *karmas* in one's own life cycles. In that sense also, one's शरीर *śarīra* is a क्षेत्र *kṣetra*.

There are also other reasons why one's शरीर *śarīra* is called क्षेत्र *kṣetra*. For example क्षत *kṣata* – त्राणात् क्षेत्र *trāṇāt kṣetra* – That which releases one from संसार *samsār* – from the ups and downs of worldly life, which means that which enables one to gain आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānam* – Self-knowledge is क्षेत्र *kṣetra*. So is one's physical body.

क्षरणात् क्षेत्रं *kṣaraṇāt kṣetram* – That which is continuously changing is क्षेत्र *kṣetra*, so is one's physical body.

क्षयात् क्षेत्रं *kṣayāt kṣetram* – That which is ever subject to decay and destruction is क्षेत्र *kṣetra*. So is one's physical body.

Such descriptions of क्षेत्र *kṣetra* apply to all क्षेत्र *kṣetras* - all objects in this creation as we can easily appreciate from our own daily experiences. Having pointed out that one's शरीर *śarīra* - one's physical body is a क्षेत्र *kṣetra* an object of one's knowledge, भगवान् *bhagavān* says in the next line

एतत् यो वेत्ति तं प्राहुः क्षेत्रज्ञ इति तद्विदः *etat yo vetti taṁ prāhuḥ kṣetrajña iti tadvidah*



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4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

## ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

एतत् यः वेत्ति *etat yah vetti* means एतत् *etat*, इदं शरीरं क्षेत्रं *idaṁ śarīraṁ kṣetraṁ*, यः वेत्ति *yah vetti* – The one who knows this fact, namely that one's own शरीर *śarīra* – physical body is क्षेत्र *kṣetra* an object of one's knowledge

तं प्राहुः क्षेत्रज्ञः इति – That knower of this शरीर क्षेत्र *śarīra kṣetra* is called क्षेत्रज्ञः *kṣetrajñah*

यः वेत्ति *yah vetti* – The one who knows one's शरीर *śarīra* completely as an object of one's knowledge - how does one know that? Both by nature and through विवेक ज्ञानं *viveka jñānaṁ* – Upanishad knowledge.

I do not need anyone to tell me whether or not this शरीर *śarīra* is my शरीर *śarīra*. I know it naturally. Anything touching my शरीर *śarīra*, anywhere in my शरीर *śarīra*, I immediately recognize that my शरीर *śarīra* is being touched. On the other hand, if I have विवेक ज्ञानं *viveka jñānaṁ* – discriminating knowledge about what is आत्मा *ātmā* and what is not आत्मा *ātmā* – what is SELF and what is not SELF, then I know clearly, even more clearly than before, that this शरीर *śarīra* – this physical body is an object of my knowledge and the knower of that knowledge – The क्षेत्रज्ञ *kṣetrajña* is Myself, The आत्मा *ātmā*, The चेतन आत्मा *cetana ātmā*, The प्रत्यग आत्मा *pratyaga ātmā* – the pure consciousness in myself, the innermost consciousness in myself, and that is the Self I Itself.

एतत् यः वेत्ति *etat yah vetti*, तं प्राहुः *taṁ prāhuḥ*, क्षेत्रज्ञ इति *kṣetrajña iti* – The ONE who knows fully, both naturally and through Upanishad knowledge, that one's शरीर *śarīra* – one's physical body is a क्षेत्र *kṣetra* – an object of one's knowledge, and the knower of one's शरीर क्षेत्र *śarīra kṣetra*, namely The Self I - the चेतन आत्मा *cetana ātmā* - the all-conscious, ever conscious आत्मा *ātmā* - The Self I, is called क्षेत्रज्ञ *kṣetrajña*.

The आत्मा *ātmā* I is called क्षेत्रज्ञ *kṣetrajña*; by whom?

तद्विदुः क्षेत्र क्षेत्रज्ञ विदुः *tadviduḥ kṣetra kṣetrajña viduḥ* – By those who understand clearly and beyond doubt the distinction between क्षेत्र *kṣetra* and क्षेत्रज्ञ *kṣetrajña*.





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4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

## ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Thus Sri Krishna opens this discourse on क्षेत्र क्षेत्रज्ञ विभाग by saying that one's शरीर *śarīra* – one's physical body is a क्षेत्र *kṣetra* – an object of one's knowledge, and not oneself itself, and the knower of one's शरीर क्षेत्र *śarīra kṣetra* – the knower of one's physical body as क्षेत्र *kṣetra*, that knower, That Self I in oneself, That आत्मा *ātmā* "I" is क्षेत्रज्ञ *kṣetrajñā*.

Sri Krishna identifies that क्षेत्रज्ञ *kṣetrajñā*, The आत्मा *ātmā*, The Self I as Himself, as परमेश्वर *parameśvar* Itself in the next verse, which we will see next time.