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श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता

त्रयोदशोऽध्यायः - क्षेत्र-क्षेत्रज्ञ विभाग योगः

trayodaśo'dhyāyah - kṣetra-kṣetrajñā vibhāga yogah

Chapter 13

Volume 3

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 kṣetrajñā iti tadvidaḥ ॥

क्षेत्रज्ञं चापि मां विद्धि सर्व क्षेत्रेषु भारत ।

kṣetrajñāṁ cāpi mām viddhi sarva kṣetreṣu bhārata ।

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

kṣetra kṣetrajñāṁ yojñānaṁ yat tat jñānaṁ mataṁ mama ॥

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 *kṣetra* and क्षेत्रज्ञ *kṣetrajñā* – between शरीर *śarīra* – one's own physical body and the आत्मा *ātmā* – the Self "I" in oneself. Calling Arjuna's attention, Sri Krishna says:

कौन्तेय *kaunteya* – O! Arjuna, please listen

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

एतत् यः वेत्ति तं प्राहुः *etat yah vetti taṁ prāhuḥ*, क्षेत्रज्ञ इति तत् विदः *kṣetrajñā iti tat vidaḥ* – The one who knows this fact, That Knower, that subject I, The Self in oneself, That आत्मा *ātmā* I, is called क्षेत्रज्ञ *kṣetrajñā* by people who recognize the distinction between शरीर *śarīra* and The आत्मा *ātmā* – one's own physical body (the



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object) and The Self "I" (the subject) in one's own physical body respectively. Identifying That क्षेत्रज्ञ *kṣetrajñā*, The आत्मा *ātmā* "I", भगवान् *bhagavān* says

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

सर्व क्षेत्रेषु क्षेत्रज्ञं मां विद्धि *sarva kṣetreṣu kṣetrajñam mām viddhi* – Please learn to understand and recognize that The क्षेत्रज्ञ *kṣetrajñā*, The आत्मा *ātmā* – The Self "I" in my शरीर *śarīra* – in my body, in your body, in all bodies, is Myself, the परमेश्वर *paramēśvar* 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 *paramēśvar* Itself.

I recognize myself every day that I am only a संसारि *saṁsāri*, never absolutely free from the ups and downs of worldly life, but भगवान् *bhagavān* says that I am, in fact, परमेश्वर *paramēśvar* 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 *paramēśvar* 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.



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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 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 *avidyā* or अज्ञानं *ajñānaṁ*, 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 *vidyā*, ब्रह्मविद्या *brahmavidyā*, ज्ञानं *jñānaṁ*, ब्रह्म ज्ञानं *brahma jñānaṁ*, आत्म ज्ञानं *ātma jñānaṁ*, ईश्वर ज्ञानं *īśvara jñānaṁ*, 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 *avidyā* and अज्ञानं *ajñānaṁ* indicate that which is not Self-knowledge, which means that which is Self-ignorance.

It is because of अविद्या *avidyā* or अज्ञानं - Self-ignorance, one habitually superimposes the attributes of one's शरीर *śarīra* - 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 *śarīra* - one's physical body, and the relationship between अविद्या *avidyā* - Self-ignorance, and one's शरीर *śarīra* - physical body. Every individual person, like every one of us here, is a unique combination of शरीर *śarīra* and आत्मा *ātmā* - the body and The Self. We have already heard about आत्मा *ātmā* - The Self, extensively in all the earlier chapters of भगवत् गीता *bhagavat gītā*, and also in all the Upanishads - ईश *īśa*, केन *kena*, कठ *kaṭha* and तैत्तिरीय



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taittirīya, which we have seen already. As we may recall briefly, the आत्मा *ātmā* – The Self is,

सत् चित् आनन्द स्वरूप ब्रह्मन्, *sat cit ānanda svarūpa brahman*, सर्वव्यापी सर्वभूत आशय स्थित परमेश्वर *sarva vyāpī sarvabhūta āśaya sthita parameśvar* Itself. That आत्मा *ātmā* 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 *ātmā* - The Self, already exists in the hearts of all beings as परमेश्वर *parameśvar* Itself, recognizable by every person by one's own विवेक बुद्धि *viveka buddhi*, even though आत्मा *ātmā* is formless. More about आत्मा *ātmā* we will see as we go along.

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

What we call शरीर *śarīra* – 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 *sthūla śarīra* – the gross physical body, which is perceptible both externally and internally

सूक्ष्म शरीर *sūkṣma śarīra* – the subtle body, which is imperceptible, and it fills the स्थूल शरीर *sthūla śarīra* entirely, and

कारण शरीर *kāraṇa śarīra* – the causal body, which is the cause for both the सूक्ष्म शरीर *sūkṣma śarīra* and स्थूल शरीर *sthūla śarīra*. The कारण शरीर *kāraṇa śarīra* is also imperceptible.



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The स्थूल शरीर *sthūla śarīra* – this perceptible gross physical body, is constituted of the पञ्चमहाभूतस *pañcamahābhūtas*, the five great elements – आकाश *ākāśa*, वायु *vāyu*, अग्नि *agni*, आपः *āpaḥ* and पृथ्वी *pṛthavī*, after they have undergone पञ्चीकरण *pañcīkaraṇa* – the process of grossification through mutual interactions. By itself, the स्थूल शरीर *sthūla śarīra* gross physical body is inert, and it is just a shell, a housing for the occupation of the imperceptible सूक्ष्म शरीर *sūkṣma śarīra* – the subtle body, which fills up the entire housing.

The सूक्ष्म शरीर *sūkṣma śarīra* – 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 ज्ञानेन्द्रियस *jñānendriyas* - organs of perception
- the 5 कर्मेन्द्रियस *karmendriyas* - organs of action
- the 5 प्राणस *prāṇas* - powers of physiological functions of प्राण *prāṇa*, अपान *apāna*, उदान *udāna*, समान *samāna* and व्यान *vyāna* (the 5 digestive powers) and
- मनः *manaḥ* and बुद्धि *buddhi* – mind and the faculty of decision.

The ज्ञानेन्द्रियस *jñānendriyas* and कर्मेन्द्रियस *karmendriyas* in the सूक्ष्म शरीर *sūkṣma śarīra* – the organs of perception and action in the subtle body are not the gross ones seen externally in the स्थूल शरीर *sthūla śarīra* – in the perceptible physical body, but they are their imperceptible counterparts in the सूक्ष्म शरीर *sūkṣma śarīra* – the subtle body.

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



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On exhausting all of one's प्रारब्ध कर्मफलसु *prārabdha karma phalas*, 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 *yathā karma*, यथा श्रुतं *yathā śrutam*, says कठोपनिषत् *kāthopanīṣat* (कठ *kāṭha* 5-7), each time in accordance with one's own past कर्मसु *karmas*, cultivated knowledge and mental disposition, resulting in successive births and deaths for the gross physical body, again and again.

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

This causal body, this कारण शरीर *kāraṇa śarīra*, is indeed अविद्या *avidyā* or अज्ञानं *ajñānam* – Self-ignorance. Since only the one who is capable of gaining knowledge can be ignorant, the स्थूल शरीर *sthūla śarīra* – the gross perceptible body cannot be ignorant. Only the सूक्ष्म शरीर *sūkṣma śarīra* – the subtle imperceptible body can be ignorant.

अविद्या *avidyā* – Self-ignorance is not precisely definable. It is a condition of the सूक्ष्म शरीर *sūkṣma śarīra* – subtle body, in which the तमस् *tamas* aspect of माया गुण *māyā guṇa* – the ignorance aspect of माया गुण *māyā guṇa* prevails in its original state; we may recall this तमस् *tamas* as the original तमस् *tamas*, 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 *tamas* – ignorance has the power both to conceal and to create. This original तमस् *tamas* – अविद्या *avidyā* has the power to conceal आत्मा *ātmā* – The Self "I", from the organs of perception in the सूक्ष्म शरीर *sūkṣma śarīra* – the subtle body. It also has the power to create a formidable obstruction for the



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बुद्धि *buddhi* in the सूक्ष्म शरीर *sūkṣma śarīra* to recognize आत्मा *ātmā* – The Self "I".

Thus, we understand that अविद्या *avidyā* – Self-ignorance is the स्वरूप *svarūpa* of कारण शरीर *kāraṇa śarīra*. It is the very nature of the causal body. अविद्या *avidyā* exists in an undifferentiated form in the differentiated components of the अन्तःकरण *antaḥ karaṇa* – inner organs of perception of सूक्ष्म शरीर *sūkṣma śarīra* – the subtle body, and consequently, अविद्या *avidyā* has the power to sustain अहंकार *ahaṁkāra* – the notion of ego, the notion that "I am the कर्ता *kartā*, भोक्ता *bhoktā* – the doer, the enjoyer, etc." in the mind and बुद्धि *buddhi* of the सूक्ष्म शरीर *sūkṣma śarīra* – the subtle body, which in turn gives rise to कर्म's *karmas* and कर्मफल's *karma phalas*, and the associated experiences of सुख दुःख *sukha duḥkha* – pleasure, pain, sorrow, distress, etc., leading to repeated births involving different सूक्ष्म शरीर's *sūkṣma śarīras* and स्थूल शरीर's *sthūla śarīras* - subtle bodies and gross bodies. That is how अविद्या *avidyā* – Self-ignorance is related to one's शरीर *śarīra* – one's physical body.

Having identified कारण शरीर *kāraṇa śarīra* – the causal body as अविद्या *avidyā* – Self-ignorance, we can now say that every individual person, indeed every individual living being, is a जीव *jīva* made up of a particular combination of स्थूल शरीर *sthūla śarīra*, सूक्ष्म शरीर *sūkṣma śarīra*, अविद्या *avidyā* and आत्मा *ātmā* in the increasing order of subtlety in manifestation, where आत्मा *ātmā* alone is सत्यं *satyaṁ* – Absolute reality, never subject to change, and the other three are only मिथ्या's *mithyās* - transient realities ever subject to change. That is the लक्षण *lakṣaṇa* – the distinguishing mark of every individual जीव *jīva*. With reference to any particular person as जीव *jīva*, let us be clear that since जीव *jīva* includes आत्मा *ātmā*, which is सत्यं *satyaṁ*, ever existent, the जीव *jīva* is also ever existent, which means there is no death for जीव *jīva*. When the स्थूल शरीर *sthūla śarīra* – the gross physical body dies, the जीव *jīva* does not die. The जीव *jīva* continues to exist as an unmanifest individual जीव *jīva* made up of सूक्ष्म शरीर *sūkṣma śarīra*, अविद्या *avidyā* and आत्मा *ātmā*, until such time it is ready to re-manifest itself in another स्थूल



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शरीर *sthūla śarīra* appropriate to its pre-cultivated गुणs *guṇas*, knowledge and mental disposition.

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

Therefore, with respect to all individual जीवs *jīvas*, we must understand that the आत्मा *ātmā* in the जीव *jīva* - The जीवात्मा *jīvātmā* is परमात्मा *paramātmā*, The परमेश्वर *parameśvar* Itself, which is exactly what the महावाक्य *mahāvākya* of गीतोपनिषत् *gītōpaniṣat* says, namely क्षेत्रज्ञं चापि मां विधि *kṣetrajñam cāpi mām viddhi*, सर्वक्षेत्रेषु भारत *sarvakṣetreṣu bhārata*.

Again, मोक्ष *mokṣa* - liberation is only for the जीव *jīva*. Liberation for the जीव *jīva* means the सूक्ष्म शरीर *sūkṣma śarīra* - the subtle body in the जीव *jīva* being able to recognize itself as आत्मा *ātmā*, as परमेश्वर *parameśvar* Itself. How is such recognition possible? It is possible because, that which stands between सूक्ष्म शरीर *sūkṣma śarīra* and आत्मा *ātmā*, is अविद्या *avidyā* - Self-ignorance. When अविद्या *avidyā* is removed, आत्मा *ātmā* becomes प्रत्यक्ष ज्ञानं *pratyākṣa jñānam* - अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं *aparokṣa jñānam* - direct and immediate knowledge for the बुद्धि *buddhi* in the अन्तःकरण *āntah karana* - in the inner instruments of perception of the सूक्ष्म शरीर *sūkṣma śarīra* - the subtle body, and the जीव *jīva* now naturally recognizes Itself as आत्मा *ātmā*, as परमेश्वर *parameśvar* Itself.

Thus, when अविद्या *avidyā* - self-ignorance disappears, जीव ब्रह्म ऐक्यं *jīva brahma aikyam* - the ONENESS of जीव *jīva* and आत्मा *ātmā*, जीव *jīva* and ब्रह्मन् *brahman*, जीव *jīva* and परमेश्वर *parameśvar*, becomes evident, spontaneously, even while the body is alive and active, and such a जीव *jīva* now becomes a ज्ञानी *jñānī* - an enlightened person existing as the very embodiment of परमेश्वर *parameśvar*.



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For such a ज्ञानी *jñānī*, in time, when all the प्रारब्ध कर्म *prārabdha karmas* are exhausted, the स्थूल शरीर *sthūla śarīra* – the gross physical body naturally falls, and since there are no more कर्म *karmas* to be done, or कर्मफल *karma phalas* to be experienced, the सूक्ष्म शरीर *sūkṣma śarīra* – the subtle body also disappears, and since अविद्या *avidyā* – Self-ignorance has already disappeared, the ज्ञानी *jñānī*, as a जीव *jīva*, now spontaneously becomes one with आत्मा *ātmā* - the all-pervading Self Itself, the परमेश्वर *parameśvar* Itself. Such a जीवात्मा *jīvātmā* is परमात्मा *paramātmā* – The Immortal परमेश्वर *parameśvar* 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 *ātma jñānam* – Self-knowledge, by transcending अविद्या *avidyā* – Self-ignorance.

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

We will talk some more about अविद्या *avidyā* next time.