

Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 123: Chapter 13, Verses 18-21

(September 9 – September 15, 2020)

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ORIGINAL SANSKRIT DOCUMENT

TRANSLITERATION

ज्योतिषामपि तज्ज्योतिस्तमसः परमुच्यते ।

jyotiṣhām api taj jyotis tamasaḥ param uchyate

ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं ज्ञानगम्यं हृदि सर्वस्य विष्ठितम् ॥ १३-१८ ॥

jñānaṁ jñeyaṁ jñāna-gamyam hṛdi sarvasya viṣṭhitam

इति क्षेत्रं तथा ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं चोक्तं समासतः ।

iti kṣhetraṁ tathā jñānaṁ jñeyaṁ choktaṁ samāsataḥ

मद्भक्त एतद्विज्ञाय मद्भावायोपपद्यते ॥ १३-१९ ॥

mad-bhakta etad vijñāya mad-bhāvāyopapadyate

प्रकृतिं पुरुषं चैव विद्वयनादि उभावपि ।

prakṛitiṁ puruṣhaṁ chaiva viddhy anādī ubhāv api

विकारांश्च गुणांश्चैव विद्वि प्रकृतिसम्भवान् ॥ १३-२० ॥

vikārānśh cha guṇānśh chaiva viddhi prakṛiti-sambhavān

कार्यकारणकर्तृत्वे हेतुः प्रकृतिरुच्यते ।

kārya-kāraṇa-kartṛitve hetuḥ prakṛitir uchyate

पुरुषः सुखदुःखानां भोक्तृत्वे हेतुरुच्यते ॥ १३-२१ ॥

puruṣhaḥ sukha-duḥkhānām bhokṛitve hetur uchyate

TRANSLATION

- (18)** He is the source of light in all luminaries and is entirely beyond the darkness of ignorance. He is knowledge, the object of knowledge, and the goal of knowledge. He dwells within the hearts of all living beings.
- (19)** I have thus revealed to you the nature of the field, the meaning of knowledge, and the object of knowledge. Only My devotees can understand this in reality, and by doing so, they attain My divine nature.
- (20)** Know that *prakṛiti* (material nature) and *puruṣh* (the individual souls) are both beginningless. Also know that all transformations of the body and the three modes of nature are produced by material energy.
- (21)** In the matter of creation, the material energy is responsible for cause and effect; in the matter of experiencing happiness and distress, the individual soul is declared responsible.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Rx8MUcpnEMEWIm6hpMKwfY2FeNzktZ-B/view?usp=sharing>

Chapter 13

Verse 18:

The Supreme Lord Krishna known as *Parabrahma* is the source of the *brahman* or spiritual substratum pervading all existence. It is solely His effulgence that illuminates all luminaries such as the sun, the stars, lightning, jewels, etc. with light. These luminaries only dispel the darkness hindering the vision between the eyes and their objects, whereas the knowledge of a mere spark of the Supreme Lord, being the *atma* or immortal soul illuminates all physical lights and without the *atma* knowledge of illumination is not possible. That is why the *atma* is said to be totally beyond the darkness of *maya* which is the deluding, external, illusory potency of the Supreme Lord. The illusory nature of *maya* is ever changing by nature whereas the *atma* is eternal and unchanging. The *atma* is itself knowledge as well as the goal of all knowledge and is most worthy of attaining by the acquisition of knowledge., humility etc. which are in the hearts of all human beings albeit dormant or active The qualifications to obtain this knowledge is found in the 20 excellent virtues expounded earlier in verse 8 to 12 beginning with reverence. The words *hṛidi sarvasya dhiṣṭhitam* emphasizes that the Supreme Lord Krishna is specially situated in the etheric heart of all living entities.

Verse 19:

A concise description of what constitutes the *kshetra* or field of activity has been given by Lord Krishna beginning in verse six with *maha-bhutani*, meaning the five fundamental elements of material nature, and in verses 8 through 12 beginning with *amanitvam* or reverence, the 20 excellent spiritual endowments are enumerated as the means for acquiring the knowledge of *atma-tattva* or soul realization and perception of the eternal spiritual reality, which is knowing that the Supreme Lord resides within the etheric heart of all living beings. Here Lord Krishna states *madbhakta* meaning His devotees are knowledgeable of the reality regarding the *kshetra*, knowledgeable of the means by which to realize the *atma* or immortal soul which is of the nature of *kshetra-jna* or knower of the sphere of activity and distinctly different from the *kshetra*. Only His devotees are those situated in such knowledge and *madbhavayopapadyate* meaning qualified to attain exclusive loving devotion to Him, which is everlasting and eternal and which is different from *samsara* or the perpetual cycle of birth and death. The conclusion is that Lord Krishna's devotees knowing the true nature of spiritual eternity and what is the ultimate reality qualify themselves faithfully and enthusiastically in His exclusive loving devotion.

Verse 20:

In this verse, Lord Krishna explains that from the beginning of time *purusha* or the immortal soul and *prakriti* or the material substratum pervading physical existence have been existing united together. The word *vikarams* means modifications and transformations denoting non-spiritual material attributes and passions. The word *gunas* or three modes of material nature, including *sattva* or goodness with its virtues, *rajas* or passion with its desires, and *tamas* or nescience with its ignorance, are all by-products of *prakriti*. Virtuous qualities such as reverence and humility are situated in *sattva* and effectuate *moksha* or liberation from material existence. The qualities of passion with their desires and attachments are situated in *rajas* that effectuates bondage to material existence. The qualities of ignorance with sense gratification as the goal of existence is situated in *tamas* which leads to degeneration into less evolved species next life. *Purusha* uniting with *prakriti* has been perpetuating since the beginning of time and expresses itself as a *kshetra* or field of activity which is a physical body. The *jiva* or embodied being, influenced by the modifications of *rajas* and *tamas* in the form of desire and attachment, attraction and aversion, shrouds the *atma* or immortal soul and keeps it in bondage. By contrast, the *jiva* being influenced by the modifications of *sattva* in the form of the 20 super excellent attributes of spiritual endowment, given in verses 8 to 12 headed by reverence and humility, constitutes the cause of the *atma* attaining *moksha*.

Verse 21:

After explaining how the evolution of all jivas or embodied beings along with their modifications and transformations all arise from *prakriti* or the material substratum pervading physical existence, Lord Krishna elaborates on how the *Purusha* or eternal

manifestation of the Supreme Lord as the *atma* or immortal soul is *hetuh* or responsible for determining one's transmigratory existence. The effect of this is the physical body, and the cause is the means to experience the dualities such as joy and distress, while the senses and their production are from the *gunas* or the actions of goodness, passion and ignorance. This produces *karma* or reactions from past actions, making the subsequent modifications and transformations. *Prakriti* is the cause of the position of the physical body as confirmed by Kapila and Vedavyasa. The Purusha manifested as the *atma* is the cause of the happiness and misery experienced which are of its own making. Although the inert *prakriti* cannot by itself be considered the cause, it is the source of the physical manifestation. The cumulative results of *karma* act as a sentient principle upon even the insentient, the same as fire burns upwards, rivers flow downwards, the wind blows obliquely and milk from the cow spurts outwards. Therefore, this agency of the insentient *prakriti* is said to be due to the influence of the *Purusha* by the experience of cognition in both joy and misery, happiness and distress and all such dualities. Whereas these are the qualities of only sentient beings, the experience of the *Purusha* is said to be due to the proximity of *prakriti*