

CHAPTER 13

NATURE, THE ENJOYER AND CONSCIOUSNESS

In Chapters Six through Twelve, Lord Krsna concluded His description of *bhakti-yoga*. In chapters 13-18, He describes *jnana-yoga*.

One may ask, "If *bhakti* is the culmination of the *yoga* ladder, why is *jnana* presented after the section on *bhakti*?"

Understanding the connection between the *bhakti* section and the *jnana* section will help reveal the reason. In Text 12.7, Lord Krsna promised to save His devotees from the path of birth and death. Chapters 13-18 fulfill this promise by supplying the philosophical knowledge necessary to extricate oneself from material entanglement.

We call this section the "*jnana* section," but in truth the entire *Bhagavad-gita* is *bhakti*. The first six chapters discuss how to achieve *bhakti* through one's works (*karma yoga*). The last six chapters discuss how to achieve *bhakti* through knowledge. The middle six chapters discuss *bhakti itself*.

Jnana has its use in assisting our detachment from *maya* and our subsequent attachment to Krsna. When we utilize knowledge as a means to attain devotion, it becomes a part of *bhakti*.

Without the touch of *bhakti*, both *karma* and *jnana* are useless. This is another reason why the discussion of *bhakti* comes in the middle of *Bhagavad-gita*, where it can remain in contact with both *karma* and *jnana* and thus lend them value.

Arjuna's questions - The field of activities and the knower of the field (13.1-7)

Arjuna begins the thirteenth chapter by asking six questions.

1. Material nature - *prakrti*
2. The enjoyer of matter - *purusa*
3. The field in which one can act within the material world - *ksetra*
4. The entity who *experiences* the field of actions - *ksetra-jna*
5. Knowledge, and the process of acquiring knowledge - *jnanam*
6. The object worthy of knowing - *jneyam*

Main Theme:

Understanding reality means knowing matter, the spirit soul and the Supreme Lord in perspective.

Sub Points:

A. The "field of activities" (*ksetra*) is the material body (13.2-7).

The body is a conglomerate of material elements (listed in verse 6) through which the conditioned soul acts on the world and receives impressions of worldly phenomena.

B. The body is composed of senses (13.2,5-6).

1. Knowledge acquiring senses: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin (*janendriya*).
2. Senses of action: voice, legs, hands, anus and genitals (*karmedriya*).
3. One receives a set of senses appropriate to fulfill one's desires and destiny from one's previous birth.

C. The body is not the conscious self, it is an article manipulated by the desires of the soul. It is not an essential part of the person, but rather an instrument employed by the person owning the body.

D. Two *ksetra-jna-s* The Lord and the living entities (13.2-3,4-5).

1. The soul knows his or her own field.
2. The Supersoul is the knower of all fields.

E. Five stages of realization, from *Taittiriya Upanisad*

1. In terms of realization of the absolute.

1. *anna-maya* For the living entity at this level, food is the supreme object of realization. This is like the consciousness of an ameba, or of a young child.

2. *prammaya*, At this level, the Absolute Truth is seen in living symptoms. One seeks

to preserve his life.

3. *jnana-maya*: One appreciates the subtle interactions of mind, intelligence, emotions, aesthetics, etc. as the utmost object of realization.

4. *vijnana-maya*: One realizes that his self is different the field of activities, including the subtle body. This is like impersonal Brahman realization. Thus the soul itself becomes the ultimate object of realization.

5. *ananda-maya*: One realizes the distinction between his self and the Supreme self, and enters into blissful loving relationship with the Supreme.

2. In terms of *ksetra* and *ksetra-jna*.

1. <i>Ksetra</i>	-gross body	<i>anna-maya</i> <i>prana-maya</i>
	- subtle body	<i>jnana-maya</i>
2. <i>Ksetra-jna</i>	- individual soul	<i>vijnana-maya</i>
	- supreme soul	<i>ananda-maya</i>

The process of knowledge and liberation (13.8-12)

In these texts Lord Krsna explains how the *ksetra jna* (soul) can disentangle himself from the body (*ksetra*) by cultivating knowledge (*jnana*).

Main theme:

Since the Lord reveals true knowledge in the hearts of deserving persons, the real method of acquiring knowledge is cultivation of saintly characteristics, headed by humility.

Sub Points:

- A. Srila Prabhupada explains, "This process of knowledge is sometimes misunderstood by less intelligent men as the interaction of the field of activity. But actually this is the process of real knowledge."
 - 1. Acquisition of knowledge involves proper bodily and mental behavior. Therefore one may wrongly deem it a parcel of the field of activity (*ksetra*).
 - 2. However, since these particular actions liberate the *jiva* from the body, we do not count them as a part and parcel of bodily activities.
- B. The practice of pure devotional service is the foremost item of knowledge. If one takes to the practice of devotional service, all the other important items manifest. The practice of accepting a spiritual master is also essential.

The object of knowledge (13.13-19)

After describing the process of knowledge in verses 8-12, Lord Krsna explains the goal of knowledge (*jneya*) the Supersoul (this section answers questions 5-6).

Main theme:

The Supersoul is the ultimate object to be known.

Sub points:

- A. Only a devotee can deeply understand the true relationships existing between material nature, the Supersoul, and the soul ("Nature, the Enjoyer, and Consciousness").
- B. The goal of spiritual knowledge is to understand the nature of the soul and the Supersoul, as well as their relationship with each other.
- C. Many verses in this section describe the Lord in a contradictory fashion, "He is the original source of all senses, but He is without senses." These descriptions show that Krsna's qualities are unlike those we experience in the material world; they are transcendental.
- D. The individual soul is *ksetra-jna*, but is subordinate to the Supersoul *ksetra-jna*. In all cases, the spirit soul is the servant and the Supersoul is the master.
 - 1. The individual soul's jurisdiction is limited to his own body, while the Supersoul is all pervasive.
 - 2. The three modes control the living entity, but the Supersoul controls the three modes.
- E. The ordinary soul can perceive the Supersoul only when his material senses are purified by the practice of *bhakti-yoga* (13.15-16).
- F. The Supersoul is one unified entity, although He appears to be divided among all beings (13.17).

Prakrti, purusa, and their union (13.20-26)

In the previous section, Lord Krsna defined *jneya* (the object of knowledge) as the self and the Supersoul. Now, He describes the soul and Supersoul (*purusa*) in terms of their connection with material nature (*prakrti*). This section answers questions 1-2.

Main theme:

The conditioned soul's desire to control and enjoy matter binds him to material nature. The Supersoul is the factual enjoyer and controller. Understanding this will lead the conditioned living entity toward liberation.

Sub points:

- A. Both the *jiva* soul and the Supersoul act as *purusa* (enjoyer), although the Supersoul is the factual enjoyer and controller.
- B. Both material nature and the living entities are eternal (13.20).
 1. Although the specific manifestations of matter are temporary, the sum total of material energy is ever existent.
 2. The living entities are eternal parts and parcels of the Supreme Lord.
 3. Although both are eternal, material nature and the living entity (*prakrti* and *purusa*) are different. The nature of *prakrti* is constant transformation, whereas the nature of the *purusa* is non-changing.
- C. All things happen in matter, as a result of the living entity's desire. The resultant suffering or enjoyment occurs in the living entity himself, due to his illusory oneness with matter (13.21-22).
 1. Since his desires and actions cause him to suffer and enjoy, the living entity is the cause of suffering and enjoyment
- D. Freedom from *prakrti* is available for one who recognizes the true *purusa*, the Supersoul (13.23-26).
 1. Since his bondage is due to his attempt to take the position of the Lord, the conditioned soul can become free by recognizing the Lord's position as the only factual enjoyer
 2. One can come to this understanding through *jnana-yoga*, *astanga-yoga*, *karma-yoga*, and *bhakti-yoga*, which begins with hearing.

Jnana-caksuh: the vision of know/edge (13.27-35)

In this chapter, the Lord described how to understand the position of *prakrti purusa*, *ksetra*, *ksetr-jna*, *jnana*, and *jneyam*. Now He will describe the vision of one who can understand them in the proper perspective.

Main theme:

One who can see the Supersoul, living entity, and material nature in their proper relationship, sees through the eyes of knowledge.

Sub Points:

- A. The material manifestation is simply a combination of the field of activities and the knower(s) of the field (13.27-29).
- B. The Supersoul is ever-present with the soul, accompanying him through the course of material existence (13.28-29). One who understands this "does not degrade himself by his mind."
 1. When one sees the Supersoul everywhere, in control of every event, he will not feel like a victim when unfavorable material situations arise. Nor will he be "offended" or "wronged" by another's behavior towards him. Rather, he will see the Supersoul utilizing those situations and people as instruments for his personal purification.
- C. The soul can be known as that which provides the body with consciousness (13.31,33-34).
- D. The transcendental soul never takes part in the activities of the body. Material nature produces the body under the jurisdiction of the Supersoul (13.30,32).