

BHAGAVADGITA

English translation of Sri Ramanuja's Sanskrit Commentary - Swami Adidevananda

Chapter 7

RO

7.1 The Lord said -- Listen attentively to My words imparting knowledge to you, by which you will understand Me indubitably and fully --- Me, the object of the Yogic contemplation in which you are engaged with a mind so deeply bound to Me by virtue of overwhelming love that it would disintegrate instantaneously the moment it is out of touch with My essential nature, attributes, deeds and glories, and with your very self resting so completely on Me that it would break up when bereft of Me.

7.2 I will declare to you in full this knowledge having Me for its object, along with Vijnana or distinguishing knowledge. Vijnana is that knowledge of God in which His nature is distinguished from all things. I am distinguished from all things, animate and inanimate, as the only Being opposed to all that is evil and endowed with infinitely great manifestation of countless multiples of attributes of all kinds which are auspicious, unsurpassed and without limit. I will declare to you that knowledge which has My essence as its object. Why say much? I shall declare to you that knowledge knowing which nothing else remains to be known again in relation to Myself. Sri Krsna declares that this knowledge, which will now be taught, is difficult to attain:

7.3 'Men', i.e., those who are qualified for observing the commands of the Sastras --- among thousands of such men, only some one strives till the attainment of perfection. Among thousands who strive till the attainment of perfection, some one only, understanding Me, strives to attain success through Me (i.e., through My grace). Among thousands of those who might know Me, some one only knows Me in reality, as I am. In other words, there is no one who is capable of knowing Me as I am, i.e., as distinguished from all other entities, as implied in the expression Vijnana. Sri Krsna will declare later on: 'It is very hard to find such a great-souled person' (7.19), and 'But no one knows Me' (7.26).

7.4 Know that Prakrti, the material cause of this universe, which consists of endless varieties of objects and means of enjoyment and places of enjoyment, is divided into eightfold substances --- earth, water, fire, air and ether, having smell, taste etc., as their attributes, and Manas along with kindred sense organs and the categories Mahat and ego-sense --- all belonging to Me.

7.5 This is My lower Prakrti. But know My higher Prakrti which is different from this, i.e., whose nature is different from this inanimate Prakrti constituting the objects of enjoyment to animate beings. It is 'higher', i.e., is more pre-eminent compared to the lower Prakrti which is constituted only of inanimate substances. This higher Nature of Mine is the individual self. Know this as My higher Prakrti through which the whole inanimate universe is sustained.

7.6 Know that all beings from Brahma down to a tuft of grass, who have their origin in these two Prakrtis of Mine, are aggregated forms of the self and of inanimate matter. Irrespective of whether they are existing in a superior or inferior form, the selves and inanimate matter are mixed together in them. On account of their origination in My two Prakrtis, they are Mine. So, know that because the entire universe has its origination in these two Prakrtis which have their origination in Me, I am myself the origin and dissolution of the entire universe. For the same reason, I am its Lord (Sesin). It is proved on the basis of the Srutis and Smrtis that these two, Prakrti and Purusa (matter and the self), which form the aggregate of all animate and inanimate beings, have the Supreme Person as their cause. This is evident from Sruti and Smrti texts like the following: 'The Mahat resolves into Avyakta, Avyakta into Aksara, Aksara into Tamas, and Tamas becomes one with the Supreme Lord' (Su. U., 2); 'O sage, distinct from the form of Visnu, the Supreme Lord, the two forms, Prakrti and Purusa, arise' (V. P., 1.2.24); and 'What was described by Me as Prakrti in its dual form of the manifest and the unmanifest, and the Purusa do merge in the Supreme Self, and the Supreme Self is the support of all. He is the Supreme Lord named Visnu, exalted in the Vedas and Vedanta' (V. P., 6.4.38-39).

7.7 I am absolutely superior to all in two ways: 1) I am the cause of both the Prakrtis and I am also their controlling master (Sesin). This controllership over inanimate nature is exercised through the animate

Prakrti (the Jivas) who form the inner controller (Sesin) of their bodies which are constituted of inanimate nature. 2) I am supreme to all in another sense also --- as the possessor of knowledge, power, strength etc., in an infinite degree. There is no entity other than Me with such attributes of an equal or superior nature. The aggregate of all the animate and inanimate things, whether in their causal state or in the state of effect, is strung on Me who abides as their Self, as a row of gems on a thread. They depend on Me. And it is proved that the universe of inanimate and animate beings exists as the body with Brahman (i.e. the Supreme Person) as their Self as declared by the Antaryami-brahmana and other texts: 'He whose body is the earth' (Br. U., 3.7-3), 'He whose body is the self' (Br. U. Madh., 3.7.22), and 'He is the inner self of all beings, without evil, He is the Lord in the supreme heaven, He is the one Narayana' (Su. U., 7). Thus, as everything constitutes the body of the Supreme Person forming only a mode of His who is their Self, the Supreme Person alone exists, and all things (which we speak of as diversity) are only His modes. Therefore all terms used in common parlance for different things, denote Him only. Sri Krsna shows this by coordinating some important ones among these entities with Himself.

7.8 - 7.11 All these entities with their peculiar characteristic are born from Me alone. They depend on Me; inasmuch as they constitute My body, they exist in Me alone. Thus I alone exist while all of them are only My modes.

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7.12 Why should this be declared with particular illustrations? The reason is as follows: Whatever entities exist in the world partaking of the qualities of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas in the forms of bodies, senses, objects of enjoyment and their causes --- know them all to have originated from Me alone, and they abide in Me alone, as they constitute My body. 'But I am not in them.' That is, I do not depend for My existence on them at any time. In the case of other beings, though the body depends for its existence on the self, the body serves some purpose of the self in the matter of its sustenance. To Me, however,

there is no purpose at all of that kind served by them constituting My body. The meaning is that they merely serve the purpose of My sport.

7.13 Now, in this way, the whole universe, consisting of animate and inanimate entities belonging to Me, evolves from time to time from Me only, is absorbed in Me, and abides in Me alone. It constitutes My body and has Me for its self. Whether in the causal state or in the state of effect, it is I who have all these entities as My modes, because all entities form My body. Thus, in regard to all these modes, I am superior to them, as I am their cause, principal, and as I possess a complex of countless auspicious attributes like knowledge, strength etc. In every way I remain as the highest being. There exists none higher than Myself. Such being the case, I am superior to these entities composed of the qualities of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas --- superior to them by My extraordinary attributes and by having these various modes for My enjoyment. I am the highest and immutable, i.e., I form a unity in Myself. This world constituted of gods, men, animals and immovables, and deluded by the three Gunas of Prakrti and its evolutes are inferior and transient. The forms of bodies, senses and objects of enjoyment comprising the world are there in accordance with their past Karmas. No one in the world knows Me. How is it possible that all experiencing beings think as enjoyable objects which are inferior, constituted of the Gunas and are transient, while You exist --- You who are of the nature of unbounded and abundant bliss, who has an eternal unchanging form and who is the source of the enjoyableness of even the objects of the world? Sri Krsna

replies:

7.14 (a) This Maya of Mine consists of the three Gunas, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Because it is created by Me, the Divine, for purpose of sport, it is divine in its power and therefore difficult to overcome. The word Maya is used for the effects of the three Gunas, because it has got the power of generating wonderful effects as in the case of the magic of Asuras and Raksasas. See the passages: 'Then the excellent discus, the flaming Sudarsana, was despatched by the Lord to defend the boy. The thousand Mayas or wonderfully created weapons of the evil-designed Sambara were foiled one after another, by that quickly moving discus, for protecting the body of the boy' (V. P., 1.19. 19-20). Here the term Maya does not signify the sense of 'false'. Even with regard to magicians, when the term, Mayavin (one who possesses Maya) is used, there is origination of real impressions with the aid of certain incantations, herbs etc., though the objects created are illusory things. Accordingly the term Maya denotes the incantations, herbs etc., which have got the power of creating real impressions. Inasmuch as the sense of the term should be invariable, following the usage in all cases, the term Maya can be applied to the illusory objects, only in a secondary sense, while its primary sense in regard to the real impressions generated in the mind. It is just like in the statement 'The cots cry.' The Maya of the Lord, which is absolutely real and which consists of the Gunas, is alone taught in the texts like, 'Know then Maya to be the Prakrti and the possessor of the Maya to be the great Lord' (Sve. U.,

4.10). It not only obscures the essential nature of the Lord but also creates the condition of the mind that sees its objects as enjoyable. Therefore, the entire universe, deluded by the Lord's Maya, does not know the Lord who is of the nature of boundless beatitude. (On the other hand they feel objects set forth by Maya as enjoyable). Sri Krsna teaches the way of deliverance from Maya: (b) But those who take refuge in Me alone --- Me whose resolves are always true, who has supreme compassion, and who is the refuge of all beings without exception and without consideration of their particular status --- such persons shall pass beyond this Maya of Mine consisting of the three Gunas. The meaning is that they worship Me alone, renouncing the Maya. Why, then do all not take recourse to refuge in the Lord which is conducive to the worship of the Lord?

7.15 'Evil-doers', those who commit evil deeds, do not resort to Me. They are of four types, according to the degree of their evil deeds: (i) the foolish, (ii) the lowest of men, (iii) those persons deprived of knowledge by Maya, and (iv) those given to demoniac nature. 'The foolish' are those who have misconceived knowledge. True knowledge consists in understanding that the self is dependent on the Lord and exists for Him. But 'the foolish' think they are independent and also that all enjoyable things of the world are their own and for their enjoyment. 'The lowest of men' are those who are incapable of turning towards Me, even though My essential nature is known to them generally. 'Persons who are deprived of knowledge by Maya' are those who, though possessing

knowledge about Me and My manifestations, are moved by deceitful reasonings to contend that such knowledge is inconsistent and impossible. 'Those of demoniac nature' are those who have positive knowledge about Myself and My manifestation but hate Me. The intensity of sinfulness in these types in the order in which they are successively placed.

7.16 'Men of good deeds,' i.e., those who have meritorious Karmas to their credit, and who resort to Me and worship Me alone --- they too are divided into four types according to the degrees of their good deeds, each subsequent type being better than the preceding, because of the greatness of their good deeds and gradation in respect of their knowledge. (i) The 'distressed' is one who has lost his position in life and his wealth, and who wishes to regain them (ii) He who 'aspires for wealth' is one who desires for wealth which he has not till then attained. Between them the difference is very little, as both of them seek wealth. (iii) He 'who seeks after knowledge' is one who wishes to realise the real nature of the self (in Its pure state) as an entity different from the Prakrti. He is called 'one who seeks to secure knowledge,' because knowledge alone is the essential nature of the self. (iv) And the 'man of knowledge' is he who knows that, it is the essential nature of the self to find happiness only as the Sesa (subsidiary or liege) of the Lord, as taught in the text beginning with, 'But know that which is other than this (lower nature) to be the higher Prakrti' (7.5). Without stopping with the knowledge of the self as different from the Prakrti, he desires to attain

the Lord. He thinks that the Lord alone is the highest aim to reach.

7.17 Of these four, 'the man of knowledge' is the foremost. Why?

Because of being ever with Me in Yoga and devoted to the One only. To the man of knowledge the attainment of Myself being the only end in view, he is ever with Me. As for the others, they contemplate on Me only until the fulfilment of their desires. But to the man of knowledge, there is single-minded devotion to Me only. Unlike him, the others, want only the objects of their desire and they are devoted to Me only as a means for gaining them. Hence he, the man of knowledge, alone is the foremost. Further I am very dear to the man of knowledge. Here the term 'artha' in relation to the expression 'athyartham' denotes 'what cannot be expressed adequately.' That is, even I, the omniscient and omnipotent, is unable to express how much I am dear to the Jnanin, since there is no such limit as 'this much' for this love. Such is the meaning. As in the case of Prahlada, the foremost among men of knowledge, it is said: 'But he with his thoughts firmly fixed on Krsna while being bitten by the great serpents, felt no pain from the wounds, being immersed in rapturous recollections of Him' (V. P., 1.17.39). I reciprocate this love infinitely.

7.18 Because they worship Me alone, all these are generous i.e., benefactors. For, those who receive from Me anything, however small they are, I consider them as contributing everything to Me (and thus as benefactors). But I deem the man of knowledge to be My very self. I consider Myself as depending on him for My support. Why is it so?

Because this person considers Me to be the highest and finds it impossible to support himself without Me; I also find it impossible to be without him. Thus, verily, he is My self. The attainment of this state of mind requires innumerable auspicious births. It is attained after gaining the knowledge of the real nature of the self and the self feels that its happiness consists in being a dependant (Sesa) of Myself.

7.19 Further after passing through innumerable auspicious births, one gets the knowledge: 'I find my sole joy as a Sesa of Vasudeva. I find my essence, existence and activities to be dependent on Him. He is superior over all others on account of His innumerable auspicious attributes.' Consequent to this knowledge he resorts to Me, i.e., meditates on Me, realising, 'Vasudeva alone is my highest end and also the means for attaining it, and whatever other desire remains in the mind, He alone is all that too for me'. Such a great-souled person, i.e., great-minded man is hard to find. It is very hard to find such persons in this world. This is the only meaning of the statement that 'Vasudeva is all,' because of the topic having been begun with the statements: 'For I am very dear to the man of knowledge' (7.17) and 'For he, integrated, is devoted to Me alone as the highest end' (7.18). It is so, also because that Jnanin whose traits are given here, possesses the same qualities as the man of knowledge described earlier. For, it has been said that the two Prakrtis, the animate and the inanimate, have their sole essence in being the Sesa (dependants) of the Supreme Person in the verses beginning with 'Earth, water' (7.4) and ending with, 'Ego-sense, thus My Prakrti is

divided eightfold. This is my lower (Prakrti). But know that which is other than this (lower nature) and forms the life-principle to be the higher Prakrti' (7.4-5). Then take the beginning from 'I am the origin and dissolution of the whole universe. There is nothing higher than Myself, O Arjuna' (7.6-7), and ending with, 'Know that all the states of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are from Me alone. But I am not in them. They are in Me' (7.12). It has been declared in these texts that the two Prakrtis, both in their states of cause and effect, depend upon Him for their essence, existence and activities and that the Supreme Person is superior to everything in all respects. Therefore the knower of this truth alone is here spoken of as a man of knowledge or as one knowing 'All this is Vasudeva.' [The purpose of this explanation is to eliminate any pure monistic slant to this passage.] Sri Krsna now explains the rarity of finding such a person of knowledge.

7.20 All men of this world are 'controlled', i.e., constantly accompanied by their own nature consisting in the Vasanas (subtle impressions) resulting from relation with the objects formed of the Gunas. Their knowledge about My essential nature is robbed by various Karmas, i.e., by objects of desire corresponding to their Vasanas (subtle impressions) born of their Karmas and constituted of Gunas. In order to fulfil these various kinds of desires they take refuge in, i.e., seek and worship, other divinities who are regarded as different from Me, such as Indra and others, observing various disciplines, i.e., practising rituals which are specially meant to propitiate only these divinities.

7.21 These divinities too constitute My body as taught in the Sruti text like: 'He who, dwelling in the sun, whom the sun does not know, whose body is the sun' (Br. U., 3.7.9). Whichever devotee seeks to worship with faith whatever form of Mine, such as the Indra, although not knowing these divinities to be My forms, I consider his faith as being directed to My bodies or manifestations, and make his faith steadfast, i.e., make it free from obstacles.

7.22 He, endowed with that faith without obstacles, performs the worship of Indra and other divinities. Thence, i.e., from the worship of Indra and other divinities, who constitute My body, he attains the objects of his desire, which are in reality granted by Me alone. Although he does not know at the time of worship that divinities like Indra, who are his objects of worship, are My body only, and that worship of them is My worship, still, inasmuch as this worship is, in reality, My worship, he attains his objects of desire granted by Me alone.

7.23 The men of 'small understanding' means those whose understanding is poor, who worship only Indra and other divinities. The fruit of their worship is small and finite. Why? The worshippers of divinities like Indra go to the divinities. And Indra and other divinities possess limited joy and live only for a limited time. So if they attain equality of enjoyment with them, they also fall down along with them in due course; but My devotees, knowing that their acts are of the nature

of My worship, renouncing attachment for finite, fruits, reach Me, having for their purpose the pleasing of Me alone. That is, they never more return to Samsara. For Sri Krsna teaches later on: 'But on reaching Me there is no rebirth, O Arjuna' (8.16). Now Sri Krsna declares: 'But these others (i.e., who worship Indra etc.) regard as insignificant even My incarnations among men and other beings in order to make Myself easy for all to resort to.'

7.24 Ignorant people do not know My higher nature, immutable and unsurpassed. They do not know that it is I, who is worshipped through all rites, who is the Lord of all, and whose nature is beyond speech and mind, that has incarnated as the son of Vasudeva, without abandoning My divine nature, out of My supreme compassion and parental love for those who resort to Me and in order that I may be the refuge of all. They consider Me as only a worldly prince who was not manifest before and who has now become manifest by Karma and has secured a special form. Therefore, they do not resort to Me, nor do they worship Me. Why is He not manifest (to them)? Sri Krsna says:

7.25 Concealed by the Maya called Yogamaya, I am associated with a human form and other generic structures which are special to individual selves. Because of this I am not manifest to all. The foolish, by seeing in Me merely the human or the other generic structures, do not know that My powers are greater than those of Vayu and Indra, that My lustre is more brilliant than that of sun and fire, that though visible to all, I am

unborn, immutable, the cause of all the worlds, the Lord of all, and that I have assumed a human form, so that all who want can take refuge in Me.

7.26 I know all being that have passed away, those that live now and those that will hereafter. But no one knows Me. Among the beings existing in the three-fold divisions of time whom I look after, no one understands Me as of the nature described and as Vasudeva incarnated to be a refuge for all. So no one resorts to Me. Therefore, the one who knows Me really (Jnanin) is extremely difficult to be found. Such is the meaning. So also:

7.27 As soon as beings are born they are deluded. This delusion springs from sense experiences described as pairs of opposites like heat and cold. Such reactions spring from desire and hate. The purport is this: Desire and hatred for the pairs of opposites like pleasure and pain, which are constituted of Gunas, have their origin in the Jivas from the past experiences they had in their previous births. The subtle impressions or Vasanas of these previous experiences manifest again as instinctive desire and hatred towards similar objects in every succeeding birth of the Jivas. The delusive force of these impressions make them deluded from the very beginning. It becomes their nature to have love or hatred for such objects, in place of having happiness and misery at union with or separation from Me. The Jnanin, however, feels happiness when he is in union with Me and misery when separated from Me. No

other being is born with such a nature as found in the Jnanin.

7.28 However, there are some whose sins, accruing from beginningless time, which cause desire or hatred to the pairs of opposites and annual the tendency towards Me, have come to an end, i.e., have become weakened, through the accumulation of good actions in numerous births, They resort to Me, devoid of delusion produced by the Gunas, and worship Me alone in proportion to the excellence of their Karmas previously described. In order to attain deliverance from old age and death and for acquiring the supreme consummation of reaching Me, they remain steadfast in their vows. Sri Krsna enumerates what special things are to be known and what ought to be attained by these three classes of votaries of God:

7.29 Those who take refuge in Me and strive for deliverance from old age and death, i.e., for the vision of the real nature of the self as distinct from the Prakrti, they know brahman (the pure individual self). They also know all about the individual self, and the whole of Karma. [This attainment is known as Kaivalya, which means the aloofness of the self in absorption in Its own bliss.]

7.30 Here, other qualified persons distinct from those already mentioned (i.e., those who desire Kaivalya) are to be understood, because of the mention again of the term 'those' (ye). Even though the declaration --- those seekers of fortune who know Me as being

connected with the higher material entities' (Adhibhuta) and 'with that which is higher to divinities' (Adhidaiva) i.e., the self in Its lordship --- resembles a repetition, it is really an injunction on account of the meaning not being known otherwise. The statement of knowing Me as being connected with the sacrifice is also enjoined as an injunction for all the three types of differently qualified aspirants (those who aspire for Kaivalya, wealth and liberation) without any difference, because of the nature of the subject matter, that being sacrificial. None of the three types of aspirants can give up the performance of the great sacrifices and other rituals in the form of periodical and occasional rituals. They know Me at the hour of death in a way corresponding with their objectives. Because of the term ca (too) in 'they too,' those who have been mentioned before as 'striving for release from old age and death' are also to be understood along with the others as knowing Me at the hour of death. By this, even the Jnanin knows Me as being connected with the sacrifice on account of the nature of the meaning of the subject treated (i.e., sacrifice). They also know Me even at the hour of death in a way corresponding with their objective. The purport is that, besides the others mentioned earlier like the knower of the Self, those others who are now described as knowing Him with Adhibhuta, Adhidaiva and Adhiyajna are to be included among those who will know Him at the time of death.