

BHAGAVADGITA

English translation of Sri Ramanuja's Sanskrit Commentary - Swami

Adidevananda

Chapter 13

RO

13.1 No commentary.

13.2 The body which is cognised in identity with the experiencing self by co-ordinate predication (Samanadhikaranya) in the propositions, 'I am a god, 'I am a man,' 'I am fat,' 'I am slender' etc., is described by those who know the real nature of the body as only the Field (Ksetra) of experience for the experiencing self, who is distinct from the body.

Those who know this, namely, those who know the exact nature of the self, call it the Field-knower (Ksetrajna). That knower who knows the body, as divided into its different members and as their collectivity, can say 'I know it, the body, as an object.' The person with this perception is the one who is called the Ksetrajna or the Field-knower, who must necessarily be different from the Field (Ksetra), which is the object of this knowledge. It is true that at the time of perceiving an object like a pot which is different from one's body, the seer who thinks 'I am a god who sees it' or 'I am a man who sees it' etc., is putting himself as identical with the body through co-ordinate predication. In the same way he experiences the body as an object of knowledge when he says 'I know this body.' Thus if the body is an object of knowledge, it must be different from the knowing self. Therefore, the Field-knower (Ksetrajna). The knower, is other than the body which is an object of knowledge like

a jar, etc. But this knowledge which arises by way of co-ordinate predication is justified on the ground that the body is inseparable from oneself; for it constitutes an attribute of the self like 'cow-ness' of the cow etc. The knowing self is however unique in being an eternal and subtle form of knowledge. But this is inaccessible to the ordinary man's organs of vision; it is accessible only to a mind refined by Yoga. The ignorant see the knower only in the form of Prakrti because of close proximity to or union with Prakrti. Sri Krsna thus declares later on: 'When in identification with the Gunas he departs or stays or experiences, the deluded perceive him not. They, who have the eye of knowledge, see' (15.10).

error

13.4 What the 'Field is' namely, what its substance is; what it is 'like', namely, what things depend on it; what its 'modifications' are, namely, what its transformations are; what the 'purpose' is for which it has been originated; 'what it is,' namely, what its true nature is; 'who it is,' namely, who the individual self is and what its nature is like; what its 'powers', are, namely, what powers it possesses. All this, briefly learn from Me.

error

13.6 - 13.7 The 'great elements, the Ahankara, the Buddhi and the Avyakta' are substances that originate the Ksetra. The 'great elements'

are the earth, water, fire, air and ether. The 'Ahankara' here means Bhutadi (primeval element). The 'Buddhi' is called Mahat; the 'Avyakta' is known as the Prakrti. The 'ten senses and the one' and the five objects of senses are principles depending on the Ksetra. The 'five sensorial organs' are ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose. The five motor organs are speech, hands, feet, and the organs of excretion and reproduction. These are the ten senses. The Manas is the additional 'one' more. The 'objects of the senses' are five --- sound, touch, form, taste and smell. Desire, hatred, pleasure and pain, being the transformation of the Ksetra, are said to be the modifications of the Ksetra. Though desire, hatred, pleasure and pain are the qualities of the self, yet they originate from the association of the self with the Ksetra. Sri Krsna will state that they are the attributes of the self; 'In the experience of pleasure and pain, the self is said to be the cause' (13.20). The combination of elements serves as the support (Adhrti) of the intelligent self. As such, the word Adhrti means substratum. The combination of material elements has arisen as the substratum for the self to experience pleasure and pain, and for acquiring worldly experiences and the final release. The combination of elements is formed by substances commencing from the Prakrti and ending with the earth; it is the basis of senses which are endowed with the modifications of the nature of desire, hatred, pleasure and pain. These form a Sanghata or an association of elements. It serves as the basis of the experience of pleasure and pain by the individual self. This is what is said of the Ksetra. This Ksetra has been explained briefly with its modifications and effects.

Now certain qualities, the effects of the Ksetra, worthy of being acquired as being the means for securing the knowledge of the self, are enumerated.

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13.8 'Amanitva' means freedom from superiority complex towards eminent people. 'Adambhitva': 'Dambha' is the practice of Dharma for winning fame as a virtuous person; freedom from it is Adambhitva. 'Ahima' is absence of tendency to injure others by speech, mind and body. 'Ksanti' is the tendency of keeping the mind unmodified even when harmed by others. 'Arjava' means having a uniform disposition towards others in speech, mind and body. 'Acaryopasana' means being intent in prostrating, questioning, performing service etc., in regard to the teacher who imparts the knowledge of the self. 'Sauca' is the competence of the mind, speech and body, as enjoined by the Sastras, for the knowledge of the self and the means of this attainment. 'Sthairya' is possessing unshakable faith in the Sastras concerning the self. 'Atma-vinigraha' means the turning away from all objects that are different in nature from the self.

13.9 'Absence of desire' with regard to sense-objects means dispassion towards all objects different from the spiritual self by the constant awareness of the evil in them. 'Absence of egotism' means freedom from the misconception that the self is the body, which is in reality different from the self. This is only an illustration standing for other misconceptions too. It indicates freedom from the feeling of possession towards things which do not belong to one. 'Perception of evil in birth, death, old age, disease and sorrow' means the constant contemplation on the inevitable evil of birth, death, old age and sorrow while in the body.

13.10 'Non-attachment' means freedom from attachment to things other than the self. 'Absence of clinging' to son, wife, home and the like means absence of excessive affection for these beyond the limits allowed by the Sastras. 'Constant even-mindedness' to all desirable and undesirable events means the state of freedom from joy and grief with regard to occurrences springing from desire.

13.11 'Constant devotion' means devotion with a single end, namely, Myself the Lord of all; 'remaining in places free from people' means having no love for crowds of people.

13.12 'Adhyatma-jnana' is the knowledge that pertains to the self. Reflection for the attainment of knowledge of the truth, namely, being always intent in the thought having for its object the knowledge of the

truth. 'Knowledge' is that by which the self is realised. The meaning is that it is the means for the knowledge of the self. The group of attributes mentioned before, beginning with modesty etc., are those that are favourable for the knowledge of the self in association with the body. All the evolutes of Ksetra, which are different from those mentioned above, constitute ignorance, as they are antagonistic to the knowledge of the self. Now, the nature of Ksetrajna, characterised as the knower in the stanza, 'He who knows it' (13.1), is examined:

13.13 I shall declare that nature of the individual self (brahman) which is the object to be known, namely, what is to be gained by means of virtues like modesty etc., by knowing which one attains to the self which is immortal, birthless, free from old age, death and such other material qualities. [The expression is split up as --- Anadi = beginningless; Matparam = having Me as the Highest.] Anadi means that which is beginningless. Indeed, there is no origination for this individual self (brahman) and for the same reason, It is endless. The Sruti also declares: 'The wise one is not born, nor dies' (Ka. U., 2.18). 'Matpara' means having Me for the Highest. Verily, it has been told: 'Know that which is other than this (lower nature), which is the life-principle, to be the highest Prakrti of Mine' (7.5). By virtue of being the body of the Lord, the nature of the self finds joy in being completely subsidiary to Him. So the Sruti declares: 'He who, dwelling in the self, is within the self, whom the self does not know, whose body the self is and who controls the self from within ...' (Br. U. Madh., 5.7.22). Similarly do the texts declare: 'He is

the cause, Lord of Lords and of sense organs. He has no progenitor, nor lord' (Sve. U., 6.9); and 'He is the Lord of the Pradhana and of the individual selves, and the Lord of qualities (Ibid., 6.16). That which is conjoined with the quality of infinite dimension or extensiveness can be designated as brahman. It is different from, and not circumscribable by, the body etc. The meaning is, It is the principle which apprehends the Ksetra. Sruti also declares: 'He (i.e., the individual self) partakes of infinity' (Sve. U., 5.9). By its Karma It is circumscribed. It assumes Its infinite nature only when It is freed from the bonds of Karma. The term brahman is applied to designate the individual self as in: 'He, crossing beyond the Gunas', becomes fit for the sake of brahman' (14.26), 'I am the ground of the brahman, who is immutable and immortal' (14.27), and 'Having attained to the state of brahman, tranquil, he neither grieves nor craves; regarding all beings alike, he attains supreme devotion to Me' (18.54). It (brahman) is said to be neither being nor non-being. The terms 'being' and 'non-being' cannot signify the nature of the self because It is neither effect nor cause. For It is called 'being' (Sat) in the condition of effect when It has the form of gods etc. As It cannot possess names and forms in the condition of cause, It is said to be 'non-being' or Asat. So the Sruti texts declare: 'In the beginning, verily, this (brahman) was non-existence; therefrom the being was born' (Tai. U., 2.7.1) and 'Verily, this (brahman) was then undifferentiated. It became differentiated by names and forms' (Br. U., 1.4.7). The self's conditions as effect and cause have arisen on account of veiling by Avidya or ignorant in the form of Karma. It is not an expression of Its real nature.

So, the terms 'being' and 'non-being' do not signify the nature of the self, If it is argued that, in the passage 'In the beginning, verily, this (Brahman) was non-existence' (Tai. U., 2.7.1), it is the Supreme Brahman in the state of cause that is described --- even then it can be pointed out that the Supreme Brahman in causal condition has, for His body, the conscient and non-conscient entities in a subtle state, incapable of being differentiated by names and forms. Such a description is therefore valid. On the same principle the nature of Ksetra (body) and Ksetrajna (individual self) in the state of cause can also be indicated by the term 'non-being'. But this condition of the individual self has arisen due to Karma and such descriptions as 'being' and 'non-being' are applicable to the self only in the state of bondage. Its pure form cannot be signified by the terms 'being' and 'non-being'.

13.14 Everywhere are Its hands and feet i.e., the self in Its pure form is able to perform everywhere the works of hands and feet. Its eyes, heads and mouths are everywhere; It performs everywhere the task of eyes etc. The Sruti declares; 'Without feet or hands, He moves swiftly and seizes things; He sees without eyes, He hears without ears? (Sve. U., 3.19). It may be said that it means that the Supreme Brahman performs everywhere the task of hands, feet etc., even though He is devoid of hands and feet. If 'Brahman' is taken to mean the self, it can be asked how this power of the Supreme Brahman (namely, having hand, feet, eyes, etc., everywhere) can be attributed to the self, then the answer is that it is established in the Srutis that the pure individual self has the

capacity of performing the task of hands, feet etc., because It is equal to Him. Sruti also declares: 'Then, the wise seer, shaking off good and evil, stainless, attains the supreme equality with Him' (Mun. U., 3.1.3). Sri Krsna will also teach later on: 'Resorting to this knowledge, It partakes of My nature' (14.2). It exists encompassing all things, whatever aggregate of things that exist in the world; It encompasses them. The sense is that in Its pure state, It is all-pervasive, as It has no limitation of space etc.

13.15 Sarvendriya-gunabhasam i.e., shining by the functions of the senses --- means that which is shedding light on the functions of all the senses. The 'Gunas' of the senses means the activities of the senses. The meaning is that the self is capable of knowing the objects with the functioning of the senses. 'Yet devoid of the senses' i.e., It is capable by Itself, of knowing everything. Such is the meaning. It is 'detached', namely, It is free, by nature, from attachment to the bodies of gods etc. 'Yet supporting all,' yet capable of supporting all bodies, such as of gods etc., as declared in the Sruti. 'It is one, is threefold ...' (Cha. U., 7.26.2). It is devoid of Gunas, i.e., by nature It is devoid of Sattva etc., and yet It is the experiencer of the Gunas' --- It has the capability to experience Sattva etc.

13.16 Abandoning the elements like earth etc., It can exist outside the body. It can exist within them while performing spontaneous activities as established in the Srutis: 'Eating, playing, enjoying with partners or with

vehicles' (Cha. U., 8.12.3). 'It is unmoving and yet moving' --- it is by nature, unmoving, It is moving when It has a body. It is so subtle that none can comprehend It. Although existing in a body, this principle, possessed of all powers and omniscient, cannot be comprehended by bound ones because of Its subtlety and Its distinctiveness from the body. It is far away and yet It is very near --- though present in one's own body, It is far away from those who are devoid of modesty and other qualities (mentioned above) as also to those who possess contrary qualities. To those who possess modesty and such other qualities, the same self is very near.

13.17 Though the entity called the self is present everywhere in the bodies of divinities, men etc., It is 'undivided' because of Its form being that of the knower. However, to those who are ignorant, It appears divided, by such forms as those of divinities etc. --- 'I am a divinity,' 'man' etc. Though the self can be contemplated by way of co-ordinate predication as one with the body in such significations as, 'I am divinity, I am a man,' It can be known as being different from the body, because of Its being a knower. That is why it has already been pointed out at the beginning: 'He who knows It? (13.1). Now Sri Krsna says that It can be known as different also on other grounds --- as the 'supporter of elements' etc. Because It supports the earth and other elements combined in the shape of the body, the self can be known as being different from the elements supported. The sense is that It can be known as a separate entity. Likewise, It is that which 'devours', namely, the

consumer of physical food etc. Because, It 'devours' the food, It can be known as an entity different from the elements. It causes 'generation' --- It is the cause of transformation of consumed food etc., into other forms like blood etc. As eating, generating etc., are not seen in a corpse, it is settled that the body, an aggregate of elements, cannot be the cause of devouring food, generating of species and supporting them.

13.18 This (self) alone is the 'light' which illuminates things like the sun, a lamp, a gem etc. It is knowledge alone in the form of the effulgence of the self which illuminates a lamp, the sun etc. But a lamp etc., dispel the darkness that intervenes between the sense of sight and its subject. Their illuminating power is limited to this extent. This is said to be beyond Tamas (darkness). The term Tamas denotes Prakrti in its subtle state. The meaning is that the self transcends Prakrti. Therefore, It is to be comprehended as knowledge, i.e., to be understood as of the form of knowledge. It is attainable by means of knowledge --- such as modesty etc., already described. It is present in the heart of all, i.e., It is specially settled, or present in the heart of all beings like men etc.

13.19 This is a brief description of the principle of Ksetra --- i.e., the text beginning with 'The great elements, the Ahankara' (13.5) and ending with 'An association' (13.6). 'Knowledge' which is the means for attaining the comprehension of the principle known as the self has been taught in the text beginning with 'Modesty' (13.7) and ending with 'Reflection for attainment of knowledge of truth' (13.11). The nature of

Ksetrajna (the self) which is the object of knowledge has also been concisely taught by the text beginning with 'The beginningless brahman having Me for the Highest' (13.12) and ending with 'present in the heart of all' (13.17). My devotee, on knowing this, i.e., the truth about the Ksetra, the truth about the means for attaining the nature of the self as distinct from the Ksetra, and the truth about the Ksetrajna, becomes worthy to attain My state of being. What is called My state of being is My own nature (Svabhava), namely, the transcendence of transmigratory existence. The meaning is that he becomes worthy to attain the state of freedom for transmigratory existence. Next (1) the beginninglessness of the conjunction between the Prakrti and the self which are completely distinct, (2) the difference in the workings of these two when they are associated with each other, and (3) the cause of this conjunction --- these are treated:

13.20 Know this Prakrti and Purusa (self) are uncreated and are beginningless. Know that the modifications, desire, hatred etc., which cause bondage, and the qualities of modesty etc., which cause release, originate from Prakrti. The Prakrti, having no beginning, develops into the form of the body, and conjoint with the self, causes bondage through its own transformations such as desire and hatred. The same Prakrti, through its transformations like modesty etc., causes release. Such is the meaning. The difference in the functions of Prakrti and Purusa in combination is stated ---

13.21 The 'Karya' means the body, the 'Karanas' mean the instruments, i.e., the senses of perception and action plus the Manas. In their operations, the Prakrti, subservient to the self, is alone the causal factor. The sense is that their operations, which are the means of experience, have their foundation in the Prakrti, which has developed in the form of the body subservient to the self. In regard to this, the authority is the aphorism, 'The self is an agent, on account of the scriptures having the purpose' (B. S., 2.3.33) etc. The agency of the self means that the self is the cause of the will (effort) to support the body. The self (Purusa) associated with the body is the cause for experiencing pleasures and pains. The meaning is that It is the seat of those experiences. Thus, has been explained the difference in the operations of the Prakrti and of the self when they are mutually conjoined. He now proceeds to explain how, though the self, which in Its pristine nature experiences Itself by Itself as nothing but joy, becomes the cause of experiencing both pleasure and pain derived from sense objects when It is conjoined with a body. The term Guna figuratively represents effects. The self (in Its pristine nature) experiences Itself by Itself, as nothing but joy. But when dwelling in the body, i.e., when It is in conjunction with the Prakrti, It experiences the qualities born of Prakrti, namely, happiness, pain etc., which are the effects of Gunas like Sattva etc. He explains the cause of conjunction with the Prakrti:

13.22 The self, settled in a series of bodies of divinities, men etc., which are modifications of Prakrti, becomes attached to happiness, pain etc.,

resulting from the Sattva and other qualities associated with the respective wombs, and hence engages Itself in virtuous and sinful deeds, constituting the means for happiness, misery etc. In order to experience the fruits of those good and evil deeds, It is born again in good and evil wombs. Then It becomes active and consequently is born again as a result of Its activities. As long as It does not cultivate qualities like modesty etc., which are the means for realising the self, so long Its entanglement in Samsara continues like this. Thus, it has been declared here that attachment causes births in good and evil wombs.

13.23 The self existing in the body becomes the 'spectator and approver' of this body by means of the will in consonance with the functioning of the body. Likewise, It is the 'supporter' of the body, Similarly, It becomes 'experiencer' of the pleasure and pain resulting from the activities of the body. Thus, by virtue of ruling and supporting the body and by making the body completely subservient, It becomes 'the great lord' (Mahesvara) in relation to the body, the senses and the mind. Sri Krsna will further declare: 'When the lord acquires the body, and when he leaves it and goes on his way, he takes these as the wind carries scents from their places' (15.8). In the body, It is said to be the 'supreme self' in relation to the body, the senses and the mind. The word 'self' (Atman) is applied to the body and the mind subsequently. It is said afterwards: 'Some perceive the self by means of the self through meditation' (13.24). The particle 'also' (api) indicates that the self is the 'supreme lord'? in relation to the body just as It is the supreme self. The

supremacy of the self has been described in the text beginning with 'It is the beginningless brahman having Me for the Highest' (13.12). It is true that the self (in its emancipated state) has limitless power knowledge. But it becomes the great lord and the supreme self only in relation to the body. Such lordship and supremacy is the result of attachment to the Gunas arising from the beginningless conjunction with Prakrti.

13.24 He who 'understands', namely, knows truly with discrimination, the self to be thus, and also the Prakrti as having the aforesaid nature along with Sattva and other Gunas, whose nature will be later examined, is never born again, i.e., is never reborn conjointly with Prakrti again in 'whatever state he may be placed,' i.e., in whatever painful condition he may be placed in the bodies of divinities, men etc. The meaning is that at the time when the body ceases to exist, the self will attain the purified state characterised by boundless knowledge devoid of evil.

13.25 The different types of Yogis are described herein: (1) Some with perfect Yoga perceive the self (Atmanam) in the body with the mind (Atmana) by meditation. (2) Others with imperfect Yoga see the self, with mind rendered fit for Yoga, by Sankhya Yoga, namely, Jnana Yoga, (3) Still others, (a) unqualified to practise Jnana Yoga, and (b) qualified but preferring an easier method, and (c) also distinguished persons like Janaka --- all these perceive the self after being qualified for Yoga by Karma Yoga which contains within itself knowledge (Jnana).

13.26 But some, namely, those who are not qualified for Karma Yoga etc., for realising the self, listen to Jnanins who know the truth, and meditate on the self through Karma Yoga, etc. --- they too pass beyond death. It means that those who are devoted to what they hear only, even they, intent on hearing and devoid of evils, begin in due course, the practice of Karma Yoga etc., and pass beyond death. By the term 'too' (api), the difference in levels is made out. Now, in order to teach the contemplation on the distinctness of the self conjoined with the Prakrti, he says that all entities, movables and immovables, are the product of combination between the conscient and the non-conscient:

13.27 Whatever being is born, whether it be movable or stationary, it is born only from the mutual combination of the Ksetra and Ksetrajna. The sense is that it is born only from this combination, i.e., is born as a compound of the two and never in their separateness.

13.28 He who sees the Atman as It really is --- he is the one who sees the Atman as a distinct entity in all embodied beings that are composed of Prakrti and Purusa, even in bodies of diverse nature of gods, men etc. The true seer is one who sees the Atman as the supreme ruler in all these bodies as the imperishable self, though the bodies are subject to destruction. Conversely the purport is that he who sees the Atman, only as characterised by the unequal forms of the bodies as men, gods etc., and as possessed of birth, death etc. --- such a person is perpetually caught up in transmigratory existence.

13.29 'The ruler' (the self) abides in the bodies of divinities and the rest as their supporter, controller and as their Sesin (principal). He who sees the self free from dissimilar shapes of divinities etc., and as being of the same form of knowledge, he does not injure himself by 'himself', namely, by his mind. Therefore, as a result of seeing the sameness of the nature of the self in every place as a knower, he attains the 'highest goal.' What is to be reached is called 'goal'. He attains the supreme, namely, the self in its pure form. On the contrary, if he should view the self as dissimilar in every place, i.e., identifies It with the bodies, then he 'injure the self, namely, hurls It into the middle of the ocean of Samsara.

13.30 When he perceives that 'all acts are performed by the Prakrti' in the manner previously stated in, 'Prakrti is said to be the cause of agency to the body and sense-organs' (13.20), and perceive also that 'the self, being of the form of knowledge, is not the doer,' and that the self's conjunction with the Prakrti, Its direction of the body and Its experiences of happiness and misery are the result of ignorance of the nature of Karma --- then indeed he perceives the pure self.

13.31 When he perceives that the diversified 'modes of existence' of all beings as men, divinities etc., are founded on the two principles of Prakrti and Purusa; when he perceives that their existence as divine, human, short, tall etc., is rooted in 'one' common foundation, namely, in the Prakrti, and not in the self; when he sees that 'their expansion', i.e.,

the successive proliferation into sons, grandsons and such varieties of beings, is from Prakrti alone --- then he reaches the brahman. The meaning is that he attains the self devoid of limitations, in its pure form of knowledge.

13.32 This 'supreme self' (Atman) has been defined as having a nature different from that of the body. While existing in the body, It is 'immutable', i.e., It is not liable to decay as It is 'without a beginning,' i.e., never created at any point of time. Because It is 'free from Gunas,' being devoid of Sattva and other Gunas of Prakrti, It neither acts nor gets tainted; It is not tainted by the qualities of the body. Granted that the self being without Gunas, does not act; but how is it possible that the Atman is not tainted by its constant association with the qualities of the body? To this, Sri Krsna replies:

13.33 As the 'all-pervading ether,' though in contact with all substances, is 'not tainted' by the qualities of all these substances, as it is 'subtle' --- even so the self, though 'present in all the bodies,' everywhere, namely, in divinities, men etc., is not contaminated by these bodies by reason of its extreme subtleness.

13.34 As the 'one sun' illumines 'all this world' by his radiance, so the 'knower of the body' illumines the entire Ksetra, i.e., the body, by its own knowledge, within and without and from head to toe, by conceiving 'This my body is of this nature.' This self of the said nature is totally

different from the body, because It is the knower of the body. The body is the object of Its knowledge and is therefore different from It, even as the illuminating sun is totally different from the illumined world.

13.35 Those who 'discern thus' in the described manner the 'difference', namely, the difference between the body and the knower of the body with 'the eye of knowledge' or discrimination, and also the 'means of deliverance from manifested Prakrti' --- they attain the 'highest', namely, the self. They are completely delivered from bondage. Moksa is that by which deliverance is effected. The means of deliverance as already stated consists of qualities beginning with modesty (13.7). They, through the knowledge already imparted concerning the differences between the body and the self, know those differences existing between them. Then learning about modesty etc., which form the means of deliverance from Prakrti that has developed into material elements constituting the body, they have to practise these virtues, and they will thereby be absolutely delivered from bondage and will reach the self marked by infinite knowledge abiding in Its own form.