

॥ श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता ॥

BHAGAVAD GEETA – 7

The Yoga of Knowledge & Wisdom

“THE SANDEEPANY EXPERIENCE”

**TEXT
28.07**

Reflections by
SWAMI GURUBHAKTANANDA





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11	<i>Viveka Choodamani</i>	34	<i>Aitareya Upanishad</i>
12	<i>Jnana Sara</i>	35	<i>Narada Bhakti Sutras</i>
13	<i>Drig-Drishya Viveka</i>	36	<i>Taittiriya Upanishad</i>
14	<i>"Tat Twam Asi" – Chand Up 6</i>	37	<i>Jivan Sutrani (Tips for Happy Living)</i>
15	<i>Dhyana Swaroopam</i>	38	<i>Kena Upanishad</i>
16	<i>"Bhoomaiva Sukham" Chand Up 7</i>	39	<i>Aparoksha Anubhuti (Meditation)</i>
17	<i>Manah Shodhanam</i>	40	<i>108 Names of Pujya Gurudev</i>
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A NOTE ABOUT SANDEEPANY

Sandeepany Sadhanalaya is an institution run by the Chinmaya Mission in Powai, Mumbai, teaching a 2-year Vedanta Course. It has a very balanced daily programme of basic Samskrit, Vedic chanting, Vedanta study, Bhagavatam, Ramacharitmanas, Bhajans, meditation, sports and fitness exercises, team-building outings, games and drama, celebration of all Hindu festivals, weekly Gayatri Havan and Guru Paduka Pooja, and Karma Yoga activities.

This series is an effort to promote the learning of Vedanta; it does not replace the Course, but hopes to inspire young people to spend two years of their life for an experience that is sure to make a far-reaching spiritual impact on their personal lives. Sandeepany is an all-round spiritual course that gives proper direction to the youth and to those approaching retirement. Hinduism is in dire need of a band of systematically trained teachers or Acharyas who can serve this Eternal Religion.

– The Author, February 2019, Shivaratri Day

Om Namah Shivaaya!

Text
28.07



ज्ञानविज्ञानयोगः

THE BHAGAVAD GEETA – 7

“The Yoga of Knowledge & Wisdom”

Sri Veda Vyasaji

Reflections

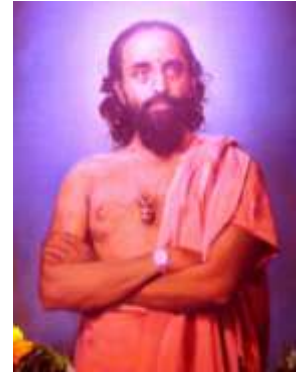
by Swami Gurubhaktananda

on the 10 Lectures delivered by **Swami Advayanandaji**

Acharyaji, 15th Batch Vedanta Course

at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Powai, Mumbai

4th May – 13th May, 2013



Adi Shankaracharya

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Author:

Swami Gurubhaktananda (ex Krishna Chaitanya, born Bipin R. Kapitan in Durban, South Africa)

Email: gurubhakta.dls@gmail.com

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About This Edition:

Web Edition:	21 st March, 2019, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Jayanti
Website:	Chinmaya International Foundation: www.chinfo.org
Series Title :	The Sandeepany Experience
Series Subject:	Vedanta & Supportive Subsidiary Texts

Declaration by the Author: *The material in this series is under inspiration of the Sandeepany Vedanta Course, but largely consists of the Author's reflections on the Course. He is deeply indebted to the Chinmaya Mission for its excellent presentation of the Course by their renowned and dedicated Acharyas.*

Personal Dedication

1. To my Parents, Smt Sharadaben & Sri Ratilalbhai Kapitan

who inspired me to study in life, to stick to the path of Dharma and pursue the highest ideals; and swamped me with their abundant Love;

2. To Pujya Sri Swami Vimalanandaji Maharaj

the President of the Divine Life Society of Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, India, who constantly encouraged and supported this effort;

3. To Pujya Sri Swami Tejomayanandaji (Guruji)

for his boundless vision and inspiration to create a vibrant organisation;

4. To Sri Swami Advayanandaji and Sri Swami Sharadanandaji

my Acharyaji and Upa-Acharyaji at Sandeepany, who imparted their bountiful knowledge and wisdom with rare selfless Divine Love, just as the Rishis of yore would wish to see them do.

BHAGAVAD GEETA – 7

“Yoga of Knowledge & Wisdom”

॥ श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता ॥

अथ सप्तमोऽध्यायः
ज्ञानविज्ञानयोगः

THE BHAGAVAD GEETA

Discourse – 7 (30 Verses)

“The Yoga of KNOWLEDGE & WISDOM”

INTRODUCTION

BEFORE BEGINNING WITH the verses, we first take an overview of the Geeta:

Chapters 1 to 6 complete the first Shatka called *Twam Pada*, on **Karma Yoga**. They deal with matters concerning the Jeeva or individual soul and his Sadhana or spiritual path.

Chapters 7 to 12 comprise the second Shatka, called *Tat Pada*, on **Bhakti Yoga**. They deal with matters concerning Ishwara, the all-pervading Lord of the World.

Chapters 13 to 18 form the third Shatka called *Asi Pada*, on **Jnana Yoga**. They deal with the identity between Twam and Tat, between Jeeva and Ishwara.

From the seed planted in the last verse of the 6th Chapter, three issues arise, which are taken up in Chapters 7 to 12 in greater detail:

- i) What is My (the Lord's) real Nature? (**Maam, Me**)
- ii) What is the worship of the Lord's Nature? (**Bhajanaam**)
- iii) How do we 'fix our mind' upon Him? (**Madgate**)

When Sri Krishna uses the word Me, we should understand this to mean the Universal Being, also known as the Pure Brahman, unassociated with Maya or His creative power. The Lord begins the Chapter with a discussion on 'Himself', as the Creator (Ishwara) of the world around us. We make a start moving out of our individuality and attaching ourselves to His Infinite Being. That is the journey ahead upto Chapter 12.



BHAGAVAD GEETA – 7
“The Yoga of Knowledge & Wisdom”

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7.1 PREPARING THE STUDENT

(Verses 1-3, 3 No.)

AS EXPECTED, LORD KRISHNA takes up the Chapter in a vein that bears close resemblance to the end of the last Chapter. It is *unprompted* by any question, which tells us:

- (i) that the Lord is pleased with Arjuna's growth;
- (ii) that Arjuna has grasped all that has been taught to him so far;
- (iii) that the foundation of his discipleship is firm;
- (iv) and that Arjuna is now ready to know the full Truth about the Lord.

The student has shown his interest in the spiritual venture; it is now for the Teacher to take him forward by supplying whatever equipment is necessary for his trip.

Verse 1: “Listen, Arjuna, About Me”

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

मय्यासक्तमनाः पार्थ योगं युञ्जन्मदाश्रयः ।

असंशयं समग्रं मां यथा ज्ञास्यसि तच्छृणु

॥ ७-१॥

śrībhagavānuvāca |

mayyāsaktamanāḥ pārtha yōgaṁ yuñjanmadāśrayaḥ |

asamśayaṁ samagraṁ māṁ yathā jñāsyasi tacchṛṇu || 7-1||

	<i>Shree Bhagavaan Uvaacha:</i>	<i>The Blessed Lord Said:</i>
1	<i>Mayi aasaktamanaah, paartha,</i>	<i>With the <u>mind</u> intent on Me, O Partha,</i>
2	<i>yogam yunjan madaashrayah;</i>	<i>practising <u>Yoga</u> and taking <u>refuge</u> in Me,</i>
3	<i>asamshayam samagram maam,</i>	<i>without doubt, comprehensively about Me,</i>
4	<i>yathaa jnaasyasi tat shrinu.</i>	<i>how you shall <u>know</u> – that do thou <u>hear</u>.</i>

1-2 The objectives of the Lord's teaching are stated at the very outset:

i) **Mayi Aasaktamanaa:** Arjuna, by knowing My true Nature, I am sure your mind will become more “*intently focused on Me*”. You will surrender your head to Me, Arjuna.

ii) **Yogam Yunjan:** This focus will enable you to meditate more profoundly on My real Nature. You will surrender your heart to Me, Arjuna.

iii) **Madaashrayah:** And you will find through this knowledge that I am your only support and refuge in life, there is no other. You will be Mine, completely. You will surrender your hands to Me, Arjuna.

Thus the vital teaching is about to begin; by it the Teacher, with love alone as His motive, wins the head, heart and hands of the student.

The Confidence of Sri Krishna

3-4 There is another important purpose served in this verse. The Lord is confident about the value of what He is about to say. He wants Arjuna's full attention. These words tell us about how He succeeds in having it:

iv) **Asamshayam**: Arjuna, your mind will become clear, "without any doubt".

v) **Samagram**: You will understand everything about Me. I am not going to hold back any secrets. Your knowledge will be comprehensive.

vi) **Jnaasyasi**: You will know what is most essential for you to know. After knowing this, you will not need to know anything further (see next verse). This will be the end of all knowing.

Tat Shrinu: Oozing with such confidence, the Teacher passes the same contagion to his eager, keen student. Arjuna will be all eyes and ears to listen attentively. He will hang onto every word from his beloved Teacher's lips. The setting is just perfect for the flowering of the Guru-disciple relationship.

Tat: It is significant that the word "Tat" is being used here. This is a huge Tat – it stands for the subject matter of the entire second Part of the Geeta, from Chapter 7 to 12, as mentioned in the above Introduction. Tat stands for "That", which is the entire universe. The first six Chapters dealt with **Etat**, "This", which stands for the individual, the seeker. Now the Lord moves on to the wider subject of the vast Universe to which the "I" relates.

Verse 2: **The Subject: Jnaana & Vijnaana**

ज्ञानं तेऽहं सविज्ञानमिदं वक्ष्याम्यशेषतः ।

यज्ज्ञात्वा नेह भूयोऽन्यज्ज्ञातव्यमवशिष्यते

॥ ७-२॥

jñānam tē:'ham saviññānamidaṁ vakṣyāmyaśēṣataḥ |

yajñātvā nēha bhūyō:'nyajñātavyamavaśiṣyate

|| 7-2||

1	<i>Jnaanam te aham sa-vijnaanam,</i>	<i>To you, scriptural knowledge together with realisation (arising from it) –</i>
2	<i>idam vakshyaami asheshatah;</i>	<i>this I shall <u>declare</u> in full;</i>
3	<i>yat jnaatvaa na iha bhooyah anyat,</i>	<i>knowing which nothing more here</i>
4	<i>jnaatavyam avashishyate.</i>	<i>remains to be <u>known</u>.</i>

The Subject Outlined

1-2 This Chapter is named **Jnana-Vijnana Yoga**; these terms are now introduced.

i) **Jnaanam**: This word means "knowledge" in its most general sense. However, when we see it in the light of Padas **3-4**, it becomes very clear that in this context it refers to knowledge of the Self or the "Higher knowledge" as given in the Shastras or scriptures, even if it is only indirect or intellectual knowledge.

We are noting this point now, because later in this Chapter, we shall be discussing the "Lower knowledge", which refers to all other knowledge except that connecting the Jeeva to Ishwara. As far as the Lord is concerned, the Higher knowledge is about **Me** (the

Supreme Lord), i.e. that which relates to *Moksha*; and the Lower knowledge is about the Deities and the lower goals such as heavenly worlds, attainment of desires, etc, i.e. the *Kama* attainable through *Dharma* and *Artha*. This will be explained in detail later.

ii) **Vijnaanam**: The fruit of the practice of Jnaana is Vijnana, i.e. wisdom that is founded on knowledge. This wisdom is said to arise from the successful practice of the knowledge of the Self, and is thought to be the result of one's direct realization of the Self (however, see block below defining Vijnana). It is evident that Vijnana is possible only through the Higher knowledge, which has Liberation as its Goal.

DEFINITIONS OF JNANA & VIJNANA

The relationship of Jnana to Vijnana may be written as the following statement:

JNANA (Knowlg.) ⇒ SADHANA (Practice) ⇒ REALISATION ⇒ VIJNANA (Wisdom)

A Technicality in Defining "Vijnana"

In the above statement, theoretical intellectual knowledge is **Jnaana**.

However, the definition of **Vijnana** is a bit more subtle. Most philosophers are happy to consider Vijnana to be wisdom produced by Self-realisation, as shown in the above statement. But Sri Shankaracharya differs with this. Sri Shankaracharya considers Self-realisation itself to be Vijnana. His statement would be written as:

JNANA (Knowledge) ⇒ SADHANA (Practice) ⇒ VIJNANA (Realisation)

An example will help understand the subtle difference.

Consider a light that is produced by striking a match. In the above debate, what the philosophers are saying is that Vijnana is the light. But what Shankaracharya is saying is that Vijnana is not the light, but the striking of the match that produced the light. He is technically correct. As far as logic goes, one cannot fault Sri Shankaracharya's view.

What does this imply? It means that in Sri Shankaracharya's view, God-realisation is the end of the road, there is nothing that needs to follow it. This is in keeping with the principle of Non-duality. Non-duality means there can be nothing else after attaining it. God-realisation does not *produce* anything – it is the 'end product' itself!

This may appear as 'splitting hairs', but it significantly affects the interpretation of a large portion of this Chapter. Sri Shankaracharya's interpretation reduces the statement to simply this: **Theory + Practice = Realisation**. That is the crux of the Chapter.

The pains we have taken to show the correctness of Shankaracharya's view will pay rich dividends as we continue with the Chapter.

3-4 It is true that mere Jnaanam is of no use unless it is brought into practice in our lives. However, that does not mean that it must not be acquired. For, only when Jnaanam is acquired can one begin to practise it.

Jnana covers the theoretical scriptural teaching, Sadhana covers the practice of the knowledge, and Vijnana covers the fruit of the two together. This is the full process of knowledge, i.e. the theory and practice. This is the implication of "Jnana-Vijnana Yoga", the subject of this Chapter.

Verse 3: *The Rarity of this Knowledge*

मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु कश्चिद्यतति सिद्धये ।
यततामपि सिद्धानां कश्चिन्मां वेत्ति तत्त्वतः

॥ ७-३॥

manuṣyāṇāṃ sahasrēṣu kaścidyatati siddhayē |
yatatāmapī siddhānāṃ kaścīnmāṃ vētti tattvataḥ

॥ 7-3॥

1	<i>Manushyaanaam sahasreshu,</i>	<i>Among <u>thousands</u> of men</i>
2	<i>kashchit yatati siddhaye;</i>	<i>one perchance strives for perfection;</i>
3	<i>yataataam api siddhaanaam,</i>	<i>even among those successful <u>strivers</u></i>
4	<i>kashchit maam veti tattvatah.</i>	<i>only one perchance knows Me in essence.</i>

The attainment of Vijnana or realisation as defined above is, indeed, extremely rare. The statistics of success on this path may sound forbidding to an ordinary person. But to Arjuna, whose sincerity Sri Krishna has been well satisfied with, these statistics will be an added incentive for him to pursue the path. Knowing that the success rate is low will give Arjuna greater motivation to give it “his best shot” and be more conscientious.

1 Rarity of the Human Birth: Although this is not mentioned, it is something that precedes the verse. The missing line could read, “Among thousands of living beings, one perchance is born as a human being.” The human birth itself is rare and special because in it alone does the soul have freedom to choose the path it wants to follow. In all other births, freedom is not there; other creatures are driven by instinct.

Acharyaji spent some time explaining why the human birth is so rare, and what is so special about the human birth. It is rare because only in a human birth:

- i) can one think of higher things;
- ii) is Karma and Jnana possible;
- iii) can one act to earn merit or demerit;
- iv) can one know Apra and Para Vidya (the lower and higher knowledges);
- v) can one free oneself from Vasanas and become liberated;
- vi) can one objectively look at himself, introspect and find the purpose of life;
- vii) can one visualize the possibility of evolution, and envision a greater goal in life.
- viii) can one attain worldly objectives or spiritual goals;

For these reasons, to get a human birth is very rare and precious, indeed. That being so, we can now understand how much rarer are the other two items listed in the verse.

2 Striving for perfection: This is the next rarity, granting that one has a human birth.

Out of millions of people, a handful may be interested in striving to perfect themselves. Only a few wish to “swim upstream”, against the current of the mind; the majority are quite happy to float “downstream” going wherever their mind whimsically takes them. Those few of disciplined intellect, take some trouble to study the scriptures and gather to themselves the information as well as the inspiration to lead the higher life.

3-4 Attaining Perfection: Among these strivers, the third level of rarity is to actually succeed in attaining perfection.

Although the knowledge of the path is there, life throws many obstacles and temptations along the pathway. The higher one aims in life, the greater are these obstacles. These test one's longing for God above worldly desires to the limit. Even while on the spiritual path, old selfish patterns of thought have their sway. The seeker gets hi-jacked by these and, in the guise of spirituality, he gets placed on the path of materialism once again! It is a strange world. At every turn, the forces of Maya are waiting to derail us from the correct path. Thus it happens that only a few finally reach the goal although many may try.



7.2 THE LOWER AND HIGHER PRAKRITIS

(Verses 4-7, 4 No.)

The Geeta's 8-Component Model of Nature

THERE ARE MANY MODELS in Indian spiritual literature which give a breakdown of the categories of material nature. Among the more authoritative of these is the 24-component model given in the *Saankhya* ("related to numbers") system of Sage Kapila. The *Srimad Bhagavat Purana* also has 24 components, differing slightly from the *Saankhya*. *Vedanta* has a 22-component model. The *Geeta* has a condensed equivalent of the above.

SOURCE OF INFO	GROSS BODY	SUBTLE BODY	TOTAL
Saankhya	5 gross elements	19 components	24
Srimad Bhagavatam	5 gross elements	19 components	24
Vedanta	5 gross elements	17 components	22
Bhagavad Geeta	5 gross elements	3 components	8

Verse 4: *Apara Prakriti – My Lower Nature*

भूमिरापोऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च ।

अहङ्कार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा

॥ ७-४॥

bhūmirāpō:'nalō vāyuh khaṁ manō buddhirēva ca |

ahaṅkāra itīyaṁ mē bhinnā prakṛtiraṣṭadhā

|| 7-4||

1	<i>Bhoomih, aapah, analah, vaayuh,</i>	<i>Earth, water, fire, air,</i>
2	<i>kham, manah, buddhih, eva cha;</i>	<i>ether, mind, intellect and also</i>
3	<i>ahamkaarah, iti; iyam me,</i>	<i>egoism – thus is My</i>
4	<i>bhinnaa prakritih ashtadhaa.</i>	<i>nature divided eightfold.</i>

1-4 Incidentally, Acharyaji casually mentioned that it is quite possible that Lord Krishna's "8 wives" are these 8 components of His Lower Nature. Symbolism of this kind is not unusual in Indian mythological texts such as the Puranas.

Pujya Gurudev gives a good analogy of the inter-relationship between the gross and the subtle bodies. The analogy is a *Steam Engine*. The steel components of the engine are the gross body, inert in themselves. The steam, which powers the engine into locomotion, is compared to the subtle body, which drives the gross body.

It is important for us to note that the subtle body is very different from the "Spirit" or soul which is the spiritual factor in creation. [The latter is dealt with in the next verse.]

The subtle body, being made up of the five subtle elements (the Tanmatras), is also a manifestation of matter, except that it is invisible to the senses.

Verse 5: Para Prakriti – My Higher Nature

अपरेयमितस्त्वन्यां प्रकृतिं विद्धि मे पराम् ।
जीवभूतां महाबाहो ययेदं धार्यते जगत्

॥ ७-५॥

aparēyamitastvanyāṁ prakṛtiṁ viddhi mē parām |
jīvabhūtāṁ mahābāhō yayēdaṁ dhāryatē jagat

|| 7-5||

5	Aparaa <i>iyam itah tu anyaam,</i>	<i>This is the inferior nature, but different</i>
6	<i>prakritim viddhi me</i> paraam;	<i>from it do thou know My Higher Nature,</i>
7	<i>jeevabhootaam mahaabaaho,</i>	<i>the principle of Life in beings, O mighty-armed,</i>
8	<i>yayaa idam dhaaryate jagat.</i>	<i>and by which this world is <u>upheld</u>.</i>

5 Before proceeding further, this Pada sums up the previous verse, the **Apara Prakriti** or Lower Nature. It is collectively known as Maya in Vedanta. Acharyaji gave us the four main properties of the Lower Nature of the Lord:

- i) Jada: it is inert, both subtle and gross bodies;
- ii) Malini: it is “stained” or dirty; there is an element of Ignorance as its cause;
- iii) Bandha Roopa: it has the property of binding the soul to Ignorance;
- iv) Paraartha: it is part of the “Not-Self”; it is Unreality or Mithya.

6 The **Para Prakriti** or Higher Nature is now being described. As opposed to the Lower Nature, the Higher is far different (**Anyaaam**). It is essentially Myself, that is, the Lord Supreme, also known in Vedanta as the Supreme Brahman. It is the Substratum for the Lower Nature. Another common term for Brahman is the *Purusha*. In Chapter 15 this is known as *Purushottama*, as Purusha is taken for all that is not manifest.

7 The Higher Nature of the Lord is characterized by **Jeeva-Bhootaam**, the very principle that imparts Life to living beings (Jeevas). The Higher Nature is usually described as having the following four properties (opposite to the above four of the Lower Nature):

- i) **Chetana**: it is entirely sentient; it is Pure Consciousness.
 - ii) **Shuddha**: it is Purity itself; nothing that is “not-Self” contaminates it.
 - iii) **Moksha Roopa**: it frees the individual soul; liberates it from bondage to world.
 - iv) **Nishkriya**: it is nothing but the Self, Pure Existence; “*beyond all manifestation*”.
- Jada-Chetana is the primary difference between the Lower and the Higher.

8 “Upheld” means that the Higher Nature is the Substratum of the Lower Nature. It supports the lower. Their inter-relationship is described in the following verse.

Verse 6: Inter-Relationship Between the Higher & Lower

एतद्योनीनि भूतानि सर्वाणीत्युपधारय ।

अहं कृत्स्नस्य जगतः प्रभवः प्रलयस्तथा

॥ ७-६॥

ētadyōnīni bhūtāni sarvāṇītyupadhāraya |

aham kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayastathā

|| 7-6||

1	<i>Etad yoneeni bhootaani,</i>	<i>These (two Natures) are the womb</i>
2	<i>sarvaani iti upadhaaraya;</i>	<i>of all beings. Know thou that</i>
3	<i>aham kritsnasya jagatah,</i>	<i>for this whole universe, I am</i>
4	<i>prabhavah pralayah tathaa.</i>	<i>the <u>source</u> and also the <u>dissolution</u>.</i>

The most important point to bear in mind is that these two Natures are not to be thought of as opposing each other. In fact, they are a “happily married couple”, pairing up together, working together, not against each other, with the Lower working entirely at the mercy of the Higher. That is the ideal. Only when the Ego enters the scene, this does not work out as planned; this is dealt with separately in the *Geeta*.

The Geeta's Theory of Creation

1-2 Almost every Upanishad presents its own theory of Creation. For a world that is considered to be “unreal”, there can be no true theory. Indian tradition accepts creation theories in the spirit of ‘the more the merrier’; some truth is conveyed through each one.

In the *Geeta*, creation is seen as a product of the union between Purusha and Prakriti. The simile of the ‘womb’ draws a parallel with the male-female principle that applies to the propagation of man. Purusha and Prakriti are always together in all objects and beings in creation.

Lower Prakriti or just Prakriti is the aspect which changes all the time, it appears and disappears. Higher Prakriti or Purusha is the changeless substratum for the Lower Prakriti. It is constant and indestructible.

3 Aham or ‘I’ refers to the Higher Prakriti, the changeless aspect of creation. It is there when the universe is created, and also when the universe finally dissolves. It remains as Existence forever. More will be explained about Its nature later.

The Lord is actually saying, “I am this whole universe. The Lower Prakriti is simply superimposed upon Me. It is not Real.” In this way the Advaitic Darshan, the Vedantic viewpoint, is shown in this verse. The *Geeta* is a Vedantic text, showing the unreality of the world, the Lower Prakriti.

4 Prabhava and **Pralaya** are the creation and dissolution of the universe. Implied by these two states is the third state of *Stithi* or sustenance.

Relationship Between Purusha & Prakriti

The creation theory presented is: “The Higher Prakriti alone is Real; the Lower Prakriti of names and forms is unreal. The former is the Substratum; the latter is the superimposition upon It.”

“Other than Me, nothing else exists.” Pots are all clay only; other than clay nothing else exists. The pots have a name and a form.

From this arises the well-known sentence **Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma** – “All this is Brahman alone.” Having this knowledge, one can meditate on creation and see the underlying Reality of everything as the Lord Himself.

The next verse gives a beautiful simile that illustrates the harmonious inter-relationship between the Higher and Lower Prakriti. The entire Lower works for the Higher – that is the ideal situation.

Verse 7: “Clusters of Gems on a String”

मत्तः परतरं नान्यत्किञ्चिदस्ति धनञ्जय ।

मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव

॥ ७-७॥

mattah parataram nānyatkiñcidasti dhanañjaya |

mayi sarvamideṁ prōtaṁ sūtrē maṇigaṇā iva

॥ 7-7॥

1	<i>Mattah parataram naanyat,</i>	<i>Higher than Me, no other</i>
2	<i>kinchit asti, dhananjaya;</i>	<i>whatsoever is there, O Dhananjaya.</i>
3	<i>mayi sarvam idam protam,</i>	<i>All this is strung on Me</i>
4	<i>sootre maniganaah iva.</i>	<i>as clusters of gems on a string.</i>

1-2 In the hierarchy of existence, the Supreme Lord represents the highest point of the pyramid. Everything below Him has some degree of “Maya” associated with it. At the second level just below Brahman is Ishwara, the Head of the causal creation. Then comes Hiranyagarbha, the Head of the subtle creation. Below that comes Virat, the Head of the gross creation. Under Virat comes the whole multitude of gross objects of the universe.

3-4 In this superb simile, we get the full relationship between the Higher and Lower Natures in pictorial form. The objects of the world are clusters of gems; the Supreme Lord is the common thread that strings them all together. It is hard to get a simile more appropriate than this.

The Appropriateness of the Simile

Some commentators may object to using “gems” for the objects, as it suggests a different material from the thread. For this reason, they replace “gems” with knots, which are made from the same material as the thread! Whilst this change may correct the simile in one respect, it takes away something else in another respect.

The word “gems” represents a quality of the world which “knots” does not. The objects of the world are like gems – they are more attractive than the string. They grab all the attention. The thread is dull, not even noticeable, and therefore no one pays any attention to it. The thread is what represents the Reality. It is the thread that gives the stability to the gems. The gems may break, but the thread remains. The same is the case with the thread of Brahman when compared with the gems of worldly objects. The objects of the world keep us in bondage due to their attractiveness; they hold our attention and prevent it from shifting to the Lord, the unattractive string – lending the support but staying out of the picture, as it were!

This is a good example of how similes can have some defects and some strengths. No simile can be fully representative in every respect. Here are two more similes:

“Snake and the Rope”: This is another very common simile found in Vedanta that illustrates the same relationship. The snake cannot be shown separately from the rope, (nor the pot from the clay). There is no snake apart from the rope. The rope is the only thing that really exists; there is no snake in reality.

A Funny Modern Simile: Acharyaji gave another humorous example: A lady in a train was sitting in the lower berth, knitting a jersey. Another lady was sleeping on the upper berth with her jersey placed over her. When the first lady finished her knitting, the lady on the upper berth had no jersey! Her jersey was stitched into the new jersey in the lower berth – it had taken a lower *birth*, as it were, having the same thread but a new form!

This is how creation and dissolution go on happening *ad infinitum*. When one object is destroyed, another is created. Existence remains constant; only its forms vary.



7.3 MY SPECIAL MANIFESTATIONS

(Verses 8-12, 5 No.)

IN THE FOLLOWING five verses, Lord Krishna takes Arjuna step by step, explaining through 14 various day-to-day examples, what He means by “*I am present in all creation*”. In a manner that even a child will understand, the Lord teaches the most difficult concept of Vedanta – His all-pervading subtle nature.

The 14 examples are taken from commonplace objects. We are in the jewellery shop of the Lord, and He proudly displays some of His “clusters of gems” in the necklace described in the last verse. The Lord teaches Arjuna how to spot Him in various objects. He is the subtle essence in them, that quality by which a thing is identifiable, the essential thing in every object, and without which it will not be that object.

Verse 8: Manifestations – 1-5

रसोऽहमप्सु कौन्तेय प्रभास्मि शशिसूर्ययोः ।
प्रणवः सर्ववेदेषु शब्दः खे पौरुषं नृषु

॥ ७-८ ॥

rasō:'hamapsu kauntēya prabhāsmi śaśisūryayōḥ |
praṇavaḥ sarvavēdēṣu śabdaḥ khē pauruṣaṁ nṛṣu

॥ 7-8 ॥

1	<i>Rasah aham apsu, kaunteya,</i>	i) I am ¹ sapidity in water, O Kaunteya;
2	<i>prabhaa asmi shashi-sooryayoh;</i>	ii) I am the ² light in the moon and the sun;
3	<i>pranavaḥ sarvavedeshu,</i>	iii) I am the syllable ³ OM in all the Vedas;
4	<i>shabdah khe paurusham nrishu.</i>	iv) ⁴ sound in ether; and v) ⁵ virility in men;

Verse 9: Manifestations – 6-9

पुण्यो गन्धः पृथिव्यां च तेजश्चास्मि विभावसौ ।
जीवनं सर्वभूतेषु तपश्चास्मि तपस्विषु

॥ ७-९ ॥

puṇyō gandhaḥ pṛthivyāṁ ca tējaścāsmi vibhāvasau |
jīvanaṁ sarvabhūteṣu tapaścāsmi tapasviṣu

॥ 7-9 ॥

5	<i>Punyah gandhah prithivyaam cha,</i>	vi) I am the sweet ⁶ fragrance in earth;
6	<i>tejah cha asmi vibhaavasau;</i>	vii) and ⁷ brilliance in the fire;
7	<i>jeevanam sarva-bhooteshu,</i>	viii) the ⁸ Life in all beings;
8	<i>tapah cha asmi tapasvishu.</i>	ix) and ⁹ austerity in the austere;

Verse 10: Manifestations – 10-12

बीजं मां सर्वभूतानां विद्धि पार्थ सनातनम् ।
बुद्धिर्बुद्धिमतामस्मि तेजस्तेजस्विनामहम्

॥ ७-१०॥

bījam māṁ sarvabhūtānāṁ viddhi pārtha sanātanam |
buddhirbuddhimatāmasmi tējastējasvināmaham

॥ 7-10॥

9	<i>Beejam maam sarva-bhootaanaam,</i>	x) As the ¹⁰ seed in all beings,
10	<i>viddhi paartha sanaatanam;</i>	know Me as being eternal, O Partha;
11	<i>Buddhih buddhimataam asmi,</i>	xi) I am the ¹¹ intelligence of the intelligent;
12	<i>tejah tejasvinaam aham.</i>	xii) the ¹² splendour of the splendid am I;

Verse 11: Manifestations – 13-14

बलं बलवतां चाहं कामरागविवर्जितम् ।
धर्माविरुद्धो भूतेषु कामोऽस्मि भरतर्षभ

॥ ७-११॥

balam balavatām cāham kāmarāgavivarjitam |
dharmāviruddhō bhūteṣu kāmō'smi bharatarṣabha

॥ 7-11॥

13	<i>Balambalavataam asmi,</i>	xiii) Of the strong I am the ¹³ strength
14	<i>kaama-raaga-vivarjitam;</i>	devoid of desire and attachment;
15	<i>dharma aviruddha bhooteshu,</i>	xiv) Unopposed to their nature, In beings
16	<i>kaamah asmi bharatarshabha.</i>	I am the ¹⁴ desire , O Lord of the Bharatas.

Verse 12: “I Am Not in Them; They Are in Me”

ये चैव सात्त्विका भावा राजसास्तामसाश्च ये ।
मत्त एवेति तान्विद्धि न त्वहं तेषु ते मयि

॥ ७-१२॥

yē caiva sāttvikā bhāvā rājasāstāmasāśca yē |
matta ēvēti tānviddhi na tvaham tēṣu tē mayi

॥ 7-12॥

17	<i>Ye cha eva saattwikaa bhaavaa,</i>	Whatever natures there be – <u>pure</u> ,
18	<i>raajasaah taamasaah cha ye;</i>	<u>active</u> and <u>inert</u> – or a mixture of these,
19	<i>mattah eva iti taan viddhi,</i>	know them all to proceed from Me .
20	<i>na tu aham teshu te mayi.</i>	<u>I am not in them</u> , but they are in Me.

Some Selected Examples Explained (Obtained from Shankara Bhashya)

i) **Rasah Apsu: 1** The Lord is the taste-giving sapidity of water. Water itself has no taste, yet all tastes are made possible only in the presence of water. This is the special quality of water. Without saliva (water), one cannot experience taste.

All the examples are to be understood in this way – the Lord is their very essence.

vi) **Punyah Gandhah Prithivyaam: 5** “the sweet smell of pure, natural earth”; this has to be taken to include the sweetness of all the other elements when pure. Earth, water and air have a sweetness about them when uncontaminated or unpolluted by any foreign materials. Pollution renders them foul-smelling. Fire is different; it is always pure and purifies everything that it burns. Unholiness resulting from the presence of worldliness in our mind is also to be thought of as a mental pollutant, and carefully avoided.

xi) **Buddhih Buddhimataam: 11** Here the special quality that renders an intellect superior and worthy of being called close to God is the power of discrimination, the ability to discern the good from the bad, real from the unreal, beneficial from the harmful, etc.

xiii) **Balam Balavataam: 13** The strength spoken of here is that by which the body and mind are maintained in a healthy, virile condition, full of natural power and prowess. It is not the strength by which one begins to dominate over others, or manifest greed for material objects, or acquire things out of mere passion and attachment.

xiv) **Kaamah Dharma-Aviruddhah: 15-16** The Lord specifies here that He is the sexual urge in householders which is not contrary to Dharma. This means the urge to procreate, when it is within the bounds of righteousness and within limits so as not to dissipate one’s energy, is to be considered as one of God’s special manifestations.

In this manner, the Lord teaches Arjuna how to behold Him in all His purity, greatness, radiance, fragrance, might, power, virility and strength in all manifestations in this world. Life is to be looked at with an eye for such qualities. Qualities opposite to these are to be shunned. They, too, exist in God, but they reflect contamination and grossness, not purity, subtleness or refinement.

17-18 The last verse of the section introduces the idea of the three Gunas – **Sattwa**, **Rajas** and **Tamas** – the three strands which comprise Maya, and which She uses to “weave” every object in creation. Everything is made up of varying proportions of these three Gunas.

20 This Pada heralds in the next section, and is further explained there.



7.4 MAYA – MY POWER OF DELUSION

(Verses 13-14, 2 No.)

Verse 13: *The Gunas – Building Blocks of Maya*

त्रिभिर्गुणमयैर्भावैरेभिः सर्वमिदं जगत् ।

मोहितं नाभिजानाति मामेभ्यः परमव्ययम्

॥ ७-१३॥

tribhiraṅṇamayairbhāvairēbhiḥ sarvamiḁaṁ jagat |

mōhitaṁ nābhijānāti māmēbhyah paramavyayam

|| 7-13||

1	<i>Tribhiraṅṇamayair bhaavair,</i>	<i>Composed of the threefold Gunas,</i>
2	<i>ebhiḥ sarvam idam jagat;</i>	<i>by these is this whole world</i>
3	<i>mohitam na abhijaanaati,</i>	<i>deluded; the world knows not</i>
4	<i>maam ebhyah param avyayam.</i>	<i>Me as <u>distinct</u> from them and Immutable.</i>

1-2 In nature the basic building blocks to produce any object are three in number. They are the three Gunas or qualities – Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas. Varying proportions of these three strands make up any object under the sun.

The Example of Light: There is a good example from science which illustrates the three Gunas. Pure light is white in colour. When it passes through a prism we find that it splits into the full spectrum of colours. When even these colours are analysed further, it is found that every imaginable colour is made up of three basic colours, namely, red, green and blue (RGB). Different combinations of these three produce any other desired colour.

3-4 However, the main point the Geeta is interested to teach us is not so much about the objects of the world as about the Lord who is distinct from them. The objects are actually like a glittery screen which hide the identity of the Lord who is behind them.

Param, means “distinct from” or “above” these three Gunas. The Lord is the unchanging Substratum upon which these Gunas in various ever-changing names and forms are superimposed. The Substratum is **Avyayam**, immutable. Forgetting this fact, we get carried away by appearances of the world of objects, and ignore Him who is their very basis.

Do we sense a tone of sadness in the Lord’s remark here? Is He not sad that no one notices Him in this world? It is something for us to ponder over. Acharyaji spent quite a bit of time on this theme, showing how “stuck” we are in the Gunas so as not to see God in His pristine purity behind the curtain of Maya.

“I Am Not in Them; They Are in Me”:

We go back to line **20** of the previous section, which needed this verse to explain it. In the light of what we have just learnt, we can understand not only what this statement means, but what emotion it carries with it.

“I am in them”: The focus here is on the objects. If anyone says “I am in them”, the message that gets across is that *I* is not as important as the *them* among which it is placed.

- i) **Daivee – Ishwara:** This is Maya having its support or Ashreya in Brahman.
- ii) **Daivee – Brahman:** Maya veils Brahman.
- iii) **Hi Eshaa:** What is the proof or *Pramaana* of Maya? Our own non-experience of God is proof of Maya's existence!
- iv) **Gunamayee:** The three Gunas – Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas – are its form.
- v) **Mama:** Maya is under the control of the Supreme Lord, Me.

How to Cross Maya? Surrender

Those who surrender to Me (the Supreme Being) will certainly cross Maya. The Lord takes the responsibility for one who surrenders to Him. He will also teach his student how to recognize some of Maya's tricks, so that he will never get deluded again.

Usually people are very hesitant to surrender anything to anyone! However, the decision to surrender is not enforced; it is a choice to be made voluntarily. One actually surrenders one's ego-consciousness; he trades it for something far greater.

The deeper meaning of surrender is that it is a surrender to Truth, to knowledge of the Truth, to one's own true Self. So it is not something to be suspicious about. The root of **Prapadyante** is *Pad*, "to attain". It means attaining something higher or greater.

The meaning of "*crossing Maya*" is overcoming all influence of Maya over oneself. It means lifting the veil of Maya that is placed over our intellect. By fixing our intellect on the Lord, Maya has no way of influencing us. Its power of veiling cannot work in the Presence of the Lord, just as darkness cannot exist in the presence of light. Therefore, surrender to the Lord enables one to cross over Maya.

In order to surrender we have to know more about the Lord to whom we are to surrender. This is the purpose of the "Tat Pada" wherein we are given more knowledge about That, the Supreme Lord.



7.5 FOUR TYPES OF DEVOTEES

(Verses 15-19, 5 No.)

THE LORD, IN ACCORDANCE with His usual style of teaching, begins this section with those who are not His devotees, the very opposite of what He wants to describe. By such contrast, the point is driven home as to who the true devotees are.

Verse 15: *Four Types of Evil-doers*

न मां दुष्कृतिनो मूढाः प्रपद्यन्ते नराधमाः ।

माययापहतज्ञाना आसुरं भावमाश्रिताः

॥ ७-१५॥

na mām duṣkṛtinō mūḍhāḥ prapadyantē narādhamāḥ |

māyayāpahṛtajñānā āsuram bhāvamāśritāḥ

|| 7-15||

1	<i>Na maam dushkritinaah moodhaah,</i>	<i>The <u>evil-doers</u>, the <u>deluded</u>, and the <u>lowest</u> of men do not seek Me.</i>
2	<i>prapadyante naraadhamaah;</i>	
3	<i>maayayaa apahrita-jnaanaah,</i>	<i>Also, those who, by their own delusions, are <u>deprived of knowledge</u>,</i>
4	<i>aasuram bhaavam aashritaah.</i>	<i>take to the ways belonging to demons.</i>

Here, four types of ‘non-devotees’ or evil-doers are described. They are:

- Dushkritinaah: 1a** “sinners, evil-doers”. These are the ones who do evil deeds.
- Moodhaah: 1b** “deluded persons”. They commit sins due to deluded intellects.
- Naraadhamaah: 2** Habituated to sin, these men sink to the lowest levels, with no worthy values or ideals to live up to. They are animalistic in their behaviour.
- Apahrita-Jnaanaah: 3** The net result is that they shut the doors of knowledge upon themselves. A thick cloud of ignorance permanently veils their intellect.

The Misfortune of Evil-Doers

4 All the above four types of people do not have a choice to choose God because they do not even know of His existence. They have also discarded all chances of obtaining knowledge of God. They are left stranded – “choiceless” and “chanceless”.

Aasuram Bhaavam: These are all demoniacal humans who abuse or harm others by domination and coercion. They are stone-hearted, given to anger, lust, pride and greed.

An Example:

As an example of such people, Acharyaji quoted this true incident. A man used to bring his parents daily to the Geeta talks. But he himself would remain in his car and smoke while the talks were going on. Although he had such a nice opportunity to get knowledge,

he did not use it because his bad Vasanas blocked him from receiving the knowledge. Paapa or demerit blocks one's way to the Divine. Maya has a firm grip on such individuals. It prevents them from making any progress.

Such people, even if they do come to hear these talks, come only to criticise the teachings. They come to carp and cavil at the teacher. They will pick up an argument with him just for the fun of it. They will falsify everything that they hear. Nothing can help them until their load of Paapa is reduced so that some understanding awakens in them.

Verse 16: Four Types of Virtuous People

चतुर्विधा भजन्ते मां जनाः सुकृतिनोऽर्जुन ।
आर्तो जिज्ञासुरर्थार्थी ज्ञानी च भरतर्षभ

॥ ७-१६॥

caturvīdhā bhajantē māṁ janāḥ sukṛtinō'rjuna |
ārtō jijñāsuarthārthī jñānī ca bharatarṣabha

|| 7-16||

1	<i>Chaturvidhaa bhajante maam,</i>	<i>Four types of virtuous people worship Me, O Arjuna. They are:</i>
2	<i>janaah sukritinah, Arjuna;</i>	
3	<i>aartah, jignaasuh, arthaarthee,</i>	<i>the <u>afflicted</u>, the <u>seeker of knowledge</u>, the <u>seeker of wealth</u>, and the <u>wise</u>, O Bharata.</i>
4	<i>jnaanee cha, Bharatarshabhah.</i>	

1-2 In contrast to the above four types of “non-devotees”, are the following four types of virtuous devotees who turn to God in their life.

3 The first three are placed in order of their closeness to the Lord, i.e. Sattwic, Rajasic and Tamasic. These three categories fall under ‘Sakaamyā Bhakti’, or devotion motivated by desire.

4 The last one is the Self-realised sage. This type of devotion is called ‘Nishkaamyā Bhakti’, or utterly selfless devotion.

No.	TYPE	GUNA	LEVEL
1	AARTAH – <i>desirer of solace, relief</i>	Sattwa	Causal
2	JIGNAASU – <i>desirer of knowledge</i>	Rajas	Subtle
3	ARTHAARTHEE – <i>desirer of wealth</i>	Tamas	Gross
4	JNAANEE – <i>the desireless sage</i>	Beyond Guna	Absolute

THE FOUR TYPES OF DEVOTEES

i) **Artah**: “the distressed, or afflicted”. This seeker is at the Causal level or Anandamaya Kosha and is considered to be Sattwic. The underlying motive here is to get rid of the distress of worldly existence. The devotee's motive is pure – he wants to be free from

birth and death, as he has had sufficient experiences to conclude that worldly life is binding. He now aims to attain the infinite Bliss of God.

Gajendra prayed to God to save him from the grip of the crocodile. Draupadi prayed to Krishna to save her chastity when she was being de-robed by the vile Kauravas. Throughout their life these devotees had great love for the Lord, and always sought Him alone to protect them from the entanglements and dangers of worldly life.

ii) **Jignaasu**: “the seeker of knowledge”. This seeker is at the Subtle level or the Vijnana-Mano-maya Koshas and is considered to be Rajasic. The underlying motive here is to aspire for the highest knowledge. It is for the satisfaction of the intellect, rather than attainment of Bliss. He is a researcher in religious works. He studies tirelessly.

King Parikshit in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* was one such devotee. When he knew that he was going to die in seven days, his mind became rivetted on the stories and knowledge of the Lord. The knowledge may be only theoretical but it has its effect on the person’s mind to turn him to God fully.

iii) **Arthaathee**: “the seeker of wealth (including pleasure and fame)”. This seeker is at the Gross level or the Annamaya Kosha and is considered to be Tamasic. This is the person who wishes to attain Kanchana, Kamini and Keerti – i.e. gold, pleasure and fame. He wants the best that the world has to offer. He has no interest in spirituality, but needs God to give him a ‘push’ to attain them! Whatever merit he earns, he wishes to spend it to enjoy pleasure, on earth or in heaven is immaterial.

There are innumerable examples. In fact, the majority of devotees fall into this category. King Vibhishana and King Sugriva may be placed in this category, too, as they desired to be restored to their position of power. Dhruva wanted a permanent position in the heavens, and so he prayed to Narayanaya. He got what he wanted; the North Star is named after him. There are stories of many demons who prayed to the Lord for boons to become invincible. On obtaining them, they terrorised the earth!

The above three types of devotees are not turned away by the Lord. The criterion for the Lord is that they turned to Him for help. The Lord is thus bound to give them what they desire. Later we shall differentiate such type of devotees on the basis of whether they turn to the Lord, or to some Deities. That is a separate topic.

iv) **Jnaanee**: “the wise”. This seeker has gone beyond the causal, subtle and gross levels; he is in the Turiya or ‘Fourth’ level. He is also beyond the three Gunas, and may be called a Gunateeta. He is the sage who seeks God for God’s sake alone. He is the dearest of them all as we shall soon see. He wants to be in the presence of God alone for the love of God. He is totally selfless and unconditional in his love. He has the highest form of Bhakti – **Para Bhakti** – which is complete identification with the Divine Being.

Ignorant people foolishly think that a Jnani has no love for God when they do not see him praying for anything. He is quite content with what God gives him, so he does not ask God for anything. Also, because he has so much knowledge of the Lord, people do not think that his heart could also be filled with God. These are misconceptions of a Jnani.

The Jnani is filled with the highest love for God. It is called Nishkaamya Bhakti.

Verse 17: The Jnani – Most Dear to Me

तेषां ज्ञानी नित्ययुक्त एकभक्तिर्विशिष्यते ।

प्रियो हि ज्ञानिनोऽत्यर्थमहं स च मम प्रियः

॥ ७-१७॥

tēṣāṃ jñānī nityayukta ēkabhaktirviśiṣyatē |

priyō hi jñāninō:'tyarthamaham sa ca mama priyaḥ

|| 7-17||

1	<i>Teshaam jnaanee nityayuktah,</i>	<i>Of them the wise, ever <u>steadfast</u>,</i>
2	<i>eka-bhaktih vishishyate;</i>	<i>whose devotion is to the One – he excels.</i>
3	<i>priyah hi jnaaninah atyartham</i>	<i>I am <u>exceedingly dear</u> to the wise,</i>
4	<i>aham, sah cha mama priyah.</i>	<i>and he is exceedingly dear to Me.</i>

Whenever a list of persons is made for a certain category, it is human to want to know who is rated as the best among them. Only to satisfy our own weakness for such facts the Lord gives us His rating of the one who is most dear to Him.

The **JNANI** excels, in the Lord's opinion. 10 reasons are given in three verses to support the Lord's choice. Four of them are in this verse:

1 i) Nitya Yuktah: He is always “firmly established” in the Lord. Others may forget the Lord when they get what they want, but the Jnani loves God only for His sake.

2 ii) Eka Bhaktih: He has “single-pointed devotion” to the Lord. His attention is not split towards anyone else. To him it is not “God also” but “God alone”. The others cannot say the same, otherwise they would not be asking for anything.

3 iii) Ati Artham Priyah: He “loves Me very much”. His love for Me cannot be quantified. I am exceedingly dear to him. Even I cannot say how much love he has for Me! And the Jnani will not even think of telling anybody how much he loves Me; he is too modest to do that. In pure love no one asks ‘Why?’ or ‘How much?’ The word *Love* does not go with the words *Why* and *How much*.

4 iv) Sah Mama Priyah: “I, too, love him very much,” says the Lord. What does He mean by this? Only the Lord Himself can explain that!

Inspirational Words on Love & Intolerance

“Love is an expression of the heart that is filled with gratitude.”

“The heart has reasons which the head cannot comprehend.”

For a Jnani, Bhakti is measured by the degree of detachment he has from his Upadhis. To the extent that he is beyond his Upadhis, the Jnani's Love gets purer, stronger and deeper, until he comes to a stage when he is not even aware that he ‘loves’ the Lord. He only knows that he has to rise above the Upadhis to establish himself fully in the Lord. There is no conscious effort to love the Lord.

The Jnani is able to balance Bhakti and Jnaana, i.e. his love and knowledge, perfectly so that the one supports the other. They are like two wings to him. He uses them equally skillfully to steer him through life.

India tolerates all types of seekers in the folds of Her bosom. The true Indian tradition is to be comfortable in every other kind of Bhava towards the Lord besides one's own favourite. The integrative mentality is a Sattwic quality that comes only by God's Grace.

Verse 18: *The Jnani – My Very Self*

उदारः सर्व एवैते ज्ञानी त्वात्मैव मे मतम् ।

आस्थितः स हि युक्तात्मा मामेवानुत्तमां गतिम्

॥ ७-१८॥

udārāḥ sarva ēvaitē jñānī tvātmaiva mē matam |

āsthitaḥ sa hi yuktātmā māmēvānuttamāṁ gatim

|| 7-18||

1	<i>Udaaraah sarva eva ete,</i>	<i>Noble indeed are all these,</i>
2	<i>jnaanee tu aatmaa eva me matam;</i>	<i>but the wise I deem as My very Self;</i>
3	<i>aasthitah sah hi yuktaatmaa,</i>	<i>for, steadfast in mind, he is established</i>
4	<i>maam eva anuttamaam gatim.</i>	<i>in Me alone as his Supreme Goal.</i>

It seems the other three types of devotees may have lodged a complaint to the Lord that He is being partial towards the Jnani. This is not true; the Lord is never partial.

1 This line may appear to be merely a remark made out of courtesy to them. But the Lord is not moved the way humans are. This would be doing the Lord a grave injustice. He has spoken time and again earlier in the *Geeta* of the great value of equipoise and avoiding likes and dislikes. The Lord will not say this only out of courtesy. He really means it.

He certainly does value all the four types as noble, indeed, with genuine sincerity.

Example of Mother & Children: A young mother has a few children, each one of different age. She loves them all the same, but naturally she does not treat them all the same, and it is not because her love differs for each child. The little baby has to be treated differently from the ten-year-old girl who can do the household chores to help her mother. The mother certainly appreciates the girl's assistance. The girl is not loved any less than the baby who claims more of her attention.

In this vein, the praise of the Jnani continues into this verse. Three more reasons are added as to why the Jnani is so dear to the Lord. We continue from the previous list:

2 v) Aatmaa Eva: The wise man is, in My opinion, “My very Self”. This statement is something like a Mahavakya within the *Geeta*. It clearly indicates how close the sage is!

3a vi) Aasthitah: The Jnani is also very steadfast in his love for the Lord. The Jnani is unswervingly devoted to the Lord. His mind does not flicker even for a moment to anything else. As his love is not based on any selfish reason, it is constant and does not swing up and down depending on whether his needs are met.

3b vii) Yuktaatma Maam: “Established in Me”. The steadfastness of his mind bears the fruit of being fully established in the Highest Consciousness. He is no longer separate from God. In what other way can the Lord describe this unity?

4 There is no gap between the Lord and the Jnani! Even an embrace does not capture this unity. The Jnani is fully merged in the Lord.

Verse 19: *The Jnani – A Mahatma Hard To Find!*

बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते ।

वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः

॥ ७-१९॥

1	<i>Bahunaam janmanaam ante,</i>	<i>At the end of many births</i>
2	<i>jnaanavaan maam prapadyate;</i>	<i>the wise man comes to Me;</i>
3	<i>vaasudevah sarvam iti,</i>	<i>realizing that “All this is Vasudeva” –</i>
4	<i>sah mahaatmaa sudurlabhah.</i>	<i>such a great soul is very hard to find!</i>

Yet another verse singing the praises of the Jnani – and three more reasons to do so have been added to the list:

1-2 viii) Janmanaam: “Many births”. Does the Lord love him so much because of his realisation? No, the Jnani has spent many births doing devoted service and Sadhana striving for perfection. It is not only because of one birth that the Lord loves him so dearly. This is a recognition being given for great loyalty over many lives of consistent devotion.

3 ix) Vaasudevah Sarvam: “All this is Vasudeva” – this statement puts in a nutshell the vision that arises from spiritual experience. The Jnani embodies this vision by dint of intense dedication to his ideal. He gives up every other pursuit in pursuit of this ideal, and thus he endears himself to the Lord and deserves to be called “My dearest devotee”.

4 x) Sudurlabhah: “very rare”. The rarity of such a person makes him very dear to the Lord. There are only a handful of magnificent peaks like Mount Everest on earth, Even so there are only a few rare gigantic souls or Mahatmas like the realized Jnani. That makes them very dear to the Lord.

Why is such a person so rare? Two reasons are given in this verse:

1. The Greatness of His Soul

4 Literally, the word Mahatma means “a great soul”. A great soul is one that is not a small, narrow soul concerned only with its own individuality. The moment one steps out beyond himself, beyond his own individuality, he begins the process of expanding his consciousness. That process culminates in the soul seeing itself as one with the whole Universal Consciousness. This is the infinite expansion that is made possible on the spiritual path by the practice of Sadhana. The devotee who accomplishes this expansion becomes worthy of being the Lord’s dearest devotee.

Mahatma Gandhi was given this title because he had outgrown his individuality and lived only for the sake of the larger needs of the country, and even the world.

2. The Greatness of His Effort:

1 Bahu Janma: “many births”. The Mahatma is not one who accidentally chances upon this title. He has worked hard and diligently for many births, doing his Sadhana with faith and perseverance. He must have had many ups and downs like all of us, but he did not allow failures to deviate him one bit from his spiritual goal to merge with the Lord. Like a hero, he always got up and resumed his journey.

After many such births of superhuman efforts to break the shackles of his ego-centred mind, there comes a birth when all his Sadhana coalesces, as it were, and bears fruit. At such an auspicious time, both for him as well as for all humanity, the Grace of the Lord works a miracle: it launches him with gigantic force out of the gravitational pull of all

low tendencies, into the freedom of outer space. He rises to heights beyond the ordinary level, and towers above the rest of mankind.

For all the above 10 reasons, such a Jnani is very dear, indeed, to the Lord!

And such a Jnani is also very dear to all of humanity, a priceless treasure that reveals the full immeasurable potential of having a human birth.



7.6 DEVOTEES OF “OTHER DEITIES”

(Verses 20-23, 4 No.)

INTRODUCTION TO “OTHER DEITIES”

THE NEXT FOUR VERSES are concerned with those devotees who have desires that they wish to fulfill, but who do not come to the Supreme Lord to get them fulfilled. They go to “Other Deities” and appeal to them. This section explains the difference between such devotees and the four Bhaktas encountered in the last section, who approach the Lord Himself directly with similar requests.

This section will clarify many doubts that people have regarding the difference between the worship of the Supreme Lord and the worship of numerous Deities, who specifically fulfill such desires among people.

THREE TYPES OF DEITIES

We first sub-divide Deities into the following three types: (Note that the Supreme Lord cannot be thus sub-divided.) Only thereafter, we will be in a position to discuss who are the “Other Deities”. The three types of Deities are:

i) **The Deity is an Authorized Devata**: This means he is one of the divine beings or *Devatas* accepted in the tradition and appointed by the Supreme Lord Ishwara, and given a specific portfolio in the governance of creation. There are 33 of these Deities, whose function is to see to the smooth running of all aspects of the universe.

Examples of these are Indra the Lord of all Deities, Varuna, Agni, Vayu, etc.

ii) **The Deity is in the Service of a Devata**: There are a number of ‘other Deities’ who do not fall into the above category of *Devatas*, as they are lesser evolved beings, but they serve one of the 33 Deities described. They have no power to give any spiritual direction, and their sole function is to dispense what is requested of them after ensuring that the proper conditions are fulfilled.

Examples of these are too numerous to mention. Family Deities (Kula *Devatas*), numerous aspects of the Divine Mother, and saintly souls fall in this category.

iii) **The “Deity” is an Asuric Power**: Finally, there are the ‘other Deities’ who are not divine beings at all, but who have affiliations to Asuric powers. They may be Rakshasas, Asuras, etc. who hold great power but are filled with demoniacal qualities. They may even pose as Deities. They have their devotees who will naturally be inclined the same way as them. Lord Krishna includes them under ‘other Deities’.

Much of what is said in this section applies to devotees of such dubious ‘Deities’. No ethical principles are followed by such so-called Deities and their followers. There are many stories of such “Deities” who have caused havoc to society by trying to establish unbridled control over it. Examples of these are Ravana, Hiranyakashipu, etc..

WHO ARE THE “OTHER DEITIES”?

At this point in the Geeta, the above question will certainly be uppermost on the minds of readers, who will be anxious to know what the classification of their own Deity is in terms of the Geeta.

Firstly, it has to be said that the Geeta is a universal scripture, and does not enter into any controversy over classifying any of the numerous Deities that are worshipped among the people of this world. That is not the task the Geeta takes upon itself. The Geeta's task is to enlighten our thinking, not to start a controversy among us.

The classification of a Deity rests entirely upon the attitude of a devotee towards his Deity. The Geeta can and does enlighten us on that matter, but the ball of controversy, if any, is firmly in the court of the devotee! He can decide where his own Deity is classified. The information he needs to help him to decide is given by the Geeta in this section. Briefly it is as follows:

Two attitudes in a Devotee

Two attitudes in the devotee determine whether the Deity he worships is indeed one of the “Other Deities”. The attitudes are:

- i) The devotee views the Deity as a limited entity, with power in a particular field to be able to fulfil his desire; and
- ii) The devotee is not concerned with any interest the Deity may or may not have in his liberation beyond the realm of Samsara or worldly existence. The Supreme Lord is only concerned with the liberation of His devotee; other wishes are granted only if this liberation is not threatened by fulfilling it.

Two Benefits to a Devotee

The above throws the full responsibility on the devotee. Two peculiar benefits arise to the advantage of the devotee as a result of this responsibility:

- i) Even if the Deity's name and form are popularly attributed to the Supreme Lord, if He is regarded as a limited entity and as having no concern with his liberation from Samsara, then that Deity would fall into the category of “Other Deities”.
- ii) On the other hand, even if the Deity is popularly considered to be in the category of “Other Deities”, if the devotee within his heart regards him as having all the attributes of the Supreme Lord and prays to Him for liberation, then that Deity would fall into the category of the Supreme Lord. Needless to say, the Asuric type of “Deity” cannot be included here.

Thus, the all-important factor is not what ‘people’ say about a Deity, but the attitude held in the heart of the devotee towards a Deity. That factor alone determines whether the Deity is the Supreme Lord or one of the “Other Deities”.

To clarify, one can regard one's family Deity as nothing short of the Supreme Being and ask for guidance to be liberated from Samsara. Then that Deity stands as the Lord alone.

On the other hand, if one regards say Lord Krishna as a limited entity, and sees Him without any reference to his liberation from worldly life, then, to that person, even the great Lord Krishna Himself will stand only as one of the “Other Deities”.

THE DEFINITION OF “ME”

While it is helpful to clarify the ‘other Deities’, it is also necessary to clarify who is referred to as ‘Me’ in the Geeta.

‘Me’ is the Supreme Brahman Himself. Since Lord Krishna is an Avatara of the Supreme Brahman as defined in Vedanta, He is using the pronoun ‘Me’, referring not to Himself as a limited human manifestation, but to Himself as Brahman.

In Hinduism, there are Divine manifestations who would also be included under ‘Me’. These are Lord Shiva, Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, Lord Ganesha and a few others who are regarded as Avatars of the Supreme Lord, Brahman Himself.

The important point is that the Supreme Lord, ‘Me’, controls all the ‘other Deities’ as well. This is in the same sense as He also controls everything else in the universe, not only these Deities. This is referred to in the verses below as “that same faith of his I make unflinching” and “all these being ordained by Me alone”.

The most general definition of “Other Deities” may now be written as follows

“Any Deity who is viewed by the devotee as purely a bestower of that which is requested, taking no consideration of: i) the devotee’s own spiritual development; and ii) the Deity’s connection to the Supreme Brahman”.

Verse 20: *Those Devoted to Other Deities*

कामैस्तैस्तैर्हृतज्ञानाः प्रपद्यन्तेऽन्यदेवताः ।

तं तं नियममास्थाय प्रकृत्या नियताः स्वया

॥ ७-२०॥

kāmaistaistairhṛtajñānāḥ prapadyantē:'nyadēvatāḥ |

taṁ taṁ niyamamāsthāya prakṛtyā niyatāḥ svayā

|| 7-20||

1	<i>Kaamaih taih taih hrita-jnaanaa,</i>	<i>Whose wisdom is <u>looted away</u> by desire,</i>
2	<i>prapadyante <u>ANYA-DEVATAAH</u>:</i>	<i>approach any of the “<u>OTHER GODS</u>”,</i>
3	<i>tam tam niyamam aasthaaya,</i>	<i>following this or that <u>rite</u>,</i>
4	<i>prakrityaa niyataah swayaa.</i>	<i>led by their <u>own nature</u>.</i>

In contrast to the four types of the Lord’s devotees mentioned in verse 7.16, we now describe very similar devotees who go to “Other Deities” to fulfill their desires.

1 This line refers to the four types of deluded people in verse 7.15. Due to the influence of delusion, “*their wisdom is looted away*”, i.e. they do not recognise the Presence of the Supreme Brahman. Their intellect is clouded by delusion and so they are unable to conceive of the Supreme Reality who controls the whole of creation. The inevitable result is that they lose their connection to the Supreme Lord.

When this happens – and it happens to the overwhelming majority of human beings – we have the category of devotees that are now being described.

2 What does this delusion make them do? Under delusion, people are helplessly driven to approach “other Deities” to obtain fulfillment of their desires, as they do not have the capacity to understand the existence of the Supreme Lord in their own heart.

The Deities approached by these devotees are mostly in the third category of ‘Other Deities’ listed above.

3 Once the ‘devotee’ chooses to approach a Deity with his request, he places himself fully under the control of that Deity. He has to “fill in the forms” according to the Deity’s wish. He has to comply with all the rites and rituals stipulated by the Deity. Following this procedure, the devotee hopes to have his desire fulfilled.

4 The desire would naturally be in accordance with the nature of the person. A Tamasic person will have very Tamasic desires. Sattwic desires are ruled out for this category of people. If the person was Sattwic he would not be so heavily deluded in the first place and would go to the Supreme Lord directly.

“Driven by their own nature” refers to being completely swayed by their own Vasanas or latent tendencies. Devotees who come to ‘Me’ to fulfil some material desires will naturally come with legitimate requests, as the Lord will not fulfill any unrighteous requests. The fact that requests are taken to ‘other Deities’ implies that these requests are invariably unrighteous requests, aiming to satisfy low tendencies in the devotee.

Verse 21: *Faith Determines the Deity Worshipped*

यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः श्रद्धयार्चितुमिच्छति ।

तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां तामेव विदधाम्यहम्

॥ ७-२१॥

yō yō yām yām tanuṁ bhaktaḥ śraddhayārcitumicchati |

tasya tasyācalāṁ śraddhāṁ tāmēva vidadhāmyaham || 7-21||

1	<i>Yah yah yaam yaam tanum bhaktaḥ,</i>	<i>Whatsoever form (“Other Deity”) any devotee</i>
2	<i>shraddhayaa architum icchati;</i>	<i>desires to worship as per his faith,</i>
3	<i>tasya tasya achalaam shraddhaam,</i>	<i>that same faith of his, <u>unflinching</u></i>
4	<i>taam eva vidadhaami aham.</i>	<i>do I surely make.</i>

This verse discusses in greater detail how the faith of a devotee determines to which deity he goes to make his request. Even as the faith ranges over a wide spectrum, so, too, the Deity requested to fulfil it varies widely.

1-2 Faith could be Sattwic, Rajasic or Tamasic. Accordingly, there is a whole range of request types from pure devotion to the most sensual desire. This explains the existence of countless deities, each one suitable for one’s particular needs. Those who desire purity and righteousness have very few needs. Such requests alone will find their way to the desk of the Lord Himself. Other requests will go to the “Other Deities”.

3-4 Those who approach the Lord for fulfillment of their desires are of a different mind-set or faith than those who approach “Other Deities”. The former know that the Lord

will only permit what is good for them, not what will harm them. Even if He permits a pleasurable experience today, He will deny it tomorrow to teach the devotee to give up the desire. The Lord will only grant what is good for the devotee, not what he asks for.

It is wisely said: *“The Lord’s love is measured by the desires He makes us abandon, not by the desires which He fulfils!”*

The Lord is always independent. However, the “Other Deities” are not like that. They are dependent on the devotee, These Deities can even be compelled to give what is asked of them, because of their dependency. They are *employed*, as it were, for that purpose alone.

Verse 22: *Ultimately Lord Alone Fulfils*

स तया श्रद्धया युक्तस्तस्याराधनमीहते ।
लभते च ततः कामान्मयैव विहितान् हि तान् ॥ ७-२२॥
sa tayā śraddhayā yuktastasyārāḍhanamīhatē |
labhatē ca tataḥ kāmānmayaiḥ vihitānhi tān || 7-22||

1	<i>Sah tayaa shraddhayaa yuktah,</i>	<i>He, endowed with <u>that faith</u>,</i>
2	<i>tasya aaraadhanam eehate;</i>	<i>engages in the worship of <u>that Deity</u>,</i>
3	<i>labhate cha tatah kaamaan,</i>	<i>and from him he <u>obtains</u> his desire,</i>
4	<i>mayaa eva vihitaan hi taan.</i>	<i>these being verily <u>ordained</u> by Me alone.</i>

1-2 In accordance with our faith will be our desires, and in accordance with our desires will be the Deity we approach to have them fulfilled.

3 For the devotee there are two plans available, one with the Supreme Lord and another with the “Other Deities”. There are big differences between the two.

4 It is the Lord Himself who appears as the Deity and fulfills desires through him. Everything is initiated by the Lord and fulfilled by the Lord. He is behind everything in the universe. But He is untouched by our virtues or vices.

The two Plans, and more about how the Lord operates in both cases, is explained conclusively in the next verse. It is a most enlightening explanation that follows.

Verse 23: *The Difference Between the Deities and the Lord*

अन्तवत्तु फलं तेषां तद्भवत्यल्पमेधसाम् ।
देवान्देवयजो यान्ति मद्भक्ता यान्ति मामपि ॥ ७-२३॥
antavattu phalam tēṣāṁ tadbhavatyalpamēdhasām |
dēvāndēvayajō yānti madbhaktā yānti māmapi || 7-23||

1	<i>Antavat tu phalam teshaam,</i>	<i><u>Finite</u> indeed is the fruit that accrues to</i>
2	<i>tat bhavati alpa-medhasaam;</i>	<i>those men of <u>little intelligence</u>.</i>
3	<i>devaan devayajah yaanti,</i>	<i>The worshippers of the <u>Devas</u> go to them,</i>
4	<i>madbhaktaah yaanti maam api.</i>	<i>but <u>My</u> devotees come to Me.</i>

This is the verse that tells what the real difference is between those who come to the Lord and those who go to “other Deities”. There is a difference – spiritually, it is a very big difference; outwardly, there appears to be no difference. For that reason, many wonder why all the fuss about who one should go to?

1-3 If the request is made to the Deities, the Lord simply permits what is asked for. The devotee is left to his experience to learn how to adjust his desires for his own good. For some desires will bring sorrow and others joy.

PLAN 1. With the “Other Deities”: This is a **Bargain Plan**. It is like a business contract. The chain of the bargain runs like this:

“Faith → desire → Deity → fulfillment of desire → goodbye”.

The devotee walks over to the Deity’s counter, asks for what he wants, receives it, pays for it, and departs – until the next desire troubles him!

4 If the request is made directly to the Lord, He takes it upon Himself to grant only what is good for the devotee’s spiritual growth. In this way the devotee who comes to the Lord is quite safe from the spiritual point of view.

PLAN 2. With the Supreme Lord: The devotee agrees to an **evolution plan** with the Lord which goes as follows:

“Faith → desire → Lord → reduction of desire → more Bhakti”.

It is not a business contract. There is love and trust in it. Bhakti for the Lord builds up at the end of each day. Two of its features are: i) There is a reduction of desire; surplus desire gets converted into Bhakti, which is the real bargain for the true devotee! ii) This is a daily contract, not only when greed is felt.

DESIRE – BASIS OF DEITY WORSHIP

As far as a worldly man is concerned, he would be quite happy continuing to go to the deity of his choice where he gets ‘good returns’. He could go on like that all his life and make no complaint. Not even the thought may occur to him to change. There is no problem in that. However, there is a divine plan even in this method . . . in time to come this devotee begins to feel that finite and temporary worldly desires are not fulfilling.

The relationship between devotees and “Other Deities” is rather businesslike. It cannot be more than that. It is like that between a customer and a sales representative. Both are dependent on each other. The deity is dependent on the desire of the devotee, and the devotee is dependent on the power of the deity to fulfil it.

The attitude of wanting something small is implicit in Deity worship, and hence the results which come to them are also circumscribed by that smallness. One remains the same self-centred person, although he gets all that he asks for. That only makes him more and more materialistic, heading towards suffering.

The devotee is rewarded not for any devotion but for appeasing the Deity. Of course, he may have a warm and friendly relationship with his deity, just as a customer can have a good relationship with his salesman. But at the end of the day, the customer only gets what he pays for; and so too, a devotee only gets what he requests.

In short, the Deity is governed by Kala, Bhoga and Shakti (time, enjoyment and power). He is limited by these. He is helpless to do more for his 'customer', the devotee.

That is when the devotee begins to think, "I have been worshipping all these years but I have made no change in my life. I need to look deeper into myself. I need to make a change of heart. I want to make progress but what do I do?"

The Hand of God sets to work in his life. He is drawn to a less materialistic life; he finds that most of the things he has been asking for are not really necessary. He turns away from ritualism and yearns for some spiritual guidance.

LOVE – BASIS OF THE LORD'S WORSHIP

At such a time he turns to the Great Lord within, seated in his heart. That is '**Me**'. He makes repeated requests in this temple within where the Divine Beloved is seated, where He always was seated, waiting patiently for this day to come!

To start with, the devotee who goes to the Lord at least understands that there is a higher power governing his life, that there are rules of Dharma governing morality, virtue, merit, duties, and so on. He may still not know about the possibility of liberation from worldly existence, but having come to the Lord with a desire to lead a regulated, moderate, and virtuous life, the Lord smilingly takes charge of his life.

The Lord may not grant all his devotee's desires. But He will grant those which He feels will help him to lead an upright, hard-working and spiritual life. Renunciation being the kingpin of such a life, the Lord may even put the devotee through some hardship at first. That is for his spiritual cleansing and as a test to see if the devotee's love is pure.

In time to come, the Lord takes it upon Himself to see that all the *knowledge* comes to His devotee, to take him further up the spiritual path.

In this way the Lord, with great Love and Wisdom leads His devotee progressively forward on the spiritual path. This is not available from the "Other Deities". We see clearly the difference between the two types of relationships described in this verse. The real difference is that we switch from Bargaining with Deities to Loving God! This makes all the difference between worldly and spiritual life.

The Lord's Power of Love

Love is the language the Lord understands best, and the language in which He speaks to us. One will only go to the Lord because of love for Him, even if he has a small material request to make. *The love is the more important reason for approaching the Lord than the desire he goes with.* If the Lord turns down the request, it is okay with the devotee. No love is lost between them!

The Lord's power to give and take is unlimited. He can bestow virtues upon us. He can give us strength to face hardships and endure difficulties. He can take away our impurities. He can reduce our desires to the bare minimum. The Lord gives more than He

takes – He gives us Virtue, the greatest of treasures, and takes away our illusory Egoism. Eventually, he makes saints out of us. Is it not good to do business with God?

Such is the enormous difference between these two types of devotees, although on the surface they may look the same. It may even look more attractive to go to the “Other Deities”. However, with the Lord, the deal is out of this world!



7.7 KNOWING THE LORD & HIS MAYA

(Verses 24-28, 5 No.)

Verse 24: *How to Recognise the Lord*

अव्यक्तं व्यक्तिमापन्नं मन्यन्ते मामबुद्धयः ।

परं भावमजानन्तो ममाव्ययमनुत्तमम्

॥ ७-२४॥

avyaktam vyaktimāpannam manyantē māmabuddhayaḥ |

param bhāvamajānantō mamāvyayamanuttamam

|| 7-24||

1	<i>Avyaktam vyaktim aapanam,</i>	<i>Though Unmanifest, as an ordinary human</i>
2	<i>manyante maam abuddhayaḥ;</i>	<i>do “<u>unintelligent fools</u>” consider Me to be,</i>
3	<i>param bhaavam ajaanantah,</i>	<i>not knowing My <u>higher</u> nature,</i>
4	<i>mama avyayam anuttamam.</i>	<i>Immutable and Peerless.</i>

1 Most people take the Lord’s Incarnation as an ordinary human being like themselves! What a tragedy, when He has actually only taken this human form out of compassion to be present among us for our rapid evolution, and to do a great work for humanity to progress.

2 If we do not have any knowledge of the Lord’s higher nature (as described earlier) then we will not know any better, and we will not be able to recognize Him. It behoves us to acquaint ourselves of knowledge of the Self.

Acharyaji gave us the example of Pujya Gurudev. The heights he had scaled and the work he had turned out were phenomenal, but there were millions in India who did not recognize him, even as they do not recognize the greatness of Lord Krishna.

Pujya Gurudev’s remark against this background is very appropriate: “Naturally, therefore, Sri Krishna uses here a severe term for such deluded men of superstitious false understanding – he calls them ‘unintelligent fools’!”

3 Pujya Gurudev credits Sage Vyasa for this verse, which draws attention to the preciousness of the Lord’s birth among mankind. It is an apt reminder to all generations not to make the mistake of taking the Lord as an ordinary human being.

We see in this verse the sad irony of actual events in life. On the one hand the Avatars are honoured and worshipped in the form of idols; yet on the other hand his disciples, those who uphold His divine teaching of non-duality or aim to live the life of morality, are subjected to great pains by society. If the living teachings are ignored, how ironical is it to worship the departed body idolized in stone!

4 *Immutable and Peerless*: This is another way of describing the essential nature of Brahman, the Supreme. The word ‘Immutable’ accounts for the imperishability and unchangeability of Brahman; and ‘Peerless’ is another way of saying that the Lord is Non-dual or one without a second. They most appropriately describe Brahman’s nature.

Although taking a human form, the correct way of looking at the lives of the Avatars is to behold them as embodiments of Brahman. They truly represent Brahman in essence.

Verse 25: *Brahman Veiled by Maya*

नाहं प्रकाशः सर्वस्य योगमायासमावृतः ।
 मूढोऽयं नाभिजानाति लोको मामजमव्ययम् ॥ ७-२५॥
 nāhaṁ prakāśaḥ sarvasya yōgamāyāsamāvṛtaḥ |
 mūḍhō:'yaṁ nābhijānāti lōkō māmajamavyayam ॥ 7-25॥

1	<i>Na aham prakaashah sarvasya,</i>	<i>I am not <u>manifest</u> to all (in My real nature),</i>
2	<i>yoga-maayaa-samaavritah;</i>	<i>veiled by divine Maya;</i>
3	<i>moodhah ayam na abhijaanaati,</i>	<i>This <u>deluded world</u> knows Me not,</i>
4	<i>lokaḥ maam ajam avyayam.</i>	<i>the <u>Unborn</u> and the <u>Imperishable</u>.</i>

The first person pronoun, when used by the Lord, always refers to Him as the Avatara of Brahman, the Unmanifest Infinite Reality. It is vital to remember this point to understand this verse. Here, directly from the Lord Himself, we are told what His relationship is with Maya, the cosmic power of delusion.

1-2 Maya is like a screen that veils Brahman. Maya is like the hard crust over a baked loaf, and Brahman is the soft bread inside. The crust, though it is part of the bread, is given a separate identity due to its purpose of ‘veiling’ the bread. The Unmanifest face of Brahman is on the inside of the crust, while the face of the manifest world is on the outer side.

The world cannot behold the Supreme Brahman due to this veiling by Maya. Only the sage who has crossed over Maya is able to behold Brahman.

From the side of the world, we can see only the crust, the power called Maya. Even when the Lord Himself manifests in the world, the majority of people cannot recognize Him due to His own veil of Maya. A manifestation is always a disguise of the Unmanifested.

Pujya Gurudev explains it in a very lucid manner: “Maya is the conditioning through which when the Non-dual Brahman expresses Itself, It seems to fan out as the spectrum of the multiple universe.” Maya in this case resembles a glass prism through which a beam of light (Brahman) passes through and splits up into a rainbow of colours (the world).

Yoga Maya: Yoga means “*united with*”. This could have two meanings depending on from which side of the screen of Maya one is viewing.

3 i) From the side of the world : Maya appears as a power of delusion as it is seen through one’s thought or Sankalpa. Thought is itself a product of Maya, and cannot know Maya. Maya thus appears as something which completely controls the manifested world. This is a characteristic it borrows from Brahman which appears to belong to Maya. In return Maya shares her quality of veiling with Brahman, making Him unrecognisable.

4 ii) From the side of Brahman : Maya appears in its true colours, i.e. as the three strands of Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas of which it is constituted. More about these three *Gunas* will be learnt later in the Geeta, in Chapter 14. Maya appears as something which is completely under the control of Brahman, the “Unborn and Imperishable”.

Verse 26: *Brahman is Beyond Time*

वेदाहं समतीतानि वर्तमानानि चार्जुन ।

भविष्याणि च भूतानि मां तु वेद न कश्चन

॥ ७-२६॥

vēdāhaṁ samatītāni vartamānāni cārjuna |

bhaviṣyāṇi ca bhūtāni mām tu veda na kaścana

|| 7-26||

1	<i>Veda aham samateetaani,</i>	<i>I know the beings of the <u>past</u>;</i>
2	<i>vartamaanaani cha arjuna;</i>	<i>I know those of the <u>present</u>, O Arjuna;</i>
3	<i>bhaviṣyaani cha bhootaani,</i>	<i>and I know the beings of the <u>future</u>,</i>
4	<i>maam tu veda na kashchana.</i>	<i>but no one knows Me.</i>

Maya stands as though at the threshold; on either side of Her lie Brahman the Reality and the Universe as the Unreality. The viewpoints from each side are totally opposite. We see another example of this in this verse, this time with reference to Time.

Sri Krishna did say at the very beginning of the Chapter that He was going to tell us all about His real Nature. Now, at the end of the Chapter He is giving us Self-knowledge in its purest form – it is coming to us undiluted, straight from ‘the horse’s mouth’, as it were! How much more fortunate can we be!

1-3 The Time concept is in the spotlight in this verse. It has to be understood that this is only an example. There are many other things which differ in description depending which side of Maya we are looking from. We are only familiar with them from the empirical side. From the standpoint of Brahman, the scene is very different. In this verse, for instance, it is stated that there is no such thing as Time from Brahman’s viewpoint.

4 The “*I know*” of the Lord in **1,2** and **3**, is different from the knowing of human beings in this line, which is from *our* side of Maya. Knowledge in the eyes of Brahman is not a matter of holding mind concepts. To Him, knowledge is an absolute experience, covering all three periods of time known to us. In order to express this fact, i.e. from Brahman’s standpoint, it is said that He knows all beings of the past, present and the future.

The explanation for Brahman’s relationship to knowledge is as follows. Brahman is all-knowledge, not omniscient. Omniscience is a quality possessed by Ishwara; Brahman, having no qualities, cannot be described as omniscient, but as Knowledge itself.

As Sri Krishna unravels his autobiography, many eyebrows would certainly be raised, particularly those of philosophers. They would sit and scratch their heads over statements like this – with hanging tongues, wide eyes and frowned foreheads!

Exceptions to the Deluding Power

Na Kashchana: “no one”. This is a general statement that does not mention the *exceptions* to the rule. In general, it is true that no one knows Me. However, Acharyaji spoke of a special class of people that are exempt.

Acharyaji’s perception of this philosophical conundrum was:

i) **He Himself is Exempt:** “*Maya cannot affect Me*”, but causes illusion for the seer. Its effect is seen from the world’s point of view only, whereas from Brahman’s view Maya is no secret.

This is a very significant observation from Pujya Acharyaji, as it is very reassuring to the one who stares at Maya's face daily, who is tired of looking at Her, and who wishes to pull out of Her game once and for all and get Liberation. Such devotees would be pleased to know that they, too, can become exempt from 'not knowing' Maya.

इच्छाद्वेषसमुत्थेन द्वन्द्वमोहेन भारत ।
 सर्वभूतानि सम्मोहं सर्गे यान्ति परन्तप ॥ ७-२७॥
 icchādvēṣasamutthēna dvandvamōhēna bhārata |
 sarvabhūtāni sammōham sargē yānti parantapa ॥ 7-27॥

1	<i>Icchhaa-dwesh-samutthana,</i>	Arising from <u>desire</u> and <u>aversion</u> ,
2	<i>dvandva-mohena bhaarata;</i>	by the delusion of the <u>pairs of opposites</u> , O Bharata,
3	<i>sarvabhootaani sammoham,</i>	are all beings to delusion
4	<i>sarge yaanti parantapah.</i>	subjected at birth, O Parantapa.

The questions likely to arise in us are:

Q2. How deep-seated is this delusion in us?

This verse answers the first two questions; the next verse answers the third.

1-2 We wish to make our mind available for Reality, but something stands in its way. That something has been sent by the deluding factor. It is ***icchha Dwesha***, our mental preferences, which take the form of *Likes and Dislikes*. These mental preferences produce typical reactions, known as *Sukha and Duhkha*, i.e. joy and sorrow. They come to us in the form of the pairs of opposites, referred to as ***Dvandva***.

We encounter many experiences in day-to-day life . Most of them do not concern us, and we let them pass us without giving them any attention. However, no sooner something comes our way and gets caught in the net of our mental preferences, we *react* to them. Our reaction is of *Joy* if we like it, and of *Sorrow* if we do not like it. By these reactions, our lives

are tossed about like a boat on rough seas. As long as our attention is taken up attending to these ups and downs of life, where is the time to focus our mind on the Lord?

How did these preferences arise in the first place? Suppose our first experience with a particular type of experience was very pleasant. We ear-mark it as “Pleasure” in our minds. We then repeat it in order to enjoy the pleasure once again. With repetition, a habit is formed, which strengthens the desire for that experience. It becomes firmly etched into our memory as a Like. If it is an experience of a painful nature, it gets filed away as a Dislike.

Answer to Q2 – Delusion Spans Countless Births

3-4 These memories become permanently etched in our subtle body. They become Vasanas or firm tendencies, which we take away with us at death, and which we bring back when we are reborn. Hence the verse says '**Sarge Yaanti**', that is, "subjected at birth". And it may not be just one birth, but many of them – in fact, countless births!

Thus from the day we are born we bear the seeds of these likes and dislikes. They are etched into our memories. They are the Karma that we come with in order to wipe them off. But, without spiritual knowledge, we invariably end up adding to them rather than subtracting from them. This is our pitiable plight as human beings.

Acharyaji gave examples of little children who display likes and dislikes. At a very early age, a child declares whom it likes and whom it does not, to the surprise of the adults present! One child takes to non-vegetarian diet, another is revolted by it. The only sensible explanation for these likes and dislikes are Vasanas, which are ‘built-in’ tendencies.

Getting rid of them is a task. Indeed, it can be our life's mission. Great effort is needed to uproot them, in the same way that great inadvertance was needed to plant them there. The effort to remove these Vasanas is the Sadhana in spiritual life.

And now for **Q3** - Is there a way out of this situation?

Verse 28: *Freeing Oneself From Karmas*

येषां त्वन्तगतं पापं जनानां पुण्यकर्मणाम् ।
ते द्वन्द्वमोहनिर्मुक्ता भजन्ते मां दृढव्रताः ॥ ७-२८॥

yēṣāṃ tvantagataṃ pāpaṃ janānāṃ puṇyakarmaṇām |
tē dvandvamōhanirmuktā bhajantē māṃ dṛdhavratāḥ ॥ 7-28॥

1	<i>Yeshaam tu antagatam paapam,</i>	<i>But those whose sins have <u>ended</u>,</i>
2	<i>janaanaam punya-karmanaam;</i>	<i>those men of <u>virtuous deeds</u>,</i>
3	<i>te dwandwa-mohah nirmuktaah</i>	<i>who are <u>freed</u> from the pairs of opposites,</i>
4	<i>bhajante maam dridhavrataah.</i>	<i>they worship Me, steadfast in their vows.</i>

The third question does have a positive answer. It is not all gloomy till doom's day.

The Lord points to a method here, which in fact is none other than the art of Karma Yoga – acting in such a way that we are eventually freed from the pairs of opposites.

i) **Paapam Antagatam:** “the sins come to an end”. 1 All our existing Karmas get washed away. Implied in this is that no forbidden actions are done. No further sin accrues.

ii) **Punya Karmanaam: 2** “*virtuous deeds*”. This implies actions done as Karma Yoga, i.e. done with the single-minded, dedication and with equanimity regarding its results.

3 The immediate benefit of this purification process is that the mental preferences described in the previous verse are gradually reduced till they are totally eliminated. As one’s likes and dislikes in the world get reduced, there is a corresponding increase in one’s love for God.

4 By progressing along the lines of these three steps, great purification takes place and the person soon becomes inclined to turn his mind Godward. **Bhajante Maam:** He begins to “*worship Me*” steadfastly.

That is no mean step towards the higher life. It is a great start, indeed. It is worthy of being applauded. But applause is rarely likely to come from the world. Only the Lord will applaud it and we will know because of the ‘warm feeling’ it brings in our hearts!



7.8 GLIMPSE INTO NEXT CHAPTER

(Verses 29-30, 2 No.)

WE CLOSE WITH two verses which introduce the key principles upon which the next Chapter will throw more light. This is the Lord's style – a little preview into the next 'Episode'. Today's presenters of TV serials must have learnt their technique from Lord Krishna's Geeta!

Verse 29: *Liberation, Realisation & Knowledge*

जरामरणमोक्षाय मामश्रित्य यतन्ति ये ।
ते ब्रह्म तद्विदुः कृत्स्नमध्यात्मं कर्म चाखिलम् ॥ ७-२९॥
jarāmaraṇamōkṣāya māmāśritya yatanti yē |
tē brahma tadviduḥ kṛtsnamadhyātmaṁ karma cākhilam || 7-29||

1	<i>Jaraa-marana-mokshaaya,</i>	For Liberation from <u>old age</u> and <u>death</u> :
2	<i>maam aashritya yatanti ye;</i>	those who take <u>refuge</u> in Me, who <u>strive</u>
3	<i>te brahma tat viduh,</i>	as best as they can to <u>know</u> That Brahman –
4	<i>kritsnam adhyaatmam,</i> <i>karma cha akhilam.</i>	i) while still <u>engrossed</u> in their individuality ; ii) while <u>engaging</u> themselves fully in actions ; and

Verse 30: *Knowledge of World, Gods & Oneself*

साधिभूताधिदैवं मां साधियज्ञं च ये विदुः ।
प्रयाणकालेऽपि च मां ते विदुर्युक्तचेतसः ॥ ७-३०॥
sādhibhūtādhidaivaṁ mām sādhiyajñam ca yē viduḥ |
prayāṇakālē:'pi ca mām tē viduryuktacētasah || 7-30||

5	<i>sa adhibhootam</i> <i>adhidaivam maam,</i>	iii) while yet <u>living</u> in the plane of gross existence ; iv) while <u>devoting</u> their entire subtle being to Me;
6	<i>sa adhiyajnam cha ye viduh;</i>	v) and <u>wanting</u> to know their true inner Self –
7	<i>prayaana kaale api cha,</i>	they, even though near the time of their death ,
8	<i>maam te viduh yukta chetasah.</i>	come to <u>know Me</u> , if their mind remains steadfast.

1-2 The context is Liberation from the endless round of births and deaths. It concerns Liberation from Samsara, one of the key concepts of Vedanta. The bulk of Chapter 8 is a discussion on this enthralling subject.



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 **KAPWING**

Six new technical terms and one concept are introduced here. These will be taken up for discussion and answered in Chapter 8.

A. The Six Technical Terms: These are introduced here as follows:

- 3** i) **Brahma Tat:** “That Supreme Reality”; **Brahman**
4a ii) **Adhyaatmam:** “that which pertains to individual self”; **Jeeva**
4b iii) **Karma:** “actions performed by the individual”; **Sadhana**
5a iv) **Adhibhootam:** “pertaining to the gross plane of existence”; **Virat**
5b v) **Adhidaivam:** “pertaining to subtle plane; living beings”; **Hiranyagarbha**
6 vi) **Adhiyajnam:** “pertaining to the causal plane; the Lord”; **Ishwara**

B. The Concept of Life After Death:

7-8 **Maam Viduh Prayaana Kaale:** “knowing Me at the time of death”.

ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु
ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे
ज्ञानविज्ञानयोगो नाम सप्तमोऽध्यायः ॥ ७ ॥

ॐ tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu
brahmavidyāyām yōgaśāstrē śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvādē
jñānavijñānayōgō nāma saptamō:'dhyāyaḥ ॥ 7 ॥

Om Tat Sat!

END OF DISCOURSE 7

“THE YOGA OF KNOWLEDGE & WISDOM”

