

Philosophical Perspective of Bhagavad-Gītā on Knowledge

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ABSTRACT

In this research paper, we explore the perspective of *Bhagavad-Gītā* on knowledge. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* is the foundational source of Indian philosophy and spirituality, among three main texts. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* is the ultimate source of spiritual and philosophical knowledge about the Supreme Personality of Godhead, *Kṛṣṇa*. Self-realized souls disclose the wisdom of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Human life is the most excellent material production among the different species of life. Human beings have the superior intelligence to comprehend the Absolute Truth through immutable transcendental knowledge. Philosophical understanding of the field of activity and knower of the field of activity have constituted the true knowledge in the human intellectual and advanced human civilization. Knowledge is the intellectual power and spiritual enlightenment of human beings. The material nature is temporary and constituted by the three unseen strands. Individual souls are apart from the material universe. Instead of it, they are inseparable eternal part and parcel of the Supreme Eternal Spiritual Reality. Everything emanates from the Absolute Truth and the Absolute Truth is realized by the different transcendentalists in three different features. As far as *Bhagavad-Gītā* is concerned, the Absolute Truth is the Supreme Personality of the Godhead, *Kṛṣṇa* who has existed with the transcendental body of the Consciousness-Existence-Blissful eternally. Nothing comes from the void; everything comes from the Supreme Spiritual Perfect Eternal Personal Being.

Methodology: Here, We are using the Critical and Analytical Research method.

Introduction

Knowledge is the eternal enlightenment of humans. Knowledge is the individual soul's power and virtue as it pursues self-realization. Knowledge is improved human consciousness and logical reasoning by intellectuals. The depth of realized knowledge is known as wisdom. Wisdom is the factual, transcendental, and faultless realization. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* is the ultimate transcendental wisdom of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, *Kṛṣṇa*. *Bhagavad-Gītā* is the culmination of all Vedic literature. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* is a holy literature for all humanity, as well as a source of philosophical discoveries and spiritual realizations. *Bhagavad-Gītā* is also known as *Gītāpaniṣad*. The *Vedānta-sūtra* (*Brahm-sūtra*), 108 *Upaniṣads*, and *Bhagavad-Gītā* provide philosophical insights and teachings. The philosophical teachings and intuitive insights of *Bhagavad-Gītā* are more authentic and forever influential in human society at any time and circumstance because it is transcendental and spoken by the Supreme Personality of the Godhead, *Kṛṣṇa* Himself. The supreme Philosophical instructions and Spiritual wisdom are imparted to the entire human race through the greatest worrier and pure devotee, Arjuna, by the Supreme Personality of the Godhead, *Kṛṣṇa*, who is identical with the Supreme Absolute Truth in *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

The place of knowledge is very important in Indian Philosophy. Liberation which is the higher destination of the conditioned individual souls can be achieved by true knowledge. The idea of liberation takes place in all the classical Indian philosophy and contemporary philosophy except the gross materialistic *Cārvāka* philosophy. The name and nature of the liberation are different in different Schools of Indian philosophy. The main cause of suffering and bondage is ignorance on the Absolute Eternal Reality. With knowledge, ignorance can be completely eradicated. Ignorance is covering the human consciousness and intelligence like the black cloud covers the Sun temporarily in the sky. Indeed, the cloud cannot cover the sun in the true sense. Knowledge is cultivated in the human heart by inquisitiveness. Generally, the human body is an excellent production of material

nature. In the human body, individual souls have higher intelligence and he has the capability to cultivate knowledge by using the intelligence which is lacking in the lower creations of the material nature. Indeed, the individual souls are self-illuminated and the eternal fragmental of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But, in the conditioned stage, the true knowledge is covered by the different layers of material nature. It can be revived and reawakened by using intellectual and logical reasoning properly.

Philosophical Analysis and Definition of Knowledge in Bhagavad-Gītā

Knowledge is enhanced by human consciousness, as well as philosophical and spiritual understandings of matter, spirit, and the Supreme Being from whom they all emanate. Matter is the fundamental ingredient of material nature. Living creatures in the material world have been conditioned since the beginning of time. We cannot determine when they become conditioned in the tangible world. The many planetary systems of the material world are made up of the eight elements, and the material world is the Supreme Being's separated exterior energy. It is inferior and temporary. In total, there are twenty-four elements of the material world. The five gross elements such as the earth, water, fire, air, and sky. The three subtle elements are such as the mind, intelligence, and ego. From the five gross the five sense organs and five motor organs develop such as the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, legs, hands, mouth, genitals, and anus. The material attributes smell, taste, colour, touch, and sound are special properties of the five gross material elements respectively.

The subtle body is separated from the gross body. The subtle body is finer than the physical body. Among these material elements of the material body, the ego is the finest and subtlest element. The ego is higher than intelligence. There are two types of ego: fake ego and authentic ego. False ego occurs when an individual soul identifies with the material body, believing that the body is all-encompassing and that there is no other existence beyond it. This philosophy is rooted in the materialistic *Cārvāka* philosophy of Indian philosophical schools. In actual ego, an individual soul connects with real identity and recognizes that he/she is not this body, but rather the owner and knower of it. He/she also recognizes his/her constitutional status as an eternal part and parcel of the Supreme Absolute Truth, subordinate to the Supreme Spiritual Being.

The spirit soul is the superior energy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, *Kṛṣṇa*. The spirit individual soul is apart from the material world and he is exploiting the material resource for different purposes. The spirit individual souls are eternal and constituted by spiritual elements. An individual soul is the spiritual atomic spark. The infinitesimal spirit individual souls are wandering from one material body to another material body and from one species of life to another species in the different planetary systems of the material world. The transmigration of the spirit individual souls is continuing till he/she attains liberation by spiritual eternal knowledge. There are two types of transmigration of the living entity in the material world namely upward transmigration and downward transmigration. In upward migration, the conditioned individual souls are elevating from the lower species of life to the higher species of life, and in downward migration, the conditioned individual souls are gliding down from the higher species of life to the lower species of life. A conditioned soul can be released from the circle of birth and death and the stringent law of the material nature by true spiritual knowledge and thereby he attains liberation.

In liberation, an individual soul reawakens and regains the spiritual consciousness and establishes a loving relationship with the Supreme Personality of the Godhead, *Kṛṣṇa* through engaging in an unalloyed devotional service. Liberation does not mean that an individual soul is merging him/herself in the imperishable bodily effulgence of the Supreme Absolute Truth. The bodily effulgence or the *Brahmājyoti* is the partial realization of the Absolute Truth. The Supreme Absolute Truth is the source of all existence either material or spiritual. Everything is emanating from Him. In *Vedānta-sūtra*, it confirms in *sūtra* 1.1.2 as “*janmādy asy yataḥ*” which means the Supreme Spiritual Personality is He from whom the creation, substance, and annihilation of the manifested universe arises. It is not that the manifested phenomenon world comes of void or nothingness. Pertinently, in *Bhagavad-Gītā*, chapter ten, verse eight, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, *Kṛṣṇa* strongly confirms as follows

*“ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate /
iti matvā bhajante mām budhā bhāva-samanvitāḥ ||10||8||”*

“I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me. The wise who perfectly know this engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts.”¹

The Supreme Personality of the Godhead is the perfect and complete realization of the Absolute truth. The Transcendental body of the Supreme Lord is constituted by the three spiritual elements namely the sat-cit-ananda or eternal-consciousness-bliss. According to the Acintyabhedābheda Tattva in the Brahman realization stage or Brahm-bhūta stage, the individual spirit soul becomes the same and one with the Supreme Personality in quality; not in quantity. The individual spiritual identity of the spirit soul is eternal. Because, he is eternally fragmental of the Supreme Eternal Transcendental Personality, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

The Supersoul or *Pamarātmā* owns and knows the material body, which serves as the sphere of activity for living souls. There are two types of knower in one material body. The individual soul knows the particular body, whereas the Supersoul knows all material bodies. The Supersoul, *Paramātmā*, is the entirety of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Absolute Truth. The One undivided Supersoul resides in the hearts of countless separate souls. It is analogous to the one sun reflecting in many water pots as if there were several suns in the corporeal universe. The Supersoul is the supreme knower, ever well-wisher friend, overseer, and sanction giver of the individual souls. He knows the desire of all living entities and He is the witness of all works and experiences either pious or impious, pleasure or pain of individual souls. In the material world, an individual soul is conditioned by the mode of material nature. The material nature is comprised of three modes of quality such as the mode of goodness or Sattvaḥ, the mode of passion or Rajasḥ, and the mode of ignorance or Tamasasḥ. Mixing the three basic qualities each other creates unlimited qualities in the material world. There is always competition among three qualities for supremacy.

The conditioned individual souls, who are aware of their unique body, function within the three modes of material nature. However, self-realized individuals are unaffected by the three modalities of material nature. They are guided by pure transcendental knowledge, which is the eternal light of the souls. True knowledge has three basic components: the knower, the object of knowledge that is knowable, and the process of knowledge. Pertinently, the definition of knowledge, we find in the Bhagavad-Gītā, chapter thirteen, and verse three wherein the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa imparts Arjuna as follows

*“kṣetra-jñāṁ cāpi mām viddhi sarva-kṣetreṣu bhārata |
kṣetra-kṣetrajñāyor jñānaṁ yat taj jñānaṁ mataṁ mama || 13||3||”*

“O scion of Bharata, you should understand that I am also the knower in all bodies, and to understand this body and its knower is called knowledge. That is My opinion.”²

The philosophical and logical understandings of both the Supreme knower "Supersoul", minute knower "individual souls", the field of activity material body or the material nature is called knowledge.

The Division and Method of Knowledge in Bhagavad-Gītā

Perfect knowledge entails a grasp of the natural world, the spiritual world, and the relationship between individual souls and the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Knowledge is separated into two categories: ordinary and spiritual knowledge. The mundane knowledge pertains to the material nature, whereas the spiritual knowledge pertains to the individual souls, the Supreme Supersoul, and the Supreme Personality of God. Spiritual knowledge is superior to material knowledge. People who are in the mode of goodness are naturally inclined to achieve higher intellectual and spiritual realization through spiritual understanding. Through spiritual knowledge, a person can be enlightened spiritually

¹ Swami Prabhupada. A. C. Bhaktivedanta, (trans.). (1986). Bhagavad-gītā as it is (2nd ed.), Mumbai, The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.

²*Ibid.*

by which he attains liberation. Self-realization and knowing themselves are the preliminary stages to attain liberation. The transcendental true knowledge is the mature stage of human knowledge and realization. In spiritual knowledge, the bodily conception of life is vanquished. The spiritual need is focusing more than the bodily need in the spiritual knowledge. Human life is for understanding the Supreme Absolute Truth through spiritual true knowledge and self-realization. Human life is not to gratify merely the animal propensity. The four animal propensities are prominent and common in all living entities. These are namely eating, sleeping, mating, and fearing or defending.

Mundane knowledge is merely concerned with the affairs of the material world. Persons, who are in the mode of passion and ignorance, are naturally inclined to material affairs by material knowledge. The political affairs, economic development, social customs, engineering, palatable and skyscraper house construction, etc. which are concerning to the surface of Reality are falling into the material knowledge. With material knowledge, we can learn information about modern science and technology. Modern technology is based on the finest understanding of material nature. The material scientists and philosophers deny the existence of the Supreme Lord because of the poor fund of perfect knowledge and they are ignorant of the Supreme Eternal Reality as the essence of all existence. There are two authentic methods to gather knowledge — the Inductive method, the Ascending process, and the Deductive method, or Descending process. In the Inductive method, we utilize our senses, mind, and intellect to explore, discover, and conclude about the nature of the truth. This method is inherently prone to defect because it is completely dependent on the limited sense experience and intellectual reasoning. Since our senses, mind, and intellect are made from material energy, they are imperfect and limited. As a result, we can never be completely sure about the accuracy and reliability of the knowledge we gain through the method of Inductive or Ascending process.

In the Deductive method, we gain knowledge from the proper source without any mental speculation and rational concoction. When we receive knowledge from a perfect source, we can be assured that it is flawless. For example, if we wish to know who our father is, we do not conduct experiments. We simply ask our mother, as she is the authority on this piece of information. Likewise in spiritual matters too, the descending process immediately gives us access to vast reservoirs of knowledge, which would have taken ages of self-effort to unveil. The only criterion here is that the source from which we receive the knowledge must be infallible and trustworthy. The imperishable spiritual knowledge of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is imparted through the chain of the disciplic succession by the deductive method or the descending process. The chain of the disciplic succession is found in *Bhagavad-Gītā*, chapter fourth, the verse from one to three where the Supreme Personality of Godhead, *Kṛṣṇa* discloses to Arjuna as follows

*"imaṁ vivasvate yogaṁ proktavān ahaṁ avyayam ||
vivasvān manave prāha manur ikṣvākave'bravīt ||4||1||
evaṁ paramparā-prāptam imaṁ rājarṣayo viduḥ ||
sa kālēneha mahatā yogo naṣṭaḥ parantapa ||4||2||
sa evāyaṁ mayā te'dya yogaḥ proktaḥ purātanaḥ ||
bhakto'si me sakhā ceti rahasyaṁ hy etad uttamam .||4||3||"*

*"I instructed this imperishable science of yoga to the sun-god, Vivasvān, and Vivasvān instructed it to Manu, the father of mankind, and Manu, in turn, instructed it to Ikṣvāku. This supreme science was thus received through the chain of disciplic succession, and the saintly kings understood it in that way. But in the course of time, the succession was broken, and therefore the science as it appears to be lost. That very ancient science of the relationship with the Supreme is today told by Me to you because you are My devotee as well as My friend and can, therefore, understand the transcendental mystery of this science."*³

The Supreme Lord, *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* is the Supreme authoritative Person of all revealing Vedic wisdom and the transcendental perfect knowledge. The validity of axiomatic knowledge is self-evidencing and

³Ibid.

self-illuminating. There is no need to prove its validity by experiencing imperfect senses and logical reasoning.

Conclusion

Individual souls are everlasting and unborn. He has become conditioned in the material world by squandering his limited freedom of will. True transcendental knowledge allows the living individual to break free from the three modes of material nature and be permanently released from the cycle of material birth and death. Thus, he achieves liberation. Individual souls show all of the divine traits of the Supreme Personality of Godhead to a minute degree. The Supreme Personality of the Godhead has always held the highest constitutional status.

Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, cannot be equaled or surpassed. In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Kṛṣṇa* refers to the Supreme Personality of the Godhead and the Absolute Truth from whence everything and everyone emanates. Individual souls are qualitatively identical to the Supreme Lord, but not quantitatively. The distinct spiritual identity of the spirit soul is maintained even after emancipation. In the liberation stage, which is attained by actual knowledge, the person's true spiritual existence is reawakened, and he engages in unwavering devotional service to the Supreme Personality of the Godhead, who is identical to the Supreme Absolute Truth.

The human being is both intellectual and spiritual. Human beings have higher intelligence, which allows them to understand the spirituality of human existence. The spirit is the essence of being, and spirituality is the higher and more refined aspect of existence. The philosophical insights and spiritual realizations of the self-realized person possess the correct vision and true flawless knowledge.

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* is the ultimate philosophical and spiritual realization of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, *Kṛṣṇa*. It is the supreme authoritative authentic wisdom and instructions by the Supreme Lord, *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*, which existed forever in human civilization and the divine realization of the self-realized persons. The immortality of the self and the loving relationship which is invisible by the material eyes between the individual souls and the Supreme Lord, *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* can be realized by the imperishable transcendental eyes of true spiritual knowledge of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* even within the ocean of material darkness and the complex flux of the material waves of the pleasures and pains as well as the dualistic illusion.

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