

## True Knowledge in the Bhagavad-Gītā: A Philosophical Perspective

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### Abstract

### Original Research Article

In this research paper, I shall attempt to discuss the perspective of Bhagavad-gītā on true knowledge. The Bhagavad-gītā is one of the essential fundamental sources of Indian philosophical understanding and spiritual realization out of three basic sources. The knowledge of Bhagavad-gītā is the supreme wisdom and superior spiritual as well as the finest philosophical realization of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. The wisdom of Bhagavad-gītā is revealed by the self-realized individual soul. Among the different species of life, human life is an excellent production of material nature. Human beings have the higher intelligence to understand the Absolute Truth through imperishable 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 is emanating 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.

**Keywords:** Bhagavad-gītā, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, the individual souls, material nature, true knowledge.

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## INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is the imperishable enlightenment of human beings. Knowledge is the power and virtue of the individual soul who is on the path of self-realization. Knowledge is the advanced human consciousness and the logical reasoning of intellectual persons. The depth of realized knowledge is called wisdom. Wisdom is the factual and transcendental flawless realization. Bhagavad-gītā is the supreme transcendental wisdom of the Supreme Personality of the Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. Bhagavad-gītā is the mature fruit of all Vedic literature. Bhagavad-gītā is not only religious text for the entire human race but also the essence of philosophical insights and spiritual realizations. Bhagavad-gītā is also known as Gītopaniṣad. Especially, the philosophical insights and teachings are in the Vedānta-sūtra or Brahm-sūtra, 108 upaniṣads, and Bhagavad-gītā. The philosophical teachings and intuitive insights of Bhagavad-gītā are more authentic and greater forever influential in human

society at any time and circumstance. Because of, 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.

## METHODOLOGY

Here, I am using the Critical and Analytical Research method.

### Philosophical Analysis and Definition of True Knowledge in Bhagavad-gītā

Knowledge is the advanced human consciousness and the philosophical understandings and spiritual realizations about the matter, spirit, and the Supreme Being from where these both are emanating. The matter is the basic element of the material nature. In the material world, living entities are being conditioned from time immemorial. We cannot trace out at what time they became conditioned in the material world. The different planetary system of the material world is constituted by the eight elements and the material world is the separated external energy of the Supreme Being. 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 attribute 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 kinds of ego such as the false ego and the real ego. In false ego, an individual soul identifies with the material body and he thought the body is all in all, and beyond this body, there is no other existence. This kind of philosophy is found in the materialistic philosophy of Cārvāka philosophy in Indian philosophical Schools. In real ego, an individual soul identifies with his self and he understands he is not this body and he is the owner and knower of the body. He also understands his constitutional position as the eternal part and parcel of the Supreme Absolute Truth and the 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 attains liberation by true 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 release 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 himself in the imperishable bodily effulgence of the Supreme Absolute Truth. The bodily effulgence or the Brahmjyoti 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 asya 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 tenth, 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.”<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> Swami Prabhupada. A. C. Bhaktivedanta, (trans.). (1972). Bhagavad-gītā as it is (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), Mumbai, The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.

spiritual elements namely the sat-cit-ānanda or eternal-consciousness-bliss. According to the Acintybedābheda 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 material body is the field of activity and the living individual souls and the Supersoul or Pamarātmā is the knower and owner of the material body. There are two kinds of knower in one particular material body. The individual soul is the knower of the particular body while the Supersoul is the knower of all material bodies. The Supersoul, Paramātmā is the plenary portion of the Supreme Personality of the Godhead, Absolute Truth. The One undivided Supersoul dwells in the heart of innumerable individual souls. It is just like the one sun reflecting in innumerable water pots as innumerable sun although there is only one sun in the material world. 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 Rajah, and the mode of ignorance or Tamasah. 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 the knower of their particular body, work under the clutch of the three modes of material nature. However, self-realized persons do not affect by three modes of material nature. They are working by the true transcendental knowledge which is the imperishable light of the souls. In true knowledge, there are three essential factors namely, the knower, the object of knowledge which 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 māṁ viddhi sarva-kṣetreṣu bhārata |*

*kṣetra-kṣetrajañayor 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."<sup>2</sup> The philosophical

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

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 true knowledge.

### **The Division and Method of true knowledge in Bhagavad-gītā**

True perfect knowledge includes the understanding of the phenomenon world, the spiritual world, and the relation between the individual souls and the Supreme Personality of the Godhead. Knowledge can be divided into two — mundane knowledge and spiritual knowledge. The mundane knowledge is pertaining to the material nature while the spiritual knowledge is pertaining to the individual souls and the Supreme Supersoul and the Supreme Personality of the Godhead. Spiritual knowledge is superior to material knowledge. The persons who are in the mode of goodness are naturally inclined to higher intellectual and spiritual realization through spiritual knowledge. Through spiritual knowledge, a person can be enlightened spiritually by which he attains liberation. Self-realization and knowing themselves is the preliminary stage 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 know 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, 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 of, 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 aham avyayam ||*

*vivasvān manave prāha manur ikṣvākave'bravīt ||4||1||*

*evam paramparā-prāptam imaṁ rājarṣayo viduḥ ||*

*sa kāleneha mahatā yogo naṣṭaḥ parantapa ||4||2||*

*sa evāyaṁ mayā te'dya yogaḥ proktaḥ purātanaḥ ||*

*bhaktō'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."<sup>3</sup> 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 self-illuminating. It is no need to proof for its validity by experiencing imperfect senses and logical reasoning.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

## CONCLUSION

Individual souls are eternal and unborn. He is become conditioned in the material world by misusing the minute freedom of will. By true transcendental knowledge, the living individual can become free from the clutch of the three modes of material nature and can permanently release from the circle of material birth and death. Thereby he attains liberation. All the divine qualities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead are exhibited in the individual souls minutely. The constitutional position of the Supreme Personality of the Godhead is always supreme and greater than all greatest. No one can become equal to Him and greater to the Supreme Personality of the Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. In Bhagavad-gītā, Kṛṣṇa refers to the Supreme Personality of the Godhead and the Absolute Truth from Whom everything and everyone is emanating. The individual souls are the same and one with the Supreme Lord qualitatively; not quantitatively. The individual spiritual identity of the spirit soul is being continued even liberation. In the liberation stage which is achieved by the person through true knowledge, the real spiritual life is reawakened thereafter and he is engaging in an unalloyed devotional service unto the Supreme Personality of the Godhead, who is identical to the Supreme Absolute Truth.

The human being is not only a rational being; but also a spiritual spark. Human beings have higher intelligence by which they can understand the spirituality of human existence. The spirit is the essence of existence and spirituality is the higher and finer element of existence. The philosophical insights and the spiritual realizations of the self-realized person have the right vision and the true perfect knowledge. The Bhagavad-gītā is the perfect transcendental philosophical and spiritual realization of the Supreme Personality of the Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. It is the supreme authoritative authentic wisdom and instructions by Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which existed forever in human civilization and the divine realization of the self-realized persons. The immorality 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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