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THE GITA TEACHES US HOW TO DIE

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Abstract:

Srimad Bhagavad Gita also teaches us how to accept death with joy. Among many other teachings, it teaches us to welcome death with joy, not to be afraid of it in the slightest. *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* teaches us how to embrace death, which is the ultimate truth.

There are many verses in *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* in which death is said to be an inevitable part of life and a transformative process. This physical body merges into the five elements and the soul merges into another body. It is a ceaseless and unyielding process. It is believed that one who has understood the *Gita* well is freed from the cycle of birth and death.

Keywords: *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*, *Prasthanatrayi* Grantha, Sanatan Dharma, Upanishads, Vedas, Vedangas, Birth and Death, Soul

Introduction:

The Srimad Bhagavad Gita, is a remarkable text, which no one has ever been able to surpass. When one goes deep and studies and meditates on it, new and extraordinary feelings are revealed every day. The *Gita* is as full of emotion as it is in the intellect as much as it comes to the intellect, not the mind. I can't say as much as I think. It is not as easy to say as it is to write. *Gita* is boundless, not easy to write your thoughts on it!

Sri Krishna says that there is no birth and no death for the soul. Obviously, there is no death for matter because it is not alive. Therefore the soul does not die, and matter does not die. There are only these two energies in the physical world.

bhūmir-āpo 'nalo vāyuh kham mano buddhir eva cha

ahankāra itīyam me bhinnā prakṛitir aṣṭadhā ||7-4|| (Ramsukhdas, 2006)

That is, earth, water, fire, air, sky, mind, intelligence and ego are all the eight elements of my natural power. Since God is the origin of the whole creation. Wielding his own nature, he brings forth the whole creation. This nature is called the lower Nature (*apara Prakriti*), while the embodied soul, which is a fragment of God, is called higher nature (*para prakriti*). The lower nature is inferior, insentient and changeful, while higher nature is superior, sentient and changeless.

The entity, which is kaleidoscopic and never remains the same, has been mentioned as perishable, lower nature and of 24 categories – five subtle elements along with ego, intellect, primordial, ten organs, mind and five objects of sense.

Every man's nature is different. As a man's nature, cannot be proved to have its own separate entity, independent of that man, similar is the case with that of God's nature. This nature is God's own disposition; therefore, it is called as his nature. Similarly, the embodied soul, being a portion of God, cannot be proved to have its own separate existence, independent of God, as it is God itself in scriptures, this cosmic nature has been described as *Prakriti* and *Vikriti*. Here, a point needs attention, that Lord Krishna has not described lower and higher nature from the view-point, of *Prakriti* and *vikriti* or Nature-cum its evolutes.

The ego has two aspects. The ego is matter, in its nature, and it is a modification, or a trait of the inner sense. This is called as ego a part of lower nature in the above verse. The second aspect of ego, is one's own personality and it represent itself as a doer. This is described, in the next verse given below, by the name of higher nature, this ego is the result of the soul's identification, with casual body.

apareyam itas tvanyām prakṛitīm viddhi me parām

jīva-bhūtām mahā-bāho yayedam dhāryate jagat ||7.5|| (Ramsukhdas, 2006)

That is, O mighty-armed Arjuna! In addition to this other nature, I also have a supreme power, which is all living beings, which are struggling with nature and holding the universe. It seems that this eightfold lower nature is individual, lower nature, because a man is bound due to his affinity for it. If a man (soul) does not accept his affinity for it, there is no question of any bondage. Man himself (soul or spirit), sustain this universe viz., accepts his relationship with the universe, and that relationship leads him, to bondage.

An individual body has no separate entity, different from the universe. When a man (the self), assumes his affinity for the body, he is bound. If he does not assume this affinity, there is no question of bondage.

⁵ *Atma does not mean soul!*

It is common for scholars and laymen to translate *atma* as 'soul'. The soul is the basic principle of Indian philosophy and spirituality. In Hinduism, the soul is considered to be a conscious and intelligent principle within the passive mind-body complex. It is the true self of a human being that appears when separated from all things that are temporary, perishable, subject to the limitations of space and time.

The word soul is derived from the Sanskrit root 'at' or 'ap'. At means constantly moving or 'who is in constant motion.' And ap means 'to pervade' That is, the soul is always moving from one body to another due to the cycle of birth and death and it is omnipresent. At the core of Hindu philosophy is the distinction between the soul and nature, whereas nature works on the principle of adaptability and is subject to evolution, here the soul is immutable and always remains untouched. (Babaji, 2020)

In Bhagavad Gita (2.24), Lord Krishna describes the soul as Sarva Gata (all-pervading). Spirit is unbreakable and non-combustible, it can neither be wetted nor dried. This soul is eternal, omnipresent, immutable, unchanging and eternal.

achchedyo 'yam adāhyo 'yam akledyo 'śhoṣhya eva cha

nityaḥ sarva-gataḥ sthānūr achalo 'yam sanātanaḥ ||2.24|| (Ramsukhdas, 2006)

Because it is found everywhere, in different forms of life, from the largest plants and animals to the smallest microorganisms. It also permeates the body in which it resides. The world is transitory, while the soul is eternal. Matter is kaleidoscopic, while the soul is stable. All things and persons etc., of the world are movable, are subject to birth and decay, while the soul is everlasting.

Lord Krishna says that men identify themselves with bodies and material things, and so they do not realize, that they are different from worldly things, but even then, the soul remains uniform and constant, all the time.

Sarvagataḥ (All-pervading) – the self does not mere pervade a body but it is all-pervading – realizing of this fact is salvation (liberation from worldly bondage). As the body is seated in the world, we are not seated in the body. We (the self) have never had our union and it is not possible to have a union with the body. The body is quite afara from us. But because of desire, the sense of mine and identification with the body it appears as if we have union with the body. In fact, the *Sariri* doesn't need the body at all. The *Sariri* without the body, also remains in bliss.

So what is death?

Krishna talks about death in several verses and says he is behind it.

• I am the embodiment of death.

tapāmyaham ahaṁ varṣhaṁ nigrihṇāmyutsṛijāmi cha

amṛitaṁ chaiva mṛityuś cha sad asach chāham Arjuna ||9-19|| (Ramsukhdas, 2006)

I am the nectar and death, that is, the living (not dying) of the living beings while holding the life-force, and I am also the separation (dying) of the bodies and life-forces of the entire living beings. The lord, in the form of the sun, cures ailment of beings, by drying impure and dirty materials, which cause ailments, on the earth. As the sun, the Lord radiates heat to dry the poisonous matter of medicinal herbs and other vegetables. The Lord is immortality, as well as, death. He is immortality – it means that all beings live by sustaining their life-breath, (they do not die). He is death, as it means the departure of life-breath from the body, of all beings (their death). It means, that as a great soul regards that, all is God, in the view of the Lord also. He is all, though a common man views death and immortality, being and non-being; gross and subtle, sattva, rajas and tamas; cause and effect; water and ice etc., different. But, in fact,

the world is a manifestation of the Lord. As in clothes made of yarn, there is nothing besides yarn, in so too things, action, incidents, circumstances and men etc., there is nothing else, beside God.

God existed before the creation of the universe and in the end God will remain, then in the mid-state who else can be there besides God? Therefore immortality is a form of God and death is also a form of God. The real 9para-prakriti is a form of God and the unreal 9apara Prakriti is also a form of God. As the food offered to God becomes 'prasada' (a gift or blessing) from God and it includes both sweet food and bitter vegetables. Similarly the favourable as well as unfavourable circumstances – all are the manifestations of God. This world is unreal and the Lord who resides in it is real. The body and the world are kaleidoscopic while the soul and God are free from modifications. The body and world are perishable, while the soul and God are imperishable. The Lord declares that He is changeable and is also imperishable. It means that all is God; there is nothing else besides God.

The Lord declares – before the creation I was present, there was nothing else besides me and after the creation whatever this world appears, I am also that. The real, the unreal and that which can be beyond both the real and the unreal, I am that also, and when the creation is destroyed, whatever remains, I am also that.

- Among the determiners of laws, I am Yama, the lord of death.

anantaśh chāsmi nāgānām varuṇo yādasām aham

pitṛīnām aryamā chāsmi yamaḥ sanyamatām aham ||10-29|| (Ramsukhdas, 2006)

Lord Krishna says, "of the Nagas, I am the Ananta; of the aquatic creatures and water gods, I am Varuna, among the manes, I am Aryama; and among regulators of life, I am Yama, the God of death. Yama is the God of death. He purifies the beings, by enabling them, to reap the fruit of their virtuous and evil actions. He is very just, and righteous. He is a divine glory of the Lord.

The uniqueness in these glories, is not personal, which has emanated, only from the Lord. Therefore a striver, should think of the Lord, when he thinks of his divine glories.

- I am all-consuming death.

mṛityuḥ sarva-haraśh chāham udbhavaśh cha bhaviṣhyatām

kīrtiḥ śhrīr vāk cha nārīnām smṛitir medhā dhṛitiḥ kṣhamā ||10-34|| (Ramsukhdas, 2006)

Lord Krishna says, I am the all-destroying death. I am the origin of future beings. Of females, I am Kṛiti, Śrī, Vāk, Smṛiti, Medhā, Dhṛiti and Kṣhamā (the goddesses), presiding over the qualities, fame, fortune, speech, memory, intelligence, steadfastness and forgiveness, respectively.

Death has such a remarkable power to take away that after death there is no memory here, everything is taken away. In fact, that power is not of death, but of God. If death did not have the God-given power to take away the whole, to forget, then the same concern about the relationship of belonging that man has in this life would be about the relationship of the previous life. But being forgotten by death does not worry about the family, property etc. of previous births. Thus, the power to erase the anxiety and delusion in death belongs to God.

Krishna says that there was God before creation and there will be God in the end, then where did the other come from? Therefore, nectar is also the form of God and death is also the form of God. Sat (other nature) is also the form of God and Asat (other nature) is also the form of God.

⁷ *aham evāsam evāgre nānyad yat sad-asat param paścād aham yad etac ca yo 'vaśisyeta so 'smy aham.* Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu-The Spiritual Masters-Adi-lila ||1.53|| (Prabhupada, 2011)

Even before creation, I existed; there was nothing else but me, and whatever this world looks like after creation is created, I am also. I am also whatever can be beyond truth, falsehood and truth-untruth. I am also what remains when creation is destroyed.

We should worry about it because what happens after we die is determined by what we did before we died and what we remember at death. He says it is inevitable so no one can escape from it and just on that basis Krishna says the material world is a miserable place. A lot of people don't understand this until they've faced impending death, (sometimes their own and sometimes others') and that's when they realize death is a problem. They want the person not to press the trigger or press the button or do anything that will kill them or a member of their family. But no matter what, it is not possible to escape death, so Krishna says that is why the material world is a miserable place. Of course, if it's the only place you know of, then a blind uncle is better than no uncle, but if there's the option of living in a place where no one dies, (not just today, but ever) then obviously our world doesn't seem so appealing.

So Krishna says that even though there is no such thing as death, we are trapped in a world where material nature has made us believe that we will die. That's why we believe in it. But Krishna says that an

intelligent person will be freed from this brainwashing by the Maya, and will escape the illusion of birth and death.

Intelligent persons who are striving for liberation from old age and death take refuge in Me in devotional service. They are really Brahman because they are fully aware of transcendental activities.

jarā-maraṇa-mokṣhāya mām āśhritya yatanti ye

te brahma tadviduḥ kṛtsnam adhyātmaṁ karma chākhilam ||7-29|| (Ramsukhdas, 2006)

That is, those who take refuge in me, they seek to get rid of old age and death, they know Brahman, their soul and the realm of all karmic activities.

However, those who do not do so, and study the Vedas for sense gratification, even if they adhere to the principles of the three Vedas, cannot be liberated from the world.

Those who study the Vedas and drink Soma rasa, they seek the heavenly planets, they worship me indirectly. Purified of sinful deeds, they are born on the holy, heavenly planet of Indra, where they enjoy divine pleasures.

Here, deliverance from old age and death does not mean that after knowing Brahma, the individual self and entire field, man will not suffer from old age and will not die. But it means, that old age and death will not be able to make him sad.

A young man is free from old age and death, only at present, but it does not mean that he has deliverance from these forever, while liberated souls are always free from these, because they have separated themselves from their bodies, which suffers from old age and death. When a man identifies himself with the body, he accepts the body's old age and death, as his own. This is so, because he has assumed "I am the body and body is mine."

So as long as, a man attaches importance to the body, and the world, regarding these as permanent, he in spite of striving does not realize God. Therefore, he should not attach importance to them. He should strive to remove these two stumbling blocks, i.e., attaching importance to the body and the world, and accepting their independent existence. But those who are taking refuge in God, strive are superior, because they feel that they are engaged in spiritual discipline, only by God's grace. Thus, by taking refuge in Him and having no pride, they realize the full form, of the Lord.

By striving, they attain Brahma (the infinite) who is formless, without attributes and who cannot be perceived, by mind, intellect and senses. God exists, in all beings, because He pervades everywhere, every time, in all the things and men. But, He is not perceived, because we have attached importance to the transitory and kaleidoscopic body, and worlds, and have accepted their independent existence, so ever-attained God seems to be unattained.

Lord Krishna says, "The ignorant do not perceive the soul, departing from one body and dwelling in the other, but those who possess eyes of wisdom, perceive." This perception does not include knowledge of the number of beings, their activities and their fate. But, they do know that the self, (soul) is deferent from the body. Those who take refuge in Him, realize this reality.

By taking refuge in God, when a striver breaks up his affinity for actions and things, he realizes that his self, as well as the self of all the beings is pure and detached from Prakriti. He comes to know, that he can never be identified, with actions and bodies and he can never be separated from his self. This knowledge constitutes the fullest spiritual essence of the self.

traī-vidyā mām soma-pāḥ pūta-pāpā yajñair iṣṭvā svar-gatim prārthayante

te puṇyam āsādy surendra-lokam aśnanti divyān divi deva-bhogān ||9-20|| (Ramsukhdas, 2006)

That is, those who are interested in the desirable rituals described in the Vedas worship Me by the rituals of sacrifices. They wish to go to heaven after being cleansed of sins by consuming the remaining somras of sacrifices.

By the influence of their pious deeds they go to the world of Indra, the king of heaven, and find the happiness and wealth of the gods of heaven. When they have thus enjoyed vast heavenly sense pleasure and the results of their sacred activities are exhausted, they return again to this mortal planet. Thus those who follow the principles of the three Vedas and seek sense enjoyment only attain repeated births and deaths. After enjoying it, they enter the vast world of heaven, and when their merit is exhausted, they enter the world of mortals.

Worldly people are generally engaged in worldly pleasure. There are others, who attach value to perishable objects, aspire for heavenly pleasure and also perform actions with a selfish motive as laid down in the three Vedas for them. The term "Traividya" has been used for such people.

With the view to attain heaven, they sing hymns in praise of Indra and beg of him residence in heaven – both for these area prayers, as a rewards of the performance of Vedic and Puranic rituals, they are granted celestial enjoyments. Those heavenly pleasures are far more attractive and singular than those

of the mortal world. There they enjoy five sense-objects of the sound, touch, form, taste and smell. Moreover, they also enjoy other luxuries, honour and glory.

te tam bhuktvā swarga-lokaṁ viśhālaṁ kṣhīṇe puṇye martya-lokaṁ viśhanti evaṁ trayī-dharmam anuprapannā gatāgataṁ kāma-kāmā labhante ||9-21|| (Ramsukhdas, 2006)

That is, when they enjoy the pleasures of heaven take and the fruits of their pious deeds are exhausted then again they return to the earthly world. Thus those who follow the Vedic rituals to attain the objects they desire keep coming and going in this world again and again.

Those who want to go the heaven instead of depending on God, rely on actions with interested motive, enjoyed by the three Vedas. They go to the heaven and are obliged to return to this world, after their merits run out. Here again, they acquire merits and thus the wheel of going and coming back revolves again and again.

In chapter 8, Krishna has said a lot about death.

anta-kāle cha mām eva smaran muktva kalevaram

yaḥ prayāti sa mad-bhāvaṁ yāti nāstyatra sanśhayaḥ ||8-5|| (Ramsukhdas, 2006)

That is, whoever gives up his body at the end of his life, remembering Me alone, immediately attains My nature. There is no doubt about it. Here Lord is bestowing this human body upon man, gave him an opportunity to attain salvation, through adoration. But he did not avail himself of the opportunity. Now being helpless the only way open to him is to realize Him, by remembering Him at least while breathing his last.

Mam eva smaran means, that whatever a striver hears, sees, understands and assumes is nothing besides the Lord, by assuming so, whatever a striver thinks at the time of death is nothing else, besides the Lord, thus if a striver thinks of Him, at the time death, he will attain Him, no doubt.

Madbhavam means that the striver attains the state of Godhood whether he is a dualist or a non-dualist (dwait or Adwait) – this is in accordance with the remembrance at the last moment. That God may be bestowed with attributes or attribute less, endowed with form or formless, two armed or four armed etc., according to one's worship.

Worshippers of the Lord, attain Him by thinking of Him, at the time of death. But even to the minds of those who do not worship Him, if somehow or the other, His thought comes, they also attain Him.

It is a special favour granted by the Lord that a man at the time of death by remembering Him will attain Him even though his conduct and life had been vicious as the only aim of this human life is God realization. Otherwise, it is not befitting to the Lord, who has bestowed this human life and also to a person, that he should be careful to remember him all the time because anytime can be the time of death; as it keeps no calendar. In ethics, it is mentioned that if a man wants to follow righteousness and attain salvation, he should always remember that he is in the grip of death.

A man should utilize the special concession granted to him by God. If there is a person on the death-bed, he should be shown a picture of his favorite Deity, the name of his Deity should be chanted and he should be reminded of his Deity's form. A spiritual atmosphere should be created, so that messengers of God of death may not approach him. The God of death said to his messengers, "where there is constant remembrances. Loud chanting or narration of the stories of the Lord, never go there because that place is out of his domain."

The devotee thinks of him at the time of death, means that he may remember anyone of his forms as that of Rama, Krishna, Vishnu, Shiva, Durga, Ganesha or his name, place, qualities. By thinking of him, a person attains him, because by remembering God he forgets, "I am the body and the body is mine."

yaṁ yaṁ vāpi smaran bhāvaṁ tyajatyante kalevaram

taṁ tam evaiti kaunteya sadā tad-bhāva-bhāvitaḥ ||8-6|| (Ramsukhdas, 2006)

That is, O son of Kunti, whatever state a man remembers when he renounces the body, he surely attains that state.

Krishna advises to remember only them and thus escape the realm of birth and death and go to the realm of immortality. And when you are leaving your body, whatever comes to your mind determines your next state.

Immediately our attention goes to what is dear to us, what we are most attached to, what we do not want to be harmed. Therefore, the time of death is when we are separated from all that is dear to us. What we are attached to disappears forever. Everything we have worked for is going. Everyone we love will go away.

Therefore, devotion to Krishna is the only remedy. Unless we have attachment and feeling for Krishna, how can we remember Him when everything is falling apart? Knowing that He is God and

wonderful is good, but when we are separated from all the things we love and have worked for in life, what goes through our minds? The things we are most connected to.

My dear Krishna, please remind me to always chant your holy name; please do not put me in oblivion. You sit within me as God, so you can put me into oblivion or miss you. So please don't put me in oblivion. Please remind me to always chant, even if you send me to hell, it doesn't matter, just as long as I can always chant Hare Krishna.

It's a wonderful approach. It is humble, dependent, humble, helpless and dedicated and yet optimistic. This kind of attitude is not very useful in the material world, but it is very attractive to Krishna, it comes from the spirit of devotion and Krishna will never let His devotee perish. It's the best way we can to face the inevitable.

Hindu Sanatan Dharma Tradition:

In our Hindu Sanatan Dharma, three scriptures are considered as *Prastantrayi* texts.

1. *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* – Smriti Prasthana or Sadhana Prasthana (Practical Texts)
2. *Brahma Sutra* – Nyaya Prasthana or Sutra Prasthana (Formulative Texts)
3. *Upanishads* – Sruti Prasthana or Upadesha Prasthana (Injunctive Texts)

There are 13 Upanishads, such as Ishavasyo Upanishad, Katho Upanishad, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Aitareya Upanishad, Taitriya Upanishad, Keno Upanishad, Chhandogi Upanishad, Prasno Upanishad, Mandukya Upanishad, Mundaka Upanishad, Swetasvata Upanishad, Muktika and Prano Upanishad are the main ones. They are called Upanishads. By the way, a total of 108 Upanishads are mentioned in the Vedas. The Upanishads are composed of the word 'up', the prefix 'ni' and the root 'sad' (knowledge). Upanishads mean, to sit close and acquire knowledge.

When the Sruti knowledge of the Apaurus Vedas began to disappear, it became necessary to organize their revival again. Then the knowledge of the Vedas seen by the sages was revived by the teachers of the time through the Upanishads.

In the second chapter of Srimad Bhagavad Gita, "Sankhya Yoga", Lord Krishna has approved this in many verses.

dehino 'smin yathā dehe kaumāraṁ yauvanam jarā

tathā dehāntara-prāptir dhīras tatra na muhyati ||2-13|| (Ramsukhdas, 2006)

That is, just as the embodied man, passes from childhood to youth, and then reaches old age, so the soul passes from one body to another. The body does not remain the same but always changes. It passes by stages through babyhood, youth and old age. The verse says that soul is separate and the body is separate. The soul is Seer and the body is the Scene. Hence the changes of babyhood and youth etc., in the body are not in the soul. The soul is changeless.

As one does not grieve for the body when it passes through babyhood, youth and old age; similarly one should not grieve, when the soul passes on to the another body. If we perceive in the right perspective, we came to know that the body does not pass through babyhood, youth and old age only, but it changes every moment. Similarly, subtle and casual bodies also changes every moment. Subtle and casual bodies are not left until he attains salvation. He has affinity for them so long as he does not attain salvation.

Wakefulness, sleep and sound sleep are regarded as the states of physical, subtle and casual bodies respectively. In dream a baby sees itself as a baby, a youth sees him as a youth and the old man sees himself as an old man. It proves that a subtle body also changes. There is also a change in casual body. The wise man, the enlighten one, is he who discriminate between the real and unreal. Such a man, is never deluded and he is not reborn, because attachment for the 'trigunas' is the cause of birth in good and evil wombs and he breaks off his attachment with the qualities. Here 'tantra' has been used for the difference between the soul (spirit) and the body, the real and the unreal, the permanent and the transient. It means that these are totally different and one is never deluded about this, because he knows that he is different from the body.

The body never remains uniform while the self never becomes multiform. The body neither existed before birth nor will exist after death and at present also it is dying every moment. In fact the process of its death begins as soon as it comes to the womb. At the death of boyhood, youth ensues at the death of youth, old age ensues and at the death of the old age, the embodied self passes on to another body. The body undergoes all these states, boyhood, youth and old age – these three states are of the physical body and passing on of the embodied self to another body is the state of the subtle body and casual body. But the entity of pure consciousness transcends all these states. The states changes while the self remains the same. Thus the enlighten one, who discriminates the distinctiveness of the body from that of the self, is never deluded.

The embodied soul in order to reap the fruit of its actions goes to numberless wombs to hell and heaven. This utterance proves that eighty-four lac forms of life are left, heaven and hell are left but the self ever remains the same. Womb (bodies) changes but the self (*Shariri*) doesn't change. The self remains one, so it goes to several wombs and several worlds. The entity which goes to several wombs does not get tainted and entangled anywhere, then who will reap the fruit in eighty-four lac forms of life? Who will go to heaven and hell? Who will attain salvation?

Birth and death are not our (self) traits but are the traits of the body. Age of the self is beginning less and endless within which several bodies are born and dies. As we change several cloths but by changing cloths we do not change, we remain the same. Similarly the entity of the self even by transmigrating to several bodies ever remains the same. It means that our freedom and detachment are axiomatic. Our life doesn't depend on particular body. Because of being detached, we even by transmigrating to several bodies, remain the same but by assuming our attachment to the body, we have to take birth in several wombs. The assumed attachment doesn't stay but we go on getting attached to other things and persons etc. if we don't get attached to them, salvation or independence is self-evident or spontaneous.

na jāyate mriyate vā kadāchin nāyaṁ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ

ajo nityaḥ śhāśhvato 'yaṁ purāṇo na hanyate hanyamāne śharīre ||2-20|| (Ramsukhdas, 2006)

That is, the soul is never born and it never dies. Nor is the soul born or reborn at any time because, the soul is always unborn, eternal, indestructible and everlasting. Even if the body is destroyed, it is not destroyed. The soul is eternal, beyond birth and death. Lord Krishna means to say that the body undergoes six modifications because it is perishable while the soul is imperishable.

Hence in these verses Lord Krishna has made such a distinction between the body and the soul, as is rarely found anywhere else in the Gita.

Arjuna was grieved after thinking about the death of his kinsmen in the war. So Lord Krishna wants to explain to him that the soul is not killed even the body is slain, so he should not grieve.

Our (the self) nature and the nature of the body are quite different. We (the self) are not attached to the body are not mingled with the body. The body is not attached to us; it is not mixed with us. Therefore at the death of the body we are not affected at all. By now we have passed through innumerable bodies, but what difference did it make in our entity (existence)? What loss did we sustain? We remained the same. Similarly at the death of the body we will remain the same.

As hands, feet and nose etc., are organs of the body, likewise the body is not an organ of the self. That which flows and varies is not an organ of the imperishable as phlegm and urine etc., flow and an ulcer (boil) varies, so they are not organs of the body. Similarly the body which flows and varies is not organ of the self.

vāsāṁsi jīrṇāṇi yathā vihāya navāni grihṇāti naro 'parāṇi

tathā śharīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇāṇya nyāni sanyāti navāni dehī ||2-22|| (Ramsukhdas, 2006)

That is, just as one takes off old clothes and puts on new ones, so the soul gives up the old and worn-out body and puts on a new physical body. As said in the previous verses that a wise man does not get deluded, when the soul, transmigrates from one body to another. Now, Lord Krishna by giving an illustration explains that as a man by casting off old clothes is not grieved, so a man casting off the worn-out bodies should not grieve. Here the word '*nara*' has been used for a human being, including men-women, boys and girls, young-old etc., all of them.

As a man discarding old clothes puts on new ones, so does an embodied soul casting off worn out bodies, enter into new bodies. The casting off worn-out bodies is called death, while its acquiring new bodies, and is called a birth. So long as this embodied soul has connection with Prakriti, it goes on acquiring new bodies, according to the thoughts at the moment of the death.

In the first half of this verse, there is mention of discarding of worn-out clothes, while in the second half, there is reference to casting off worn-out bodies. If we perceive by applying our discrimination we come to know that the body is wearing out every moment and it reaches a stage when it completely dies. But we don't realize this fact because we don't pay attention to it. This is darkness or ignorance (lack of discrimination). So, how can the illustrations of old clothes befit bodies, when bodies of even children and young men die? The answer is that end of age, means the worn-out bodies whether they are of children, young men or old men. In this verse the Lord is using the terms, '*yathā*' (as) and '*tathā*' (so), has explained that a man discarding worn-out clothes, puts on new ones, so does an embodied soul, casting off worn-out bodies, acquire other bodies, which are new.

The man is happy by discarding old clothes and putting new ones, whereas he feels grieved while casting off an old body and getting into a new one. The reason is that a man by identifying himself with a body wants to live long and thinks of death of the body as his own death. Thus he gets sad. The grief is

the result of the desire to live. I may live – this desire is latent and he has to die and that causes grief. But if he were to discriminate between the real and the unreal, he need not be sad, he rather rejoices. Thus it is because of ignorance that he weeps. In his ignorance, he is like a child, who weeps, while his old clothes are taken away and he is made to put on new ones. To remove this ignorance, the Lord has used 'yatha' (as) and 'tatha' (so), by giving an illustration of clothes.

So, why this cycle of birth and death has been going on from the times immemorial from the view point of the discipline of action, to reap the fruit of virtuous and evil actions and from the view point of the discipline of the knowledge due to ignorance, devotion, due to disinclination for God, this cycle of birth and death goes on. The basic factor behind these three is that the God has granted liberty to living beings to make proper use of their lives but they misuse it and so they have to go through a cycle of birth and death. They can be free from this cycle by making proper use of this liberty. It means if they start working for the welfare of others, by renouncing their selfishness, they will be free from the cycle. An affront to our knowledge is that it is wrong to give pain to others but we derive sadistic pleasure in torturing others. Similarly we know that bodies are perishable but we have attachment and infatuation for them.

*jātasya hi dhruvo mṛityur dhruvaṁ janma mṛitasya cha
tasmād aparihārye 'rthe na tvam śhochitum arhasi ||2-27||* (Ramsukhdas, 2006)

That is, the death of the one who is born is also inevitable. And the birth of one who has died is certain. So you don't have to worry. According to the previous verse, if the soul is regarded as constantly taking birth and dying, one should not grieve, because death is sure of him who is born and rebirth is assured of him who is dead. As the Sun has risen, it will certainly set and if it is set, it will definitely arise. This is an inevitable fact, which is known to all. Therefore, none grieves over the setting of the Sun; it implies that no one should grieve over the death of anybody. In this verse Lord Krishna says that all the worldly things, including the bodies undergo changes from one form to another. Abandoning the first form is called death and change to the second form is called birth. One should not grieve over this cycle because it inevitably goes on. We should think over when nobody remained in eighty-four lac forms of life, how will this body remain intact? When eighty-four lac bodies didn't remain as 'I' and 'mine', how will this body remain as 'I' and 'mine'? This discrimination is possible only in human body, not in other bodies,

² The six emotional disturbances in the Nirukta

When the tradition of contemplating the meaning of the *Apaurushya* Vedic mantras, which are eternal or God-created, began, the sages first collected the specific words of the Vedas, known as the Nighantu, the commentary on the same Nighantu being called Nirukta. Acharya *Varshyayani* has divided the narratives under these bhavas into six bhavas from origin to end.)Mishra, (2023

The six transformations of the senses, he says in the *Varshyayani*

1. *jayate* = i.e. to be born (indicating origin)
2. *asti* = to be (competence)
3. *viparinamate* = to be changed (to have a result)
4. *vardhate* = to increase (expanding)
5. *decays* = to decay (decay) and
6. *vinshyati* = to be destroyed (destruction))Mishra, (2023

All the above are changing forms of the body and not of the soul. What we call death is the changing form of the body. In Chapter 1, Valli 2, Verse 18 of the Kathopanishad, Yama explains to Nachiketa the nature of the soul that

A wise person is never born or dies, nor has he ever existed anywhere.

*na jayate mriyate va vipaschit nayam kutasin-na babhuva kascit,
ajo nityah sasvato 'yam purano na hanyate hanyamane sarire ||1-2-18||*

That wise soul is neither born nor dies. He doesn't come from anywhere; he doesn't have a special personality. He is eternal, unborn, eternal and ancient. The body declines but not the soul.

The sun in the sky, without which we cannot do anything, good or bad, is not responsible for any good or bad in this world. Neither the virtues nor the evils of the world can manifest themselves if the sun is not to be there in the sky, yet the virtues and the evils of the world are not connected with the sun in any manner whatsoever. So is the case with the Atman that is responsible for anything that we are to do. The good action of charity or the worst action of killing, nothing is possible unless Consciousness is backing us up as an ocean of force behind us, but it does not get involved in this action of ours. Even as space is not involved in what is contained in the vessel and the sun is not involved in what is happening in the

world, so also the universal Atman that is Consciousness is not involved in any action. Neither the killer nor the killed, appearing to be identified with this action and experience, knows the truth.

While both the soul and the life force are the causes of death, there is a difference in the nature of the two. Prana, or breath, is dependent on air, but the soul is independent. As long as there is breath in the body, there is life, as long as there is life, the soul remains in this gross body as a subtle body. When the prana leaves, the soul also leaves this old cloak and enters a new physical body. Thus the soul is a consciousness, while the life is the number of breaths.

Prana is situated in five places of the body. These are called *Panchaprana*.

1. *Prana*:- i.e. respiratory system = it is located in the heart.
2. *Apana*:- Located in the reproductive and excretory system.
3. *Vyana*:- Located in the muscles.
4. *Udana*:- It is situated in the throat and speech.
5. *Samana*:- Metabolism is located in the digestive system.)Singh, (2023

They can be scientifically manipulated, balanced, stimulated or calmed by Pranayam and Exercises. This can control the life force in all five divisions of the body. For prosperity and health in the material world, it is necessary to keep the five life forces in harmony.)Singh, (2023

Prana is the life force:

The word Prana means life force, which is one of the five *Mahabhutas* – *Vayu*. When we take air into the body, it is called prana. The departure of the soul from the body is active along with the prana. As soon as the prana leaves, the soul also leaves. The basic basis of human life is life. The *Aitareya Aranyaka* contains the description “Prana-Vidya”.)Singh, (2023

³ The universe is pervaded by the life air, and thus the universe is pervaded by the life air, and thus all living entities must be pervaded by the life force of the ants. *Aitareya-Aranyaka* 2-1-6-13

⁴ The quiet environment of the forest is very useful for learning Prana-Vidya. The mantras of the Rig Veda describe the life-force. This life force is the basic pillar of all. This sky, which is the sky, is situated by the life-force in the form of the verse. Prana is everywhere. This world is surrounded by life. Prana is the world-bearer, therefore its protector. In Vedic mantras, ‘Prana’ is also called “Gopa” as it is the protector of the life of the creature. Prana is considered to be the cause of life because as long as oxygen is circulating in the body, life lasts. The entire universe is made up of life. In the *Aitareya-Aranyaka* it is said that space and air were created by the life-force. Prana is the father and space and air are his children.

Explaining the true form of Prana Vidya, the *Aitareya-Aranyaka* describes that just as an ox takes a rope to tie it and ties it to two different poles. Similarly, with regard to Prana, it is said that the long rope for extending that Prana is called “Dam” and for binding it, there are different “Names”. The entire movable and immovable being is bound by this common named speech. So when a particular man is called by a name, that man comes pulled by a rope.

Prana is said to be the form of the sage. There are shapes of sages who see these mantras from the life itself. In the *Aitareya-Aranyaka*, the following vision of the Prana in the form of a sage is given.)Singh, (2023

1. *Shatarchin Rupa Prana*:- That is, the life force that keeps the body worshipful for a hundred years.
2. *Madhyam Rupa Prana*:- Prana- lives in the middle of the body in the body bearers.
3. *Gritsamad Rupa Prana*:- While sleeping, he absorbs the senses like life, speech and others. That is why the life force is called “Grits”. And Apana is called “Mada”. Therefore, one should worship the life-force in the form of *Gritsamad*.
4. *Vishvamitra Rupa Prana*:- Vishvamitra has the entire world – friend. Bhokta means enjoyer – this entire world of life is friendly because it is enjoyable. Therefore, the life-force is called Vishvamitra.
5. *Vamdev Rupa Prana*:- Since Prana is worshiped among the gods, it is also called Vam. Thus Vamdev is called.
6. *Atri Rupa Prana*:- The entire life force protects the community from sins, hence it is called Atri.
7. *Bharadvaja Rupa Prana*:- This Prana is *Vibhradvaja*. Falcon means – subjects. That subject this life nourishes by its penetration. That is, when the soul is dead enters, then the body or subject is nourished. This life is Bharadvaja because it nourishes the people.
8. *Vasishta Rupa Prana*:- Because it is said by the gods that this life is the cause of our Vasishta, that is, our dwelling by its entry, hence it is also called *Vasishta*.

Even though the body has the power of speech, eyes, ears, smell, touch etc., the existence of all depends on the life force. Therefore, Prana is the entire form of sacrifice. Whoever knows this Prana

Tattva attains heaven. People who have experienced the after death realization attest to this.)Singh, (2023

Quotations from the Vedas: ⁶ Verse no.1972 As of Shukl Yajurveda Samhita -

Vidyam chavidyam cha yastadwedobhayam saha

Avidya mrutyum tirtva vidhyaamrutasnute ||40-14||.)Acharya, (1993

So get this knowledge of both Vidya (self-knowledge) and Avidya (matter-knowledge) simultaneously. By transcending death under the influence of ignorance (maintaining existence by matter-knowledge), the nectar essence is attained by knowledge (self-knowledge).)Acharya, (1993

⁶ Verse no. 1973 As of Shukl Yajurveda Samhita –

VayurnilmamRtamathedam bhasmat shariram

Om krato smara| klibe smara| kruta smara ||40-15||)Acharya, (1993

This life (existence) is made up of the combination of air, fire, etc. (the five elements) and nectar (eternal self-consciousness). The body is going to be consumed eventually. (Therefore) O Resolver! You remember God, remember your power and remember what you have done.)Acharya, (1993

Posthumous realization:

The general elements of posthumous realization are as follows -

- Out-of-body experience: Feeling detached from your physical body and looking at the scene from above.

- Tunnel Vision: Going through a dark tunnel towards a bright light at the end.

- Welcoming lighting: A bright, comforting light that draws a person in.

- Meeting deceased loved ones: Often with a sense of peace and reunion, seeing familiar people, who have died,
- Life review: Experiencing a detailed view of your life, sometimes focusing on important moments or regrets.

- Profound sense of peace and love: A tremendous sense of peace and feeling connected to something bigger than yourself.

Conclusion:

Among the Prasthanatrayi texts, Srimad Bhagavad Gita is very unique, because it contains the essence of both the Brahma Sutra and the Upanishads. The Gita is the essence of the Upanishads, but the Gita is actually more special than the Upanishads. All philosophy is under the Gita, but the Gita is not under any philosophy. Because the Gita does not teach philosophy, but makes us experience it.

*na tvevāham jātu nāsaṁ na tvam neme janādhipāḥ
na chaiva na bhaviṣhyāmaḥ sarve vayamataḥ param*||2-12|| (Ramsukhdas, 2006)

Neither I nor you nor these rulers of men have ever existed. Nor shall we all be hereafter.

There are only two things in the world – the body (*Sat*) and the body (*Asat*). Both of these are untouchable (*ashochyan*). That is, it is incomprehensible and ineffable. I, you and all these kings, have been before. This means that the eternal essence is always eternal. It was never lacking. Sri Krishna says, you and I have had many births, but I know them, not you. We are all in the present and this body is changing every moment. Thus we should learn the experience of separation from bodies in the present. This means that just as there is no lack of one's being in the past and future, one should experience that there is no lack of one's being in the present. Our being is the timeless essence. It is to understand that timeless essence that the Lord has said the above verse.

This verse describes the similarity between God and the soul. The Lord says that I in the form of Krishna, you in the form of Arjuna and all people have not been before and will not be in the form of kings, but in the form of Satta we have all been before and will be in the future. The implication is that the three are different with regard to body, but one with regard to being. When there was no body, there was power, and when these bodies are no more, there will be power. There is nothing but an entity.

Just as we have nothing to do with the past and the future, we have nothing to do with the present. These three fall under time, while our form is transcendental to time. Time is fragmented but the form (being) is unbroken. It is by considering the body as one's own form that one sees the difference between past, future and present. In fact, the past, future and present do not exist!

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