

CHAPTER VII
Jñāna-Vijñāna Yoga
The Yoga of Knowledge and Wisdom

Introduction

The divine song that is the **Bhagavad Gītā** is sung by Lord Kṛṣṇa in eighteen chapters. In all eighteen chapters, the Lord tells how the *jīva* (individual soul), trapped in the cycle of birth and death, can attain liberation. The methods of attaining Self-realization, which bring liberation of the individual soul, are primarily discussed in terms of **Karma Yoga** (yoga of selfless service), **Bhakti Yoga** (yoga of devotion), and **Jñāna Yoga** (yoga of knowledge). The first six chapters relate to **Karma Yoga**, the second six chapters relate to **Bhakti Yoga**, and the last six chapters relate to **Jñāna Yoga**. However, in each of the chapters, although a particular yoga is primarily discussed, the other systems of yoga are also included.

The present chapter deals with complete divinity and practice through which an aspirant attains both knowledge and wisdom. Therefore this chapter has been named **Jñāna-Vijñāna Yoga**, or **The Yoga of Knowledge and Wisdom**. The word *jñāna* (knowledge) is used for indirect knowledge of scriptures. The word *vijñāna* (wisdom) means direct knowledge of the Self through experience.

Śloka 1

श्री भगवानुवाच

मय्यासक्तमनाः पार्थ योगं युञ्जन्मदाश्रयः ।

असंशयं समग्रं मां यथा ज्ञास्यसि तच्छृणु ॥ १ ॥

sri bhagavānuvāca

*mayyāsaktamanāḥ pārtha yogam yuñjanmadāśrayaḥ
asaṁśayam samagram mām yathā jñāsyasi tacchṛṇu*

श्री भगवान् उवाच	<i>śri bhagavān uvāca</i>	the Lord said
मयि	<i>mayi</i>	on Me
आसक्तमनाः	<i>āsaktamanāḥ</i>	with mind clinging
पार्थ	<i>pārtha</i>	O Pārtha (Arjuna)
योगम्	<i>yogam</i>	yoga
युञ्जन्	<i>yuñjan</i>	practicing
मदाश्रयः	<i>madāśrayaḥ</i>	taking refuge in Me
असंशयम्	<i>asaṁśayam</i>	without doubt
समग्रम्	<i>sagram</i>	wholly
माम्	<i>mām</i>	Me
यथा	<i>yathā</i>	how
ज्ञास्यसि	<i>jñāsyasi</i>	shall know
तत्	<i>tat</i>	that
शृणु	<i>śṛṇu</i>	hear

VERSE 1

1

**The Lord said,
Listen, O Pārtha (Arjuna), with the mind attached to Me,
practicing yoga, and taking refuge in Me, you will know Me
entirely and without any doubt.**

In the previous chapter the Lord gave the methods of concentration and meditation by which Self-realization can be obtained. He concluded by giving His own personal opinion about who among seekers, pursuing different paths, is the highest seeker. In VI: 46 it was said that a yogi who tries to concentrate the mind upon the Self is superior to those yogis who practice hard austerities, engage in deep study of scriptures, or who engage in selfless service to the society. In VI: 47 the Lord again said that while yogis who practice concentration on the Self are the highest, among those meditators the one “whose mind and intellect are merged in Me” through the path of devotion, is the best.

The Lord continues the same theme of devotion in this present chapter and elaborates on the devotion that brings God-realization. In this verse three methods are explained:

1) **with the mind attached to Me** - As long as the mind is attached to worldly enjoyments, it cannot be attached to God. In order to attach the mind to God, one needs to withdraw the mind from all worldly objects.

2) **practicing yoga** - The practice of yoga referred to here means one who worships God with firm faith and devotion, while fixing the mind and intellect on God.

3) **taking refuge in Me** - As long as the mind is dependent on worldly objects, it cannot take refuge in God. In order to take refuge in God, one should renounce all dependency on worldly objects and put one’s faith entirely in God.

The Lord says that one who practices yoga as explained above will know God **without any doubt** or irresolution.

Śloka 2

ज्ञानं तेऽहं सविज्ञानमिदं वक्ष्याम्यशेषतः ।
यज्ज्ञात्वा नेह भूयोऽन्यज्ज्ञातव्यमवशिष्यते ॥ २ ॥

*jñānam te'ham savijñānam---idam vakṣyāmyaśeṣataḥ
yajjñātvā neha bhūyo'nyaj---jñātavyamavaśiṣyate*

ज्ञानम्	<i>jñānam</i>	knowledge
ते	<i>te</i>	to thee
अहम्	<i>aham</i>	I
सविज्ञानम्	<i>savijñānam</i>	combined with realization
इदम्	<i>idam</i>	this
वक्ष्यामि	<i>vakṣyāmi</i>	will declare
अशेषतः	<i>aśeṣataḥ</i>	in full
यत्	<i>yat</i>	which
ज्ञात्वा	<i>jñātvā</i>	having known
न	<i>ne</i>	not
इह	<i>iha</i>	here
भूयः	<i>bhūyaḥ</i>	more
अन्यत्	<i>anyat</i>	anything else
ज्ञातव्यम्	<i>jñātavyam</i>	what ought to be known
अवशिष्यते	<i>avaśiṣyate</i>	remains

VERSE 2

How Arjuna Will Know God

2

I shall reveal to you in full this knowledge combined with realization, which being known, nothing more here remains to be known.

In the following six chapters Lord Kṛṣṇa tells His disciple, Arjuna, the complete philosophy of yoga, both in its theory and in its practical application. The term *jñāna* (knowledge) means indirect knowledge of the scriptures, which is theoretical knowledge; the term *vijñāna* (highest knowledge) means direct knowledge of the Self, which comes through experience. *Jñāna* and *vijñāna* together lead to the attainment of Self-knowledge or Self-realization. *Jñāna* is achieved by studying the scriptures and listening to their explanation by a teacher, whereas *vijñāna* develops when the aspirant applies the theories in practice and experiences the knowledge of the Self or God.

The knowledge of this creation is insignificant in comparison to the complete knowledge of God because this creation is only a tiny part of the supreme Lord. Therefore, for one who knows the supreme Lord together with the Lord's infinite power, knowledge, and other attributes, nothing more needs to be known in this world.

Śloka 3

मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु कश्चिद्यतति सिद्धये ।
यततामपि सिद्धानां कश्चिन्मां वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ॥ ३ ॥

*manuṣyāṇām sahasreṣu kaścidyatati siddhaye
yatatāmapi siddhānām kaścinnmām vetti tattvataḥ*

मनुष्याणाम्	<i>manuṣyāṇām</i>	of men
सहस्रेषु	<i>sahasreṣu</i>	among thousands
कश्चित्	<i>kaścit</i>	someone
यतति	<i>yatati</i>	strives
सिद्धये	<i>siddhaye</i>	for perfection
यतताम्	<i>yatatām</i>	of the striving ones
अपि	<i>api</i>	even
सिद्धानां	<i>siddhānām</i>	of the successful ones
कश्चित्	<i>kaścit</i>	someone
माम्	<i>mām</i>	Me
वेत्ति	<i>vetti</i>	knows
तत्त्वतः	<i>tattvataḥ</i>	in essence

VERSE 3

How Is It That Human Beings Do Not Know the Reality of God?

3

Hardly one among thousands of humans strives for perfection; even among the successful strivers, some rare one knows Me in reality.

The term *manuṣyaṅṅām* means those who take birth in the human species. The two purposes of a human birth are *bhoga*, which means to experience the world with the mind, body, and senses; and *apavarga*, which means liberation from all experience. The first purpose, *bhoga*, is common to all living beings. However, only human beings are qualified for the second purpose, *apavarga*. Despite this, the majority of human beings indulge in fulfilling their sensual desires and remain attached to the objects of the senses. In this way they are just like all other species.

Only one **among thousands of humans**, due to some favorable latencies (*saṁskāra*) from the past birth, awakens to the idea of striving for God-realization. Even among those few who are **successful strivers**, most get trapped in egocentric desires and attachments or, due to weakness in faith and devotion, cannot practice yoga with full intensity. As a result, they are unable to attain complete God-realization. Only a **rare one**, through the persistent practice of yoga and dispassion for the world of objects, achieves God-realization in that very life.

Śloka 4

भूमिरापोऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च ।
अहंकार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा ॥ ४ ॥

*bhūmirāpo'nalo vāyuh kham mano buddhireva ca
ahamkāra itīyam me bhinnā prakṛtirāṣṭadhā*

भूमिः	<i>bhūmiḥ</i>	earth
आपः	<i>āpaḥ</i>	water
अनलः	<i>analaḥ</i>	fire
वायुः	<i>vāyuh</i>	air
खम्	<i>kham</i>	ether
मनः	<i>manaḥ</i>	mind
बुद्धिः	<i>buddhiḥ</i>	intellect
एव	<i>eva</i>	even
च	<i>ca</i>	and
अहंकार	<i>ahamkāra</i>	egoism
इति	<i>iti</i>	thus
इयम्	<i>iyam</i>	this
मे	<i>me</i>	Me
भिन्ना	<i>bhinnā</i>	divided
प्रकृतिः	<i>prakṛtiḥ</i>	nature
अष्टधा	<i>aṣṭadhā</i>	eightfold

VERSES 4-5

The Characteristics of the Higher and Lower Natures of God

4

Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intellect, egoism: thus is My prakṛti divided eight-fold.

In order for Arjuna to be clear in his mind about the true nature of the Self, Lord Kṛṣṇa lists the eight aspects that make up *prakṛti*, the matter or material principle of existence, as separate from *puruṣa*, the Self in an individual. The creation starts by the union of *puruṣa* (conscious principle) and *prakṛti* (insentient matter). When the conscious principle pervades insentient matter, matter becomes active as though it were intelligent.

Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intellect, egoism are the eight constituents of *prakṛti* (nature). According to Sāṃkhya the five gross elements (*bhūtas*) are caused by subtle energies known as *tanmātras*. The *tanmātras* also are the objects of the subtle senses (*jñānendriyas*) and are experienced in the form of our thoughts and emotions as odor, flavor, form, feeling, and sound. These *jñānendriyas* are considered as an extension of the mind (*manas*) and are the capacity to smell, taste, see, touch, and hear.

The mind (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi*), and ego (*ahaṅkāra*) are the internal senses. Taken together the five subtle energies of matter (*tanmātras*) and the three internal senses (*manas*, *buddhi*, and *ahaṅkāra*) constitute the **eight-fold prakṛti** (*aṣṭadhā prakṛti*), which is the subtle body.

The five great cosmic elements (*mahābhūtas*) are represented in an individual by the subtle energies (*tanmātras*). These act as sensory stimuli through which an individual experiences and lives in the world of sense objects. Otherwise an individual would not experience sensation or have perception.

The process of the interaction within the subtle body is as follows: When external objects come into contact with sensory organs, their stimulating nature excites the senses. The sensory organs carry those feelings and sensations inward, where they are analyzed. The mechanics of analysis and synthesis are called "mind." The mind presents those sensations and feelings to the ego (sense of "I-ness"), which owns them and determines, "This is for me" or "This is not for me." The ego presents this to the intellect for final judgment, and forms concepts regarding the sensations and perceptions, and their relationship to the personality.

Actually the sense of "I-ness" is present in the function of the senses, mind, and intellect. This empirical "I" is a reflection of

conscious *puruṣa* in unconscious *buddhi* (discriminative intellect). Therefore this “I” is neither pure consciousness nor pure intellect. This ego consciousness goes through pleasure and pain as a result of the mechanics of mind, intellect, and senses. If the sense of “I-ness” were not present in the mind, intellect, and senses, then neither pain and suffering, nor pleasure and happiness would be experienced. The mind, intellect, and senses, being the products of *prakṛti*, are by themselves, unconscious.

When an individual understands the distinction between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, that person can understand that all sufferings are caused by identification of the Self with matter. When this identification is removed, then the ego self discovers itself as the true Self.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN *PURUṢA* AND *PRAKṚTI*

<i>Puruṣa</i>	<i>Prakṛti</i>
uncaused	uncaused
eternal	eternal
omnipresent	omnipresent
beyond action and reaction	beyond action and reaction
devoid of relations	devoid of relations
eternal characteristics	eternal characteristics
pastlessness (beginningless)	pastlessness (beginningless)
independent	independent
unmanifest	unmanifest
beyond phenomena	beyond phenomena

DISSIMILARITIES BETWEEN *PURUṢA* AND *PRAKṚTI*

<i>Puruṣa</i>	<i>Prakṛti</i>
conscious	unconscious
mediatorship	cause of the world
devoid of the <i>guṇas</i>	with the <i>guṇas</i>
subject	object

The relationship between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* is one of influence, like a magnet and iron.

Śloka 5

अपरेयमितस्त्वन्यां प्रकृतिं विद्धि मे पराम् ।
जीवभूतां महाबाहो ययेदं धार्यते जगत् ॥ ५ ॥

apareyamitastvanyāṁ prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām
jīvabhūtāṁ mahābāho yayedaṁ dhāryate jagat

अपरा	<i>aparā</i>	lower
इयम्	<i>iyam</i>	this
इतः	<i>itaḥ</i>	from this
तु	<i>tu</i>	but
अन्याम्	<i>anyām</i>	different
प्रकृतिम्	<i>prakṛtim</i>	nature
विद्धि	<i>viddhi</i>	know
मे	<i>me</i>	My
पराम्	<i>parām</i>	higher
जीवभूताम्	<i>jīvabhūtām</i>	the very life element
महाबाहो	<i>mahābāho</i>	O Mighty-armed (Arjuna)
यया	<i>yayā</i>	by which
इदम्	<i>idam</i>	this
धार्यते	<i>dhāryate</i>	is upheld
जगत्	<i>jagat</i>	world

5

This is My lower nature, (what is) other than this, O Mighty-armed (Arjuna), know it to be My higher nature, the very life element, by which the universe is sustained.

In the preceding verse the eight components of God's lower nature were enumerated. In this verse the Lord explains His higher nature: "The eight-fold *prakṛti* is My lower nature, and separate from *prakṛti* is the Self, constituted by pure consciousness, which is My higher nature."

The eight-fold *prakṛti* is the objective reality and the conscious Self is the subjective reality. The entire objective reality is based on the existence of the subjective reality. This objective reality cannot be held together without the subjective reality. The mind, intellect, and senses, which are the evolutes of unconscious matter, start functioning as though they are sentient and intelligent merely due to their association with the Self or pure consciousness. If consciousness were not in us, we would not be able to experience any thoughts, feelings, or emotions within, nor would we be able to respond to the outside world. Everything functions properly and is nourished and sustained only due to the conscious principle.

The term *jagat* means not only the outer universe, but also includes the mediums of experience (the senses), the objects of experience, and the whole of the objective world. The entire objective reality is supported by the Self or pure conscious principle.

Śloka 6

एतद्योनीनि भूतानि सर्वाणीत्युपधारय ।
अहं कृत्स्नस्य जगतः प्रभवः प्रलयस्तथा ॥ ६ ॥

etadyonīni bhūtāni sarvāṇītyupadhāraya
aham kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayastathā

एतद्योनीनि	<i>etadyonīni</i>	those of which these two (prakṛtis) are the womb
भूतानि	<i>bhūtāni</i>	beings
सर्वाणि	<i>sarvāṇi</i>	all
इति	<i>iti</i>	thus
उपधारय	<i>upadhāraya</i>	know
अहम्	<i>aham</i>	I
कृत्स्नस्य	<i>kṛtsnasya</i>	of the whole, entire
जगतः	<i>jagataḥ</i>	of the world
प्रभवः	<i>prabhavaḥ</i>	source
प्रलयः	<i>pralayaḥ</i>	dissolution
तथा	<i>tathā</i>	also

VERSE 6

*How the Higher Nature Is the Creator, Sustainer, and the
Dissolver of the Creation*

6

Know that these two natures are the womb of all beings. Thus I am the source and dissolution of the entire universe.

The eight-fold *prakṛti* (matter) and pure consciousness (spirit) are the **two natures** of God (Īśvara): the eight-fold *prakṛti* is the lower nature, and pure consciousness is the higher nature. For the purposes of evolution, neither spirit nor matter can be creative alone. They must be together in order to express the potentialities that exist within each.

Matter is inert by nature, as would be all of its evolutes if they were not permeated by pure consciousness (spirit). Matter in the form of the subtle elements (ether, air, fire, water, and earth), as well as mind, intellect, and senses cannot stay together without the presence of spirit. Similarly, without matter, the potentialities of spirit cannot be expressed. Hence, the two natures of God, simultaneously, **are the womb of all** animate and inanimate creation; God is the creator, sustainer, and dissolver of that creation. At the time of dissolution the entire creation goes back to its cause.

The higher nature of God (pure consciousness), forgetting its Godly nature, identifies with the lower nature (matter) and becomes an embodied soul. This is true in terms of the universe, as well as in individual beings. When the embodied soul removes its false identification with matter, it rediscovers itself as cosmic consciousness or God. At that point matter goes back to its primordial nature, or the lower nature of God.

Just as all of the shapes, sizes, and colors of objects made from a lump of clay have the same underlying reality of clay, in the same way, the higher nature of God is the primary reality. It underlies the objects of the sense organs as well as the mind and intellect, which have all been created by the lower nature of God.

Śloka 7

मत्तः परतरं नान्यत्किंचिदस्ति धनंजय ।
मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव ॥ ७ ॥

*mattaḥ parataram nānyat---kiñcidasti dhanamjaya
mayi sarvamiḍam protam sūtre maṇigaṇā iva*

मत्तः	<i>mattaḥ</i>	than Me
परतरम्	<i>parataram</i>	higher
न	<i>na</i>	not
अन्यत्	<i>anyat</i>	other
किंचित्	<i>kiñcit</i>	anyone
अस्ति	<i>asti</i>	is
धनंजय	<i>dhanamjaya</i>	O Dhanamjaya (Arjuna)
मयि	<i>mayi</i>	in Me
सर्वम्	<i>sarvam</i>	all
इदम्	<i>idam</i>	this
प्रोतम्	<i>protam</i>	is strung
सूत्रे	<i>sūtre</i>	on a string
मणिगणाः	<i>maṇigaṇāḥ</i>	clusters of gems
इव	<i>iva</i>	like

VERSE 7

God is the Common Factor In All the Forms of the Universe

7

There is nothing whatsoever higher than Me, O Dhanamjaya (Arjuna). All this is strung on Me, as clusters of gems on a string.

In the previous verse Lord Kṛṣṇa said “I am the cause and the end, and beside Me there is nothing else.” Just as in all clay pots there is only clay, in all ocean waves there is only water, and in all gold ornaments there is only gold; so too in all forms, shapes, and sizes of creation there is only God. In this verse the Lord says that He is the sustainer of the creation.

We see that the embodied soul appears in so many different forms, shapes, and sizes, and that each being is different from all others in activity, thought, feeling, and emotion. As a result, we mistakenly have the idea that there are different selves in different bodies. In order to address this line of thinking, this verse says that God is the ultimate reality and, consequently, there is nothing higher.

God (the Self) is the same in everything, irrespective of shape, size, form, thought, feeling, or action. Lord Kṛṣṇa uses the example of a necklace made up of diverse gems of different shapes, forms, sizes, and colors. All the forms of the universe are strung like beads on one common thread that invisibly holds them together; that thread is the Self (God).

The essence of this verse is that even though in individuals the shape, size, and form are different, and the functions of mind, body, and intellect are different, one conscious principle works through all these various created objects; and everything in life adjusts to co-exist harmoniously.

Śloka 8

रसोऽहमप्सु कौन्तेय प्रभास्मि शशिसूर्ययोः ।
 प्रणवः सर्ववेदेषु शब्दः खे पौरुषं नृषु ॥ ८ ॥

raso'hamapsu kaunteya prabhāsmi śaśisūryayoḥ
praṇavaḥ sarvavedeṣu śabdaḥ khe pauruṣam nṛṣu

रसः	<i>rasaḥ</i>	sapidity, flavor
अहम्	<i>aham</i>	I
अप्सु	<i>apsu</i>	in water
कौन्तेय	<i>kaunteya</i>	O Son of Kuntī (Arjuna)
प्रभा	<i>prabhā</i>	light
अस्मि	<i>asmi</i>	am I
शशिसूर्ययोः	<i>śaśisūryayoḥ</i>	in the moon and the sun
प्रणवः	<i>praṇavaḥ</i>	the syllable Om
सर्ववेदेषु	<i>sarvavedeṣu</i>	in all the Vedas
शब्दः	<i>śabdaḥ</i>	sound
खे	<i>khe</i>	in the ether
पौरुषम्	<i>pauruṣam</i>	virility
नृषु	<i>nṛṣu</i>	in humans

VERSES 8-9

How Everything is Strung On God

8

O Son of Kuntī (Arjuna), I am liquidity in water, I am light in the moon and the sun; I am the syllable Om in the Vedas, sound in ether, and virility in humans.

It has already been explained that God's higher nature is the source of the entire creation and there is nothing beyond this. These two verses explain the essence of the invisible, eternal thread that is holding everything together. The principle that constitutes and pervades a substance and supports it from beginning to end is the essence of that substance. In this verse Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that it is He, the Lord Himself, who is that principle.

I am liquidity in water - Liquidity (*rasa tanmātra*) is the essence of the water element. Hence, the water element is strung on God by its essence of liquidity.

I am light in the moon and the sun - Radiance (*rūpa tanmātra*) is the essence of the moon and sun. Hence, the moon and sun are strung on God by their essence of radiance.

I am the syllable Om in the Vedas - The sacred syllable Om is the essence of all the **Vedas**. Hence, all the **Vedas** are strung on God by their essence of Om.

sound in ether - The sound principle (*śabda tanmātra*) is the essence of the ether element. Hence, the ether element is strung on God by its essence of sound.

virility in humans - Virility here refers to *ojas*, the most subtle form of *prāṇa* in a human, and refers to both men and women. Hence, humanity is strung on God by its essence of virility.

Śloka 9

पुण्यो गन्धः पृथिव्यां च तेजश्चास्मि विभावसौ ।
जीवनं सर्वभूतेषु तपश्चास्मि तपस्विषु ॥ ९ ॥

*puṇyo gandhaḥ pṛthivyām ca tejaścāsmi vibhāvasau
jīvanam sarvabhūteṣu tapaścāsmi tapasviṣu*

पुण्यः	<i>puṇyaḥ</i>	sweet, pure
गन्धः	<i>gandhaḥ</i>	fragrance
पृथिव्याम्	<i>pṛthivyām</i>	in earth
च	<i>ca</i>	and
तेजः	<i>tejaḥ</i>	brilliance
च	<i>ca</i>	and
अस्मि	<i>asmi</i>	am (I)
विभावसौ	<i>vibhāvasau</i>	in fire
जीवनम्	<i>jīvanam</i>	life
सर्वभूतेषु	<i>sarvabhūteṣu</i>	in all beings
तपः	<i>tapaḥ</i>	austerity
च	<i>ca</i>	and
अस्मि	<i>asmi</i>	am (I)
तपस्विषु	<i>tapasviṣu</i>	in ascetics