



# Chetana & Achetana: The Sentient and Insentient Universe



## Bhagavad Gita Collection

 **Date:** 2025-10-31

 **Description:** An in-depth exploration of the fundamental building blocks of the universe, the nature of consciousness, and their relationship with Paramatma

 **Tags:** chetana, achetana, jeevatma, paramatma, consciousness, vedanta, bhagavad-gita, creation



# Chetana & Achetana: The Sentient and Insentient Universe

The entire universe (**Jagat**) is fundamentally composed of **Chetana** (Sentient) and **Achetana** (Insentient) elements.

## 1. Definitions of Chetana (Sentient) and Achetana (Insentient)

### Chetana (The Sentient Element)

- **Derivation:** Comes from the root word **Chaitanyam** (knowledge).
- **Definition:** The **substratum to knowledge**. It is not merely defined as possessing knowledge.
- **The Jeevatma:** The individual soul (**Jeevatma**) is the **Chetana vastu**. It is minute (described as  $10^{-6}$  of a hair strand).



### Achetana (The Insentient Element)

- **Definition:** That which is **not a substratum to Dharmabhuta Jnanam**.

- **Physical Existence:** The material body (**Shariram**) is **Achetana**. It only appears sentient because the **Chetana Jeevatma** is inside and activating it.
- **Inanimate Objects:** Objects like walls are also **Achetanam**. Though a Jeevatma might be stuck to their periphery, it doesn't get activated because the body lacks the three **Gunas** (Satva, Rajo, Tamo).

---

## 2. The Two Forms of Knowledge (Chaitanyam)

The **Chetana** (Jeevatma) possesses two distinct forms of knowledge:

### 1. Dharmi Jnanam (Knowledge Personified)

- This is the **knowledge that IS the Jeevatma itself**.
- **Function:** To constantly assert the feeling of **self-existence** (e.g., the feeling of "I").
- **Analogy:** The sugar that has completely permeated the interior of a sweet.

### 2. Dharma Bhuta Jnanam (Knowledge as an Attribute)

- This knowledge is **activated** only when the five sense organs (**Pancha Gnanendriyas**) contact an object (**Vastu**).
- **Role:** The Jeevatma is the **substratum** (support) for this activation.
- **Analogy:** The sugar crystal stuck to the outside of the sweet.

---

## 3. Relation to Paramatma (The Divine)

Krishna (Paramatma) clarifies his relationship with the universe, which is the sum of all Chetana and Achetana.

### A. The Universe as Paramatma's Body (Shariram)

- **Narayana:** Means the one who is the **Adharam** (substratum/supporter) for Chetana and Achetana (**Narana**).
- **Pervasion (Vyapti):** Paramatma pervades and permeates every bit of creation, residing both **within (Antar)** and **outside (Bahir)**.
- He is called **Vishnu** (one in all); the creation in him is called **Vishwam** (all in one).

## B. The Paradox of Support (Matsthani vs. Nachaham Teshu)

Krishna presents a paradox resolved by his **Divine Will (Sankalpam)**:

1. **Matsthani Sarvabutani**: All creation (Chetana and Achetana) resides **in him** or is under him.
2. **Na chaham Teshu Avasthitaha**: Yet, he is simultaneously **not contained within them**.
3. **Resolution**: This is his divine special ability (**Yogam Aishwaram**). He supports but is not supported by creation.
4. **Control**: He controls the Jeevatma from within as the **Antaratma** via his will (**Sankalpam**).
5. **Creation Disparity (Vaishamyam)**: Any difference or disparity seen in creation is caused by the **Chetana's own accumulated karma**, not by Paramatma.

## C. Creation (Srishti) and Dissolution (Layam)

Chetana and Achetana cycle under Paramatma's direction:

### 1. Dissolution (Layam)

- At the end of Brahma's lifetime (**Kalpakshaye**), all beings return to Paramatma's fundamental nature (**Mamika Prakriti**).
- **Layam** is the transition from the **karya dasha** (effect) to the **karana dasha** (cause); it is **not destruction**.

### 2. Creation (Srishti)

- Paramatma initiates creation at the beginning of a Kalpa (**Kalpadau Visrujamyaham**).
- The material creation (**Achetanam**) involves **24 constituent elements**:
  - 3 Primary: Prakriti, Mahat, Ahankaram
  - 5 Latent Qualities: Pancha Tanmatras (sound, touch, form, taste, smell)
  - 5 Sense Organs: Pancha Gyanendriyas
  - 5 Action Organs: Pancha Karmendriyas
  - 5 Gross Elements: Pancha Bhutas (Akasham, Vayu, Agni, Apaha, Prithvi)

- 1 Mind: Manas

---

## 4. Philosophical Distinctions of Existence

The distinction between Chetana and Achetana helps understand the relationship between elements:

Distinction Category	Definition	Example
<b>Sajatiyam</b>	Difference within the <b>same category</b> (Jati).	A neem tree and a mango tree (both are trees).
<b>Vijatiyam</b>	Difference between <b>different categories</b> .	A human being and a tree.
<b>Swagata</b>	<b>Internal difference</b> within	The root, trunk, branches, and
<b>Bhedam</b>	a single entity.	leaves of the same tree.

Krishna uses these to show that while **Chetana and Achetana are distinct elements (Swagata Bhedam exists)**, they are unified as the **single body (Shariram)** of Paramatma.

---



### Reference

This blog post is based on notes taken from the following video :

**Video Sources:** - [Watch on YouTube](#) - [Watch on YouTube](#) - [Watch on YouTube](#)

For a more detailed explanation, I highly recommend watching the original videos.



### Acknowledgment & Disclaimer

These articles are based on discourses by **Sri Dushyanth Sridhar**, who renders discourses in English & Tamil on Rāmāyana, Mahābhārata, Bhāgavata, Vishnu Purāna, Bhagavad Gitā, Vishnu Sahasranāma, and Divya Prabanda in the upanyāsam, pravachanam, or kālakshepam style. Visit <https://desikadaya.org> for more information. These notes are presented solely for educational purposes to help viewers download and benefit from these teachings. Any

incorrect interpretations or inaccuracies are mine and unintentional—please forgive me. For any feedback, please send an [email](#).

---

 Generated from UpnyasamNotes  
Sacred Wisdom Preserved • January 09, 2026