



Chetana & Achetana: The Sentient and Insentient Universe



Bhagavad Gita Collection



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



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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 **Gun**as (Satva, Rajo, Tamo).
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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.
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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 Sarvabhutani**: 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
Sajatiyam	Difference within the same category (Jati).	A neem tree and a mango tree (both are trees).
Vijatiyam	Difference between different categories .	A human being and a tree.
Swagata Bhedam	Internal difference within a single entity.	The root, trunk, branches, and 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

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