



अद्वैत वेदान्त

advaita vedānta

Acharya Tadany

॥ भगवद् गीता ॥

... Bhagavad Gītā ...

Chapter 4

AI Summary - Class 189

For Bhagavad Gītā 2, by Acharya Tadany Cargnin dos Santos
July 23, 2026.

Q&A before class

The Nature of Sūkṣma Śarīram (Subtle Body)

Question About Constancy

Dipti asked Acharya Tadany an important question about the nature of the Sūkṣma Śarīram (subtle body): whether it remains constant throughout one's life or undergoes changes like the physical body.

Components of the Subtle Body

Acharya Tadany explained that the subtle body is a complex system that contains all the inner instruments (antaḥkaraṇa) of human experience, including:

- The mind (manas) - responsible for emotions and desires
- The intellect (buddhi) - responsible for reasoning, discrimination, and decision-making
- Emotions and feelings
- The power of reasoning and analysis

The Subtle Body Undergoes Constant Change

Contrary to the unchangeable nature of the Ātmā (Self), Acharya Tadany clarified that the Sūkṣma Śarīram undergoes constant changes throughout life, similar to the physical body. These changes occur at multiple levels:

- **Emotional changes:** Our emotional states and patterns evolve over time



- **Psychological changes:** Our mental patterns, habits, and tendencies transform
- **Intellectual changes:** Our capacity for understanding, reasoning, and discrimination develops
- **Spiritual changes:** Our spiritual understanding and maturity progress

Karma and the Subtle Body

Acharya Tadany explained an important characteristic of the subtle body: it retains puṇya (merit) and pāpa (demerit) accumulated through one's actions. This karmic imprint remains stored in the subtle body and influences future experiences.

Duration and Continuity

The subtle body continues to exist and undergo transformations until one of two events occurs:

1. **Mokṣa (liberation) is attained:** At this point, the subtle body dissolves completely as the individual realizes their true nature as the Ātmā
2. **Death occurs without mokṣa:** In this case, the subtle body carries forward into the next birth, maintaining the karmic imprints that will shape the next life

This understanding helps spiritual seekers recognize that while the Ātmā is eternal and unchanging, the instruments through which we experience the world are subject to transformation and development.

Understanding Subtle Energy Forms

Different Levels of Subtlety

Acharya Tadany discussed various concepts related to subtle energy forms in Vedāntic philosophy, helping students understand the hierarchy of manifestation from gross to subtle:

- **Kāraṇa Śarīram (causal body):** The most subtle form, the seed state of all manifestation
- **Sūkṣma Śarīram (subtle body):** The intermediary form containing mind, intellect, and vital forces

Scientific Parallels

To help modern students understand these ancient concepts, Acharya Tadany drew parallels with contemporary scientific understanding:

- Just as modern physics describes matter as composed of atoms, which are further composed of subatomic particles, Vedānta describes progressively subtler levels of existence



- Each level of subtlety represents a different degree of manifestation, from the grossest physical matter to the subtlest causal potential

Key Philosophical Points

Acharya Tadany emphasized two important characteristics of these subtle forms:

1. **Subject to change:** All these forms, regardless of how subtle they are, undergo transformation and modification over time
 1. **Inherently inert (jaḍa):** These forms are not conscious by their own nature; they derive their apparent consciousness from the reflection of the Ātmā, which is pure consciousness (caitanya)

This distinction is crucial for understanding that consciousness does not belong to the body-mind complex but to the Ātmā alone.

Lighter Moment

The serious philosophical discussion concluded on a lighter note with an informal conversation about comedy actors and movies, helping to balance the depth of spiritual teaching with human connection.

Summary

Yajñas in the Bhagavad Gītā: Samples of Vedic Wisdom

Krishna's Teaching Method

Acharya Tadany explained an important point about the structure of the Bhagavad Gītā: when Lord Krishna discusses various yajñas (spiritual disciplines and practices), he is not providing an exhaustive, comprehensive list of all possible spiritual practices. Instead, he presents a representative sample of Vedic wisdom to illustrate the diversity and depth of the tradition.

The Gītā as Smṛti Literature

Acharya Tadany made an important textual distinction for students to understand:



- **Śruti texts:** The original Vedic revelations, considered the primary authoritative source of spiritual knowledge
- **Smṛti texts:** Secondary texts that elaborate, explain, and apply the teachings found in śruti. The Bhagavad Gītā belongs to the smṛti category. It is not an original Vedic revelation but a masterful elaboration and explanation of Vedic principles, presented through the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra.

Beyond the Listed Yajñas

Acharya Tadany noted that the yajñas mentioned in the Gītā represent only a fraction of the spiritual practices available in the Vedic tradition. Many more yajñas exist beyond those explicitly discussed in the text. The purpose of mentioning these specific practices is to:

- Demonstrate the variety of spiritual paths available
- Show that different practices suit different temperaments and capabilities
- Illustrate universal principles that apply across all spiritual disciplines

Practical Approach for Seekers

Acharya Tadany emphasized a crucial point for spiritual practitioners: **The goal is personal growth and liberation, not academic scholarship.**

He advised that:

- Following even a few of these disciplines sincerely can be deeply meaningful and transformative
- One need not master or even know about all possible yajñas to make spiritual progress
- What matters is consistent, sincere practice rather than encyclopedic knowledge
- Each seeker should choose practices that resonate with their nature, capacity, and circumstances

This practical wisdom helps students avoid the trap of becoming mere collectors of spiritual information without genuine transformation.

Types of Yajñas and Their Role in Spiritual Practice

Two Categories of Yajña

Acharya Tadany provided a fundamental classification of spiritual practices that students must understand:



1. Karma Yajña (Action-Based Practices)

These are rituals and disciplines based on physical, verbal, or mental actions. They include:

- **Physical activities:** Ritualistic worship, service, charitable acts, physical disciplines
- **Verbal practices:** Chanting, recitation of sacred texts, prayers, mantras
- **Mental practices:** Meditation, visualization, contemplation on virtues

Purpose of Karma Yajña: The primary goal of karma yajña is *citta śuddhi* (purification of the mind). These practices help to:

- Reduce mental agitation and restlessness
- Cultivate positive qualities like compassion, patience, and humility
- Remove negative tendencies and impurities from the mind
- Develop concentration and mental discipline
- Prepare the mind for higher spiritual knowledge

Important limitation: Acharya Tadany emphasized that while karma yajña is essential for mental purification, it *cannot by itself provide self-knowledge (ātma-jñāna)* or lead directly to liberation. Action-based practices prepare the ground, but they are not sufficient for the final realization.

2. Jñāna Yajña (Knowledge-Based Practices)

This refers to the systematic study and contemplation of Vedāntic teachings under a qualified teacher (guru). It involves:

- Śravaṇa (listening): Receiving the teachings from a qualified teacher
- Manana (reflection): Deeply contemplating and reasoning about the teachings to remove doubts
- Nididhyāsana (meditation): Profound meditation on the truth of one's identity as the Ātmā

Purpose of Jñāna Yajña: This is the direct means to mokṣa (liberation). Only self-knowledge can remove the fundamental ignorance (avidyā) about one's true nature.

Choosing Practices Based on Individual Capacity

Acharya Tadany explained that the Vedic tradition recognizes human diversity and provides different practices for different people:

- **Physical predominance:** Some people are naturally inclined toward physical activity and discipline - they may benefit from ritual worship, pilgrimages, or service-oriented practices
- **Verbal predominance:** Those with a gift for speech or sound may resonate with chanting, mantra recitation, or singing devotional songs
- **Mental predominance:** Intellectually oriented individuals may prefer contemplative practices, study, or meditation



The tradition respects these differences and provides appropriate entry points for everyone, regardless of their starting temperament or capacity.

The Sequential Path

Acharya Tadany advised spiritual seekers to understand the proper sequence:

1. **Begin with karma yajña:** Practice disciplines appropriate to your nature and capacity to purify the mind
2. **Recognize signs of mental purification:** Watch for indicators that the mind is becoming ready for higher knowledge
3. **Transition to jñāna yoga:** When mental purity is achieved, seek a qualified teacher for systematic Vedāntic study

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Q&A after class

Signs of Mental Purification (Citta Śuddhi)

Acharya Tadany described key indicators that suggest a person is ready to begin jñāna yoga:

- **A calmer mind:** Reduced mental agitation, less reactivity to situations
- **Increased curiosity about the Ātmā:** A deep, authentic longing to know one's true nature
- **Reduced reactivity:** Less impulsive emotional reactions, greater equanimity
- **Greater capacity for attention:** Ability to focus and sustain attention on subtle teachings
- **Discrimination (viveka):** Growing ability to distinguish between the real and the unreal, the eternal and the temporary
- **Dispassion (vairāgya):** Reduced obsessive attachment to worldly objects and achievements

The Traditional Student-Teacher Relationship

Acharya Tadany explained the traditional approach to determining readiness for advanced teaching:

In the classical tradition, students would practice karma yajña under the general guidance of teachers. When they felt they might be ready for jñāna yoga, they would approach their guru with the question: *"Have I achieved citta śuddhi? Am I ready to begin systematic study of Vedānta?"*

The guru, with their experience and wisdom, would assess the student's readiness by observing:

- The quality of the student's questions
- The student's mental stability and maturity
- The depth of the student's desire for liberation (mumukṣutva)
- The student's capacity to receive and assimilate subtle teachings

This personalized guidance helped ensure that students progressed at the appropriate pace and received teachings suited to their level of preparation, maximizing the effectiveness of the spiritual journey.