

**LESSON 1, TEXT 1: KṢETRA & KṢETRAJÑA—THE
FIELD OF ACTIVITIES (BODY) AND THE WITNESS**

LESSON

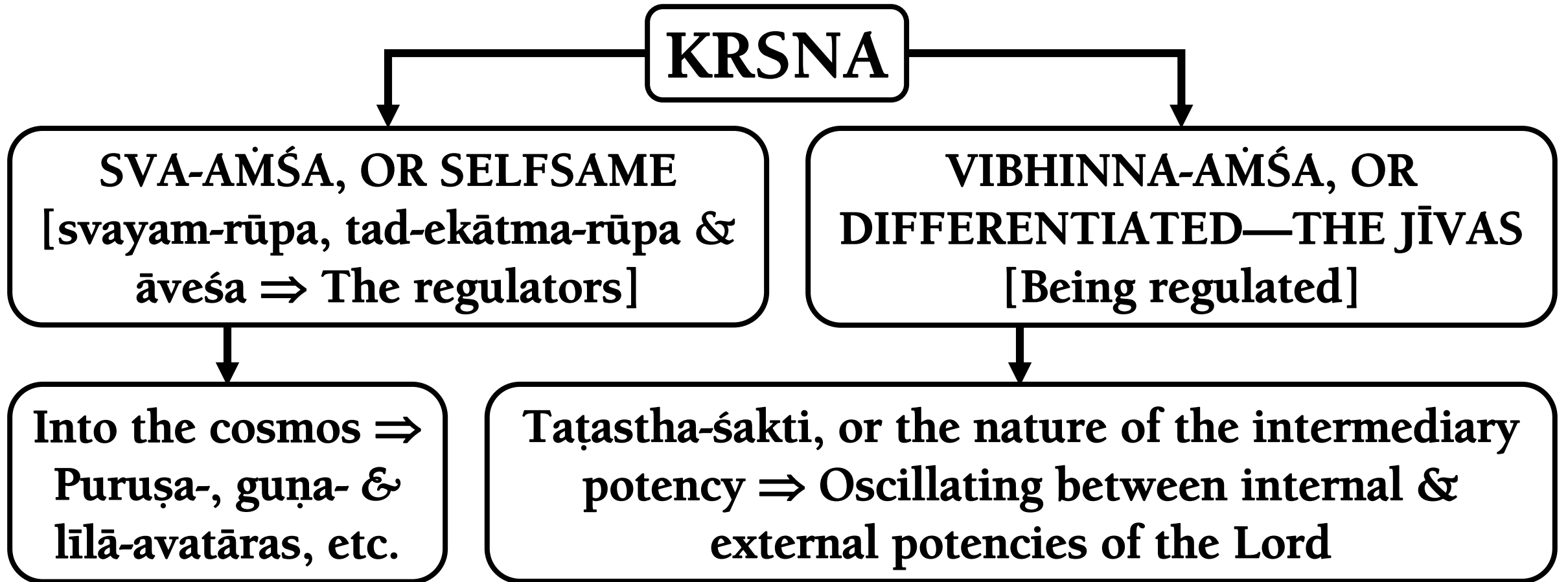
**LESSON 3, TEXTS 8-18:
THE 3 GUṆA
AVATĀRAS OF
PARAMĀTMĀ**

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**LESSON 2, TEXTS 2-7:
THREE PURUṢA
MANIFESTATIONS OF
PARAMĀTMĀ**

**LESSONS 1-3, TEXTS 1-18:
I. THE ONTOLOGY OF PARAMĀTMĀ—BHAGAVĀN'S
MANIFESTATION IN THE MATERIAL WORLD**

LESSON 3, TEXTS 8-18:
THE 3 GUNĀVATĀRAS OF PARAMĀTMĀ



DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS (Quiz questions) : Lesson 3, Texts 8-18: The 3 guna-avatars of Paramatma

1. How do we understand that Lord Visnu is transcendental (visuddha-sattva) to all 3 modes, even though He is the support for the function of sustenance, which is carried out through material mode of goodness? Does that mean He must be influenced by the sattva? [Texts 8, 14]
2. Which one of the 3 purusha avatars is the guna-avatara of Visnu? Hint: It is within the cosmos. [Text 11]
3. Lord Siva appears outwardly as inauspicious and renounced, while Lord Visnu is the husband of Laksmi, the Goddess of wealth & fortune. Nonetheless, it is observed that devotees of Siva are generally opulent, while those devoted to Visnu are bereft of material wealth. Why is this? In fact, this was the question of Pariksit to Suka. (Text 14)
4. What is the proper understanding and true intent of the apparent contradictory statements in scriptures: One should not consider Siva & Brahma as different from Visnu, and one should not see Brahma or Siva as equal to Visnu? [Text 17]
5. Who really is Sadasiva? [Text 17]

आदाव अभुच-छतधृती रजसास्य सर्गो
विष्णुः स्थितौ कृतौ-पतिर द्विज-धर्म-सेतुः ।
रुद्रोऽप्ययाय तमसा पुरुषः स आद्य
इति उद्भव-स्थिति-लयाः सततं प्रजासु ॥

“In the beginning, the puruṣa appeared as Brahmā thru rajo-guṇa for creation; as Viṣṇu, the Lord of sacrifice, protector of dharmā of the brāhmaṇas, and for maintenance; and as Śiva thru tamo-guṇa for destruction. In this way creation, maintenance and destruction of the living entities takes place at all times.” [11.4.5]

- **Tri-pāt, or -pāda** ⇒ Three trunks of the universal tree ⇒ **BRAHMĀ, VIṢṆU & RUDRA**
- The 3 guṇa-avatāras ⇒ **VIṢṆU** accepted sattva for the purpose of sustenance, or that He sustains the cosmos thru sattva; **BRAHMĀ & RUDRA** accepted the respective guṇas of the rajas & tamas for their function ⇒ JīvaG, however, concludes that **VIṢṆU** is transcendental to all three guṇas

TEXT 10: THE 3 GUNĀVATĀRAS APPEAR TO BLESS THE SAGE ATRI

तय्यमानम त्रिभुवनम प्राणायामैधसाग्निना ।
निर्गतेन मुनेर मूर्धनः समीक्ष्य प्रभवस त्रयः ॥
अप्सरो-मुनि-गन्धर्व-सिद्ध-विद्याधर-उरगैः ।
वितायमान-यशसस-तद-आश्रम-पदम ययुः ॥

“Brahmā, Viṣṇu & Śiva, spreading great fame, seeing that the 3 worlds, like fuel, were burning because of the fire emanating from the sage’s head by the fire of prāṇayāma, went to his hermitage along with Gandharvas, Siddhas, Vidyādharas and the Nāgas.” [4.1.21-22] ⇒ The sage mentioned here is Atri. Maitreya speaks.

- Atri Muni, along with his wife Ansūyā, went to a mountain to engage in severe austerities and penance to please the Supreme Regulator of the universe so that he may be blessed with a offspring like the Lord (4.1.20).
- Since he did not invoke any specific god my name, all three guṇa-avatāras appeared (the regulators of one of the functions of creation, sustenance and dissolution of the cosmos).
- Subsequently, all three took partial incarnations as Atri's sons: Soma, the moon god, was a portion of Brahmā, Dattātreya of Viṣṇu, and Durvāsā of Śiva.
- JīvaG now intends to show that Lord Viṣṇu encompasses and exceeds the other two and transcendental to material nature.

TEXTS 11 & 12: WHICH OF THE THREE REGULATORS IS SUPREME? VIṢṆU IS SUPREME AMONG THE GUNĀVATĀRAS

सरस्वत्यास तटे राजन्न ऋषयः सत्रम आसते ।
वितर्कः समभूत् तेषां त्रिष्वधीशेषु को महान् ॥

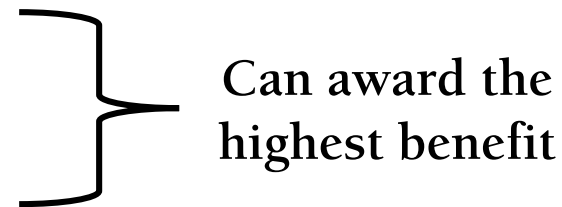
- “Once, O King, as a group of sages were performing a Vedic sacrifice on the banks of the Sarasvati River, a controversy arose among them as to which of the three chief deities is supreme.” [10.89.1]
- The sage Bhṛgu was assigned to ascertain the truth. He first went to visit Brahmā, his father. To test Brahmā’s forbearance, the sage neither paid the customary respect nor did he praise him. Brahmā became furious with anger, but contained his rage because the sage was his own son.

- Next Bhṛgu Muni went to the residence of his elder brother, Śiva, who rose up from his seat to embrace the sage. However, the sage avoided Śiva, saying that he disregarded social convention and transgressed the Vedic injunctions by wearing the garland of skulls and smearing his body with ashes of cremated bodies. Hearing these harsh words, Śiva became furious enough to about to attack the sage with his trident. But somehow Mātā Pārvati pacified her husband to not kill his own brother.
- Finally, the sage went to Vaikuṅṭha, where Lord Viṣṇu was lying down with His head resting in the lap of Lakṣmīdevi. To provoke the Lord's anger, the sage suddenly kicked Him hard in the chest. Viṣṇu, on the other hand, apologized the sage by saying that His chest being so hard might have hurt the sage's soft feet. In fact, the Lord began to massage the sage's feet. Because of the Lord's humility, the sage's heart melted and his conclusion was quite apparent.
- Actually, as pointed out by, it was Kṣirodakaśāyī-Viṣṇu (also known as Aniruddha), who lies on the Ocean of Milk (Śveta-dvīpa, or white island) within the cosmos the sage visited, rather than Vaikuṅṭha.

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति प्रकृतेर्गुणास्तैर
युक्तः परः पुरुष एक इहास्य धत्ते।
स्थिति-आदये हरि-विरिञ्चि-हरेति सञ्ज्ञाः
श्रेयांसि तत्र खलु सत्त्वतनोर्नृणां स्युः ॥

- “The one supreme puruṣa, accepting the guṇas of prakṛti known as sattva, rajas, and tamas, for creation, sustenance and destruction, is called Viṣṇu, Brahmā & Śiva, respectively. The best results for the devotees will come from Viṣṇu alone with śuddha-sattva body.” [1.2.23]
- Since only Lord Viṣṇu remains untouched by these qualities, the humanity can attain the ultimate welfare. Brahmā & Śiva are partial manifestations of Paramātmā, whereas Viṣṇu is Paramātmā Himself.

- Bhagavān assumes the role of an avatāra in two ways:
 - i. Thru His intrinsic potency, such as Matsya and Kūrma—the worshipable forms
 - ii. Thru His extrinsic potency consisting of the 3 guṇas referring to the 3 forms—only Viṣṇu is viśuddha-sattva ∴ He cannot have any material upādhis, since the material energy has no power to delimit Him in any way.
- Brahmā, however, is a jīva-tattva and is associated with rajas for creation because of being empowered by Viṣṇu
- Śiva, on the other hand, is neither a Viṣṇu-tattva nor a jīva-tattva, but that of a Paramātmā endowed with material potency (ex: yogurt to milk). However, he could be worshiped as:
 - The independent of Bhagavān (the concept of Śaivites) ⇒ forbidden or offensive
 - The presiding deity of an aspect of the material energy, such as tamas ⇒ material benefit
 - A Vaiṣṇava
 - A partial manifestation of Viṣṇu
 - A seat occupied by Viṣṇu as His representative



TEXT 13: THE PURUṢA IS DIRECTLY MANIFEST ONLY AS VIṢṆU

- Oneness of the 3 guṇa-avatāras (Brahmā, Viṣṇu & Śiva) ⇒ The presiding deity is the Supreme Puruṣa, who is only one ⇒ Viṣṇu
- Nevertheless, the gradation is indeed unavoidable because of the recognition of the relative superiority or inferiority either direct or indirect manifestations. Sūta makes this point [1.2.24]:

**पार्थिवाद् दारुणो धूमस तस्माद् अग्निस त्रयीमयः।
तमसस तु रजस तस्मात् सत्त्वं यद् ब्रह्मदर्शनम्॥**
- “Smoke is superior to dull wood, and fire, sacred to the Vedas, is superior to smoke. Similarly rajas is superior to tamas, and sattva is superior to rajas, since it is favorable for realizing the Lord.”

- JīvaG also cites Brahma-samhitā verses (5.49, 5.45-46) to show the respective positions of the 3 guṇa-avatāras (Brahmā, Viṣṇu & Śiva)
 - Lord Viṣṇu is compared to Śiva with an analogy of transformation of milk to yogurt. Doubt: Is Viṣṇu Himself transformed when He becomes Śiva? If yes, it would contradict statements that Viṣṇu is free from any kind of modifications. If no, then the analogy is inappropriate, as support by JīvaG. Viṣṇu has inconceivable potencies that allows Him to become Śiva w/out any transformation.
 - Insofar as Viṣṇu becoming Brahmā, who is compared to sun-crystal that reflects the light from the sun, there is some similarity as Viṣṇu is compared to the sun itself. Unlike Śiva, Brahmā does adhere to the Vedic injunctions, and assists the demigods and Manus in fulfilling their duties in sustaining the universe. Thus, Brahmā's acts does reflect the nature of Viṣṇu.
 - However, the Viṣṇu guṇa-avatāra is identical to Paramātmā, though one arises out of the other. This is analogous to a lamp being lit by another one, and that shines with the same brilliance as the original one.

TEXTS 14-18:

■ Supremacy of Viṣṇu in 3 verses (10.88.3-5)

शिवः शक्तियुतः शश्वत् त्रिलिङ्गो गुणसंब्रतः ।
वैकारिकस्तैजसश्च तामस चेति अहम त्रिधा ॥
ततो विकारा अभवन् षोडशामीषु किञ्चन ।
उपाधावन् विभूतीनां सर्वासामश्रुते गतिम् ॥
हरिर्हि निर्गुणः साक्षात् पुरुषः प्रकृतेः परः ।
स सर्वद्रगुपद्रष्टा तं भजन् निर्गुणो भवेत् ॥

- Śuka’s response to Parīkṣit’s query: “Śiva ever remains united with his energy. As tri-linga, he is endowed with the 3 guṇas of nature. He presides over the conditional “I” principle (ahaṅkāra, or ego), which is 3-fold—sāttvika, rājasika & tāmasika. From this (ego) manifest the 16 modifications (of prakṛti). One who worships (Śiva as presiding over) any among these (modifications) enjoys the fruit of all material opulences. But Lord Viṣṇu is the Supreme Person Himself, free from the 3 guṇas and beyond material nature. He is all-seeing (sarva-dr̥k) and the witness (upadraṣṭā). One who worships Him becomes free of the guṇas of nature.”
- Lord Viṣṇu takes away the wealth of His devotees, which enables them to see thru the false ego of independent enjoyer. They become fully devoted and attain Him.

- Once Nārada glorified Brahmā as the Supreme because of his prowess in creating the universe (secondarily creating the 8.4 million life forms and the 14 planetary systems of the universe). However, he was perplexed observing Brahmā always engaged in austerities, penance and meditation. If he was supreme, why did Brahmā need to perform austerities and who did he meditate on. Brahmā, however, corrects his son and disciple that he is not the supreme but it was Viṣṇu who is. He is just subordinate to the Lord, and so is Śiva.

सृजामि तन्नियुक्तोऽहं हरो हरति तद्वशः।
विश्वम पुरुषरूपेण परिपाति त्रिशक्तिधृक् ॥

- “Brahmā spoke to Nārada about the direct oneness with the Supreme Puruṣa only in regard to Viṣṇu of the 3 guṇa-avatāras.”
[2.6.31; TEXT 15]

- Śuka continues to hint at the oneness between Viṣṇu and the Puruṣa, who never takes birth within the material creation, unlike Brahmā & Śiva [TEXT 16]

अत्रानुवर्ण्यतेऽभीक्षणं विश्वात्मा भगवान् हरिः।
यस्य प्रसादजो ब्रह्मा रुद्रः क्रोधसमुद्भवः ॥

- “Continuously being described here in SB is Hari, who is immanent as the Self of the cosmos and transcendent as Bhagavān. It is from His delight that Brahmā is born and from His anger that Rudra arises.” [12.5.1]
- Śiva is a very prominent deity in India, and the supremacy of Viṣṇu is not easily acceptable to non-Vaiṣṇavas, especially those who are Śaivaites. Hence, JīvaG continues “hitting a nail into a wall.”

TEXT 17: VIṢṆU IS CONCLUSIVE OF AND SUPERIOR TO BRAHMĀ & ŚIVA

- There are references in the Vedic literature, including SB, which purport to state that Brahmā & Śiva are equal to Viṣṇu (4.7.54; 12.10.22). In fact, many Purāṇas warn that if one regards these 3 gods as different from one another, such a person will suffer in hellish planets (Padma- and Nārada-Purāṇa).
- JīvaG, however, counters that Brahmā & Śiva are not separate from Viṣṇu, yet they have different roles Viṣṇu w.r.t. the creation and dissolution. They are not independent controllers, but manifestations of Viṣṇu for executing specific functions. In the story of Atri Muni, the manifestations of Śiva & Brahmā in the form of Durvāsā and Soma are not on a par with Dattātreya, a manifestation of Viṣṇu.

- One may simply wonder why scriptures bewilder people?
 - JīvaG says that not all scriptures carry equal authority. They are related to the 3 qualities of material nature, just as the 3 guṇa-avatāras (Brahmā, Viṣṇu & Śiva) are similarly related. They just cater to people in different modes. However, ones in the mode of sattva are superior to those in the lower modes.
- Sadāśiva is not the supreme—Śaivites refer Śiva as Sadāśiva (Text 17.4)
 - JīvaG also refutes the contention that Sadāśiva is the supreme controller and that Brahmā, Viṣṇu & Śiva are his expansions.
 - The apparent praise of Śiva as being supreme in 8.7.31 was simply to induce Śiva to drink the deadly poison kālākūṭa.

- In fact, Śiva tells Durvāsā: “We (demigods) have no power, dear son, over the all-pervading Supreme, in whom other universes, too, similar to this—and which are the amalgamated bodies of the Jīvas and Brahmā—appear and disappear in thousands of the appointed time. We wander in these universes.” [9.4.56]
- The scriptures that describe Sadāśiva as Supreme, it is Bhagavān and Puruṣa are called Sadāśiva and not the reverse.
- In conclusion, JīvaG cites a verse spoken by Sūta (1.8.21) in reference to the story of Viṣṇu as Vāmandeva, wherein He begged 3 steps of land from Bali. Upon Bali’s granting of the charity, the dwarf form of the Lord expanded in size and covered the entire universe in two steps, reaching Satyaloka of Brahmā, who washing His feet by pouring water on it and then stored the water in his sacred pot. This then become the holy river Ganges.

TEXT 18: BALARĀMA TOO IS BUT A PART OF A PART OF KRSNA'S POTENCY

- Lord Balarāma Himself says to the Kauravas who had captured Sāmba, one of the sons of Krsna, “What is a worldly king’s throne to Krsna, when Brahmā, Śiva, and even I myself and Lakṣmī are but portions of His portions who perpetually carry on our heads the dust of His lotus feet, which sanctifies even the sacred waters of pilgrimage and which the cosmic administration of all the worlds reverentially hold upon their beautifully adorned heads.” [10.68.37]
- Thus far, JīvaG has discussed the 3 puruṣāvatāras of Viṣṇu and the 3 guṇāvatāras of which Viṣṇu is the supreme, and it is He who manifests Brahmā & Śiva.