Introduction:

The word *jnāna*, derived from the root *jñā* - to know, means “knowledge”. Etymologically, therefore, it refers to any information that the human mind gathers and digests. This information usually refers to the world at large in which man lives. But in the realm of philosophy, the term is applicable at two levels - microcosmic and macrocosmic. The microcosm refers to man as an individual while, macrocosm implies the universe; thus *jnāna* refers to man’s awareness of his own self and his relation and reality of the cosmos of which he is a part. As man is endowed with the faculty of thought and reason ever since the dawn of civilization he activated it to gain awareness. This awareness grew in depth with the passage of time.

The *RV* marks the beginning of man’s quest in this direction. Awed by the natural phenomena, the *Rgvedic* man paid tribute to it by endowing them divinity and worshipping them (Polytheism). Thereafter, one god became supreme at a point of time, and at other times different divinities were given prominence one after the other (Henotheism). Alongwith this normal belief in divinity an expression of scepticism also occurs (1). *Varuṇa* is the guardian of the moral law-*Ṛta*. Further, there is an important tendency of the “assertion of the unity of the gods and of the world” which forms “the one important contribution of the *RV* to the philosophy of India in the form of *brahmodyas* or philosophical riddles. The *RV*.I.129. voices the seer’s quest about the nature and creation of the universe. Here there is a conception of the unity of the universe in the form of *Sat* -- the first existing thing. Desire or *kāma* is the first seed of the mind. The supreme deity is distinct from the gods who are later than creation. This *Sat* is gradually named *Prajāpati* or later, *Hiranyagarbha*.
The Brāhmaṇas more or less restrict themselves to the sacrificial rituals, and are not much concerned with the aspect of knowledge. Therefore, the Vedic tradition demarcates this portion from the Upaniṣads referring to the former as Karma-kāṇḍa and the latter as Jñāna-kāṇḍa.

The Upaniṣads hold that salvation - mokṣa can be had through jñāṇa alone. Two new ideas, namely, the doctrines of karma and metempsychosis or rebirth, are introduced by the Upaniṣads. Ignorance ajñāṇa is the cause of rebirth and each act caused by desire brings bondage to the transmigratory cycle which is misery alone. Therefore, ajñāṇa has to be destroyed. True jñāṇa is the knowledge of the identity of the Brahman and the Ātman (which are ultimately one - the only True, Blissful principle). This jñāṇa is expressed in the four famous statements, namely, Aham Brahmasmi, Tat-tvam-asi, Ayam ātmā Brahma, and Sarvam khalu idam Brahma.

Jñāṇa in the BG:-

"The Upaniṣads are the milch cows, Lord Kṛṣṇa is the milkman, Arjuna is the calf, and the wise men are the enjoyers of the sweet (lit-great) milk in the form of the nectar of the Gītā" (3). Thus, enjoying the position of one of the supporting pillars of the Sanātana Dharma, the BG not only propagates but strongly advances the true spirit of the Upaniṣads in its unique way. In this sense, the BG expounds the jñāna as dealt with in the Upaniṣads and adds much more to it (probably because the Lord Himself taught it while the Upaniṣads were the visions of the realized seers). Accordingly, jñāna refers to two points --

1. “the intellectual pathway to perfection”.
2. “the goal of perfection” (4).

However, the word jñāna applies in both these senses.
In addition to the acceptance of the concepts from the *Upaniṣads* the metaphysics dealt with by the *BG* is that of *Sāṃkhya* with modifications.

A study of the *Jñāna Yoga* in the *BG* with this in view reflects the basic assumption of three levels of entities:

1. the *Ātman* which has to be released through *jñāna*;
2. the *jagat* or the empirical world with which the *Ātman* is bound due to *ajñāna*; and
3. the *Brahman* who is to be realized through *jñāna*. (cf. The Highest Reality)

**The Ātman**: 

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The *BG* opens with the preaching of the pure philosophy of the *Upaniṣads* called *Sāṃkhya buddhiḥ* (5), and *Kṛṣṇa*’s retort to *Arjuna* about his grief for those whom he should not grieve for, and yet speak words of wisdom (*pra[jñāvādān bhāṣase*). The reason behind this is that the wise do not lament for either dead (*gatasun*) or the living (*agatasun*) (6). The existence of the *Ātman* for eternal times is asserted by the body (*deha*) which houses the *Ātman* (*dehin*). The body is destructible and comes to an end, while the soul (*dehin*) is indestructible (*avināśin*) and incompressible (*aprameya*) (8). It neither slays nor is slain (*na hanti na hanyate*) (9), is neither born, nor dies, nor will it ever cease to be. It is unborn (*ajah*), eternal (*sāśvataḥ*), permanent (*nityaḥ*) and primeval (*purāṇaḥ*) (10). Therefore, the incident of death—a natural process which belongs to the body and not to the *Ātman*; the changes of the body, namely—childhood (*kaumāram*), youth (*yauvanam*) and old age (*jarā*) do not refer to the *Ātman* (11). It casts off the old bodies and assumes new ones (*sārīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇāni anyāṇi sāmyāti navāṇi dehī*) just as one casts off the worn out garments and puts on new ones (12). Therefore, it is futile to grieve over the death of a person which is merely the end of his body. *Kṛṣṇa* argues for the
sake of it (atha ca) that even if one considers the Ātman as assuming birth (nityajātam) and dying (nityam vā manyase mṛtam), one has to experience the inevitable and the eternal principle of the world (aparīthārya artha) that birth and death are inter-related and certain (dhruvah) (13). Thus, the Ātman remains beyond comprehension, is regarded as a wonder (ascaryavat), but can be realized only rarely (svā api evam veda na sa eva kaścit) (14). Kṛṣṇa presents this immortality of the soul-Ātman as the first argument to convince Arjuna about his duty as a warrior.

While explaining to Arjuna that desire is the root of all miseries and an insatiable fire (duspūrena analena) (15) covering jñāna of the Ātman (16), Kṛṣṇa refers to the hierarchy of the levels of consciousness, namely, the senses (indriyāṇi) are great (parāṇi), the manas is greater than these (indriyebhyah param), intelligence or buddhi is still greater (manasah parā), but the Ātman (Saḥ) is beyond buddhi (buddheḥ parataḥ) transcends all of them (17). Realization of this Self enables one to control the enemy in the form of kāma/ desire (kāmarūpaṁ satrum jahi) and go beyond the transmigratory cycle (18).

Thus, the BG asserts the doctrine of the immortality of the Ātman in the Upaniṣadic tone and asserts in the same strain that as only the Ātman is the friend (ātmā eva hi ātmanah bandhuh) and enemy of the Self (ātmā eva ripuḥ ātmanah) one can uplift himself through this knowledge (19). This Ātman has to be known; the knowledge of this and the Brahman is called jñāna by the BG.

Being immutable and yet embodied, the Ātman being immersed in the Prakṛti and its ever changing modes, is called Puruṣa or akṣara (20). It is an aṁśal fragment or a partial manifestation (so to say), of the Lord- the Supra - cosmic Reality (Mama eva aṁśaḥ jīvaloke jīvabhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ | Manah- saṣṭhāni-indriyāni prakṛtisthāni karṣati ||) (27). It is the Ātman who embodying Itself takes, carries and enjoys on the five senses and the mind, like the wind carrying the fragrances (22). Its departure (utkramantam), residence (sthitam) and experiences of the modes of Prakṛti (bhuṇjanam vā guṇānvitam) can be observed only by those who have the
eyes in the form of jñāna (pasyanti jñānacaksusah) (23). This Ātman, again, is the essential nature or svabhāva/adhyātma of the Supreme (24).

The Jagat :-

Alongwith the gain of the jñāna of the Ātman, one has to realize the truth that the Ātman is different from the jagat or the empirical world in which It assumes the body and gives it up like old clothes. The BG calls the detailed knowledge of the principles of the world and its existence as vijnāna.

The jñāna and vijnāna together thus respectively represent the existence of the Ultimate in the diverse universe, and the being of the diversity in the Ultimate; both together leave nothing else to be known (yat jñātva na iha bhūyāḥ anyat jñātavyam avaśīṣyate) (25).

This jagat or the empirical world is variously called aparā prakṛti or lower nature (26) and kṣetra (27), kṣara puruṣa or perishable person (28), and are respectively explained briefly as the eightfold division (the five principles, mind, intelligence and the ego-sense) (āṣṭadāh prakṛti), the perishable body, and all these “existences”. The knowledge of the parā prakṛti or the higher nature is essential (29). The Kṣetrajña or the knower of the Kṣetra is the Lord Himself (30). The BG also defines the Brahman as aksāra, the Ātman on assuming the body as svabhāva, the Prakṛti as adhibhūta. When one knows both fully well, nothing more remains for him to know (31) -- he is the jñāni -- for, this is the true knowledge( Kṣetra-Kṣetrajñayoḥ jñānam yat tat jñānam matam mama II) (32). The BG acknowledges its debt in this respect to the sages of the Vedas and the Brahma-sūtras (33).

The elements constituting Kṣetra are the pañca mahābhūtas, ahamkāra, buddhi, the avyakta (prakṛti), five karmendriyas, five jñānendriyas, manas and the
five objects of senses (*indriya-gocaraḥ*), desire (*icchaḥ*), hatred (*dvesaḥ*), pleasure (*sukhaḥ*), pain (*duḥkhaḥ*), the aggregate (*saṁghataḥ*), intelligence (*cetanaḥ*), and steadfastness (*dhrīṭiḥ*): all these constitute *jnāna* along with all the modifications (34). [Elsewhere (35), the *pañca mahābhūtas*, the mind, the intelligence and the ego-sense constitute the eightfold or *aṣṭadha aparā prakṛti*].

The above *Kṣetra* or *Prakṛti* of twenty-three elements (including *Prakṛti*) is evolved by the Lord Himself. *Prakṛti* (also called *māya*, cf. *Māyā* in the chapter of Minor Concepts) consisting of the three qualities of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* and also called *Mahad Brahma* (*mama yoniḥ mahad brahma*) is the womb wherein the Lord casts His seed (*tasmin garbham dadhāmi aham*) to give birth to all the beings in the empirical world, (*Sambhavah sarvabhūtanām tataḥ bhavati*) (36). From thereon begins the creation of the world and beings which inherit the three qualities of *Prakṛti*. This creative force brings beings into existence (37), is designated as *karma* (*bhūtabhūvodaraḥ viṣargaḥ karmasamjñitaḥ*) (38) (Interestingly, the *BG* mentions the periodic evolution and dissolution of the *jagat* and the various existences from *Prakṛti* during the day and night of *Brahmā* respectively) (39).

Therefore, pride, deceit, violence, involvement in the sensual pleasures, death, old age, illnesses, pain, etc. are the feelings basic to the beings-all called *mātrāsparśaḥ* and lead to sufferings (40), which form *ajñāna* and *āsurī sampatti* (41), whereas the contrary qualities constitute *jnāna* (42) and *daivi sampatti* leading to freedom (43). Significant is the fact that the virtues mentioned here include moral values besides the theoretical *jnāna*. The predominant qualities of *rajas* and *tamas* bind one to this *jagat* (44), and thus lead to *ajñāna*; but *sattva* is the cause of the awakening of *jnāna* (45). This *Prakṛti*, again, is *anādi* and divine or *daivi*.

Though the *BG* refers to these two, i.e. the *Ātman* and the *jagat* as different, it interprets them as two natures of the Supreme- the higher or *para* and the lower or *apara prakṛti* (46).
The knowledge of these two and the third level - the Supreme Person or Purusottama who transcends the former two (Yasmāt ksaram aitāh aham aksarāt api ca uttamaḥ | Atāh asmi loke vede ca prathitāḥ purusottamāḥ) (47) is the supreme knowledge or param jñānam leading one to the highest perfection.

Again, in the ideology and terminology of the Upaniṣads, the BG eloquently uses the metaphor of the aśvattha tree to describe this cosmos or jagat. This cosmic tree originating from God, is called ārdhvamūlam. Its branches go downwards (adhah-sākham) as it extends into the world, and the Vedas (chandāṇis) are its leaves. Its branches being nourished by the guṇas of Prakṛti (guṇā-prāyuddhāḥ) extend both below and above, with the sense - objects as its twigs (vīṣayapravālāḥ), while its roots related with karmas stretch below into the human world (48). This tree is a mysterious one, as neither its real form nor its end nor the beginning nor its foundation are perceived (49). Though the BG here specifically mentions the cutting up of this firmly rooted aśvattha tree with the sword of detachment (asahga-sastrena) (50), it is implied that the jñāna of the same is essential.

The Brahman or Purusottama (cf. The Highest Reality).

The BG lays down the conditions for achieving jñāna as -- (1) faith (Sraddhā), (2) keenness (tatpara-ta), and (3) sense-control (sānyata-indriyatva)(51). These are the qualities required even for being free from the bondage of karma (mucyante te api karmabhīḥ) (52). The others cannot be redeemed (53), for, jñāna destroys all doubts (jñāna-sacchinna-saṃsārayam) (54). In terms of sacrifices also, it is firmly held by Kṛṣṇa that jñāna-yajñā excels all the types of material sacrifices (55), the brahma yajñā being the best of them (56).
The BG praises jñāna in exalted terms. A paṇḍita is not only one whose undertakings are devoid of desire, but also whose actions are burnt up by the fire of jñāna (jñānagni-dagdha-karmāṇam) (57). In fact, all actions - without an exception, culminate in jñāna (58). Jñāna does not lead to mohav confusion (Yat jñātvā na punah moham evam yāsyasti) (59). This jñāna widens man’s vision and he perceives the identity between all the beings, himself and the Supreme (Yena bhūtam aśeṣena draksyasi ātmani Yathomayi) (60). Now Kṛṣṇa views jñāna in superlative terms. He says that even the worst sinner can cross over all the evils of the world only by means of the boat of jñāna (jñānaplanena eva) (61). Moreover there is nothing more sanctifying than the jñāna in this world (jñāna-nirdhūta-kalmasah) (62) (na hi jñānena sadāḥam pavitram iva vidyate) (63). Therefore, it reduces to ashes the bondage of all actions just as the burning fire the fuel (jñānagnih sarvakarmāṇi bhasmasat-kurute) (64).

The BG explains the cause of moha of beings as the ajnāna of the identity between the Ātman and the Brahman, which envelopes man’s being and intelligence (ajñānaṁ avṛtam jñānam tena muhyanti jantavaḥ) (65). When this ajñāna is annihilated by the realization of this oneness, it lights up the Self like the Sun - it can never be covered (ādityavat jñānam prakāsatī tatparam) (66). Such a jñānī attains supreme peace (67) as he reaches the state from where there is no return (apunarāvṛttim) (68). He is a tattvavīti/owner of the truth, and remains beyond the play of the guṇas of Prakṛti (guṇāḥ guṇeṣu vartante iti marvā na sajjate) (69). A jñānī, according the BG, does not have to meditate by residing away from the society; — he ceaselessly works for the sake of universal welfare (kuryāt vidvān tathā asaktaḥ cikīrṣuḥ lokaṁ graham) (70) (cf. Karma Yoga). Moreover, a still greater responsibility lies on his shoulders :- he should tolerate with understanding the masses of men who being ignorant, perform actions with attachment by not unsettling their minds. In fact, he should be their guiding star by coaxing them to act in the spirit of yoga as he himself does (71).
According to the BG, although jnāna is supreme, it always co-exists with karma. The BG holds him alone as a karmayogī and a jñāni who perceives akarma in karma and vice versa (72) and knowing thus he is liberated from the misery of the world (yad jñātvā mokṣyase aśubhāt) (73). The verbs "viddhi", "jñātvā", "jñātī", "abhijñātī" and others are frequently employed and emphasized by the BG in this sense also.

The BG says that jnāna is to be had from the guru by praṇītā—humble reverence, pari-praśna— inquiry and sevā—service; thus the jñānis who have seen the truth shall instruct their disciples.

Characteristics of the jñāni :

The BG terms a jñāni as trigunātīta, i.e., one who has transcended the three guṇas of Prakṛti. The characteristics of such a person are --

A. Equanimity (samatva, udāśīnatva) towards all situations and qualities.

B. Remaining/Dwelling in one’s own Self (svastha-tā).

C. Firmness of the mind (dīrgraya).

D. Renunciation of the initiation of all the actions (sarvāraṁbha-parityāga).

E. Unfailing devotion towards the Supreme (avyābhicāra-bhaktiyoga)(74).

These characteristics are more or less the same as those of the sthitaprajña (cf. Karma Yoga) and bhakta (cf. Bhakti Yoga), for, the marks of perfection are the same irrespective of the manner in which they are reached.
**Jñāna in the SBP:**

The Eleventh Skandha - the conclusion of the saga of Lord Kṛṣṇa, is the exposition of the attainment of mokṣa/liberation from the transmigratory cycle. Therefore, in the traditions of the Upaniṣads and the BG, the delineation of this jñāna forms the most significant subject-matter of this Skandha.

Although the SBP is clearly more inclined towards bhakti than towards karma or jñāna, it describes and extols jñāna in equally eloquent terms repeated by it at various places in this Skandha itself. The exposition of the Skandha begins with Vasudeva's request to Nārada (75) to explain him the way to attain salvation. In reply, Nārada narrates the dialogue between the Navayogis and the king Nimi (76) (cf. The Navayogis and the Bhāgavata Dharma) which forms the gist of the detailed account on the subject by Kṛṣṇa to Uddhava later on. The characteristic features of this dialogue are jñāna colored with bhakti and the teachers being the Navayogis who are not only bhaktas, but also the expert exponents of the Ātmavidya (77). The exposition of the Bhāgavata Dharma by Kṛṣṇa to Uddhava is called jñānamṛta-nectar of knowledge arisen from the ocean of bliss (ānandamṛta sambhrtam) (78), concentrated gist of jñāna and vijnāna (79). This jñāna is repeatedly glorified and its attainment is referred to in eloquent words (See the later part of the chapter). The other place which mentions the purpose of the exposition of these teachings is when Uddhava beseeches Kṛṣṇa to satisfy his quest for knowing the Ultimate Truth (80), as he is convinced that it is the Lord alone who is capable of instructing him about the Ātman (81).

Thus, jñāna forms an essential part of the Bhāgavata Dharma. Therefore, the SBP defines and explains it at length.

The Lord announces that as the persons endowed with jñāna and vijnāna attain His highest state and a jñānī bears Him ever in himself, he is most dear to
Him (jnānī priyatamaḥ atah me jñānena asau bibharti mām) (82). The achievement (siddhi) given by jñāna is superior to that given by tapas, japa and other disciplines (na alam kurvanti vām siddhim yā jñānakalayā kṛtā) (83). The munis have attained the Highest Reality by sacrificing the jñāna and viñāna to Him (jñāna-viñāna-yajñena mām iṣṭvā) - the Lord of sacrifices and the Self within, in their own senses (84). Therefore, the Lord advises Uddhava to adore Him (bhaja mām bhaktibhāvitaḥ) by knowing himself as the Ātman (jñānena sahitaṁ jñātvā svātmānam) and thus being endowed with jñāna and viñāna (85).

On hearing this advice, Uddhava requests Kṛṣṇa to instruct him the ancient and the holy (suddham) gospel in completeness (vipulam) which consists of renunciation (vairāgya) and realization (viñāna), along with the Bhakti Yoga (86). Here jñāna is looked upon as ancient and complete probably because it was thoroughly dealt with in the Upaniṣads and the BG. Both jñāna and bhakti are desired to be understood by Uddhava, which indicates that jñāna occupied an indispensable position in the text. Kṛṣṇa’s exposition of this mokṣa-dharma (87) is co-related with and is a repetition of the teachings on jñāna, vairāgya, viñāna, śraddhā and bhakti combined as given by Bhīṣma to Yudhiṣṭhira after the Mahābhārata war (88).

As a contrast to the BG, the scope of the term jñāna is well-defined here. Jñāna or knowledge is that by which one looks upon:-

(a) the 28 causal categories, namely, the groups of nine (ie. Prakṛti, Puruṣa, Mahat, Ahaṅkāra and the five Tanmātras), eleven (ie. five karmendriyas, five jñānendriyas and the mind), five (ie. five gross elements or pañca mahābhūtas and three (ie. guṇas) as continuously persisting in all the levels of cosmos from Brahman till the non-sentient;
(b) the One Supreme Principle permeates through all these causal categories, and
(c) also in the empirical world and the bhūtas (tat jñānam mama niścitam) (89).
The term *vijñāna* is defined too. Unlike the perception of the Supreme as the underlying principle in the multiplicity of the cosmos as *jñāna*, *vijñāna* is the perception of this Supreme Principle as excluded from this multiplicity (*etad eva hi vijñānam na tathaikena yena yat*) (90) (In other words, *jñāna* is the direct perception of the Ultimate, while *vijñāna* is the indirect perception); thus, one perceives the empirical world as transient (91) and changing, while *Sat-Brahman* - Ultimate is the one and the only principle that remains non-transient and unchanging always (*Adau ante ca madhye ca sṛjyāt sṛjyam yat anviyāt I Punah tat pratisahkrāme yat sisyeta tat eva sat II*) (92). A person who realizes this renounces the world of multiplicity (*virajyate*) (93). In brief, *jñāna* is *vāmya darsanam*, i.e., the perception of the one *Ātman* pervading all (94) and the resultant *vairāgya* is *gunēsvasaṅgah*, i.e., the non-attachment for the worldly objects (95).

In other words, *jñāna* is the same as *viveka* or discrimination (*jñānam vivekah*), and the means to develop it are the *Vedas*, *tapas*, experience, tradition and reasoning and its fruit is the understanding of the Supreme as the ever existing principle of the universe and time, as is the case of the basic metal gold and the objects made therefrom. This perception is proclaimed in the aphoristic manner - *ahamasya tadvat* - "like I am the one" who is the changeless in this changing world (96), thereby implying the feeling of identity between the *Ātman* and the *Brahman*. Thus the *ŚBP*, unlike the *BG*, defines and explains these two terms at length.

The *BG* expounds the *Karma Yoga*, the *Bhakti Yoga* and the *Jñāna Yoga* as the paths leading to salvation, - in fact, the earlier two are the *BG*’s gifts to mankind, but it does not emphatically lay down at one place all the three of them as independent paths as does the *ŚBP*. The Lord tells *Uddhava* that He has proclaimed three types of *Yogas* as means to achieve the welfare or *śreya* for men, namely, those of *jñāna*, *karma* and *bhakti*; there is no other way to achieve *śreya* except for these (*na upayaḥ anyah asti kutracti*) (97). The Lord further says that each of these belongs to specific categories of men. Thus, *Jñāna Yoga* is meant for those who are disgusted with works, their fruits and who therefore, abandon them
Karma Yoga is fit to be followed by those who have desires and are, therefore, keen to perform actions and enjoy their fruits (teṣu-anirvinnācittanām karma-yogah tu kāminām) (99) ; while Bhakti Yoga is for the one who develops śraddhā in the Lord through some past good work or through the Lord’s grace, who neither has a keen spirit of renunciation nor is too much attached to the worldly things (100). It is further said that this jñāna can be obtained by performing one’s own dharma (svadharmasthah) (101) and that too, only through the human body (102). The latter is the thought of the ŚBP, and is in line with the Lord’s proclamation that the human form is extremely dear to Him (cf. Bhakti Yoga).

Alongwith the above definitions, the ŚBP also defines the term pandita- he who having resorted to the pure knowledge, has evenness of outlook and looks upon all beings equanimously (samādṛṣṭa panditaḥ mataḥ) as His manifestations (mad-bhāvam bhāvayataḥ) whether they are holy men, the sun or a spark of fire, and a gentle/tranquil or a cruel person (103). This evenness of outlook corresponds to the samadarśitva of the pandita towards cow, elephant and so on at the BG 5.18.

However, like the BG (5.6; 12.3,4,5) the ŚBP also accepts that Jñānamārga is difficult to be followed (suduscarati) by one who has not conquered his senses (anātmanah) (104). Knowing this fully well as also that they would be deluded by Māyā on this path (tvat māyayā anāti vihatāḥ), the Paramahamsas also prefer Bhakti Yoga to Jñāna Yoga (105). The ŚBP goes a step further and emphasizes that jñāna dawns on a person only due to God’s grace (106).

The Ātman :-

The Upanishadic principle of the identity between the Ātman and the Brahman and the non-identity between the Ātman and the world or Prakṛti or the body is accepted by the ŚBP. However, unlike the BG which also accepts this, the
ŚBP elucidates at a greater length both the aspects of this principle. As far as the second aspect is concerned, the ŚBP explains the process by which this *ajñāṇa* or bondage or identity of the Ātman with the Prakṛti arises; for, it says that an ignorant person (*abudha*) being unable to distinguish the Ātman from the body or Prakṛti (*prakṛterēvātmānāma-vivicya*), gets entangled in the objects of the senses (*tattvena sparśa-samādihah*) and in the transmigratory existence (*saṁśāram pratipadāyate*) (107).

Puruṣa and Prakṛti (i.e. the body) are different from each other as the body is the result of the permutations and combinations and thus changes due to the guṇas of Prakṛti (*eṣāḥ vaikārikaḥ sargaḥ guṇavyatikarātmaḥ*) (108). It is this *guṇamayaḥ māyāḥ* which creates multiplicity and the resultant apprehensions (*anekadūḥa vikalpa-buddhiśca*) under three divisions: *adhyātma*, *adhidaiva* and *adhibhūta* (109). (cf. Changeful Conditions of the Ātman under Minor Concepts). The buddhi creates by this *ajñāṇa* or false identification, and the Ātman, who is in fact beyond it, is drawn into this false worldly panorama and experiences; it is like a person witnessing a dance or listening to music, dancing or singing in one’s own mind in tune with his identification with the artist, or like the apparent movement of the trees seen in the reflection of water full of ripples, or like one enjoying happiness in dream or in a reverie (110). The Ātman is under the domination of Time (*saṁśāraḥ ādhāvati kālatantraḥ*) (111). However, such an experience lasts only till *jñāṇa* of this non-identity between the Ātman and Prakṛti dawns on the mind of a person, just as the dream-experience lasts only as long as one is asleep (*Arthe hi avidyamāne api saṁśāraḥ na nivartate | Dhyāyataḥ viśayān asya svapne anarthāgamaḥ yathā II* (112). Therefore, the Lord’s advice to Uddhava is not to run after these illusory sense-enjoyments, but to know that the lack of awareness or *ajñāṇa* is the cause of the mind (*ātmā grahaṇanirbhātam paśya vaikalpikam bhramam)* (113).

This point is reiterated in the Bhikṣu-gitā. Neither a person nor a deity nor the stars nor *karma* nor time is responsible for the happiness or misery of man; the mind alone is the cause of turning this wheel of *saṁśāra* (*manāḥ param kāraṇam*
amananti samsāra-cakram parivartayet yat) (114); the reason being so is that the powerful mind generates the guṇas (manah guṇān vai srjate baliyāh) and the resultant diverse karmas (115). The Ātman assumes upon Itself this projection of the sāṁsāra through the mind (manah svalīgham parighyam kāmān) and is subjected to the enjoyments and sufferings rising from it (116). Therefore, the Bhikṣu calls this mind as a terrible formidable divinity (bhīṣmaḥ hi devah sahasah sahiyān) as all the senses are totally under its control. Therefore, its controller is the true master of all senses (yunīyād vaśe tam saḥ hi devadevah) (117). Therefore due to the mind, men are involved in this sāṁsāra looking upon themselves and others as separate entities from each other and get entangled in this dark endless transmigratory existence (118). But when the jñāna dawns through total dedication to the Lord, the mind is purified, the truth of the Ātman shines in it just as the sunlight being seen by treating the blinding eyesight and one gets over the limitless expanse of the darkness of ignorance (119). In the aphoristic manner, it is said that bondage and freedom caused by avidyā and vidyā are the aspects of the Lord's māyā, His powers; - there is, in fact, no bondage or liberation to the Ātman or to Him (120).

The SBP follows the footsteps of the BG in describing the Ātman but it does so more eloquently, elaborately and poetically than does the latter.

The contrast between the vidyā - the knowledge and avidyā - the ignorance is brought out by the Lord Himself in the beginning of His preaching. The knowledge is the cause of liberation while the ignorance leads to bondage. They both are referred to here as the aspects of the Māyā of Lord Himself (121). In the Upaniṣadic strain and ideology (122) the SBP calls the free soul (Brahman) and the bound soul (Ātman) as suparṇas who are friends. They belong to the same category of consciousness (sadṛṣau sakñhāyau), reside by chance (yadrechāyā) in the same nest on the tree (also body, as Śrīdhara notes). Of these, one (i.e. the bound soul) eats the fruits of this tree (i.e. karma - phala) due to its involvement in avidyā, while the other (i.e. the free soul/Brahman) does not do so as It knows Its
own nature, is enlightened (vidyāmayaḥ) and ever-free (nityamuktah) (123). An ignorant person (abudhah) residing in the body, that is a product of his past actions (called daiva here), gets bound thinking that what his senses are doing is done by him (kartiśmīti nibadhyate) (124); while a knowing person (vidvān) becomes inactive, unperturbed (avikriyaḥ), knowing and hence not identifying himself with the senses and their objects (125) (cf. guṇāḥ guṇeṣu variante iti matvā na sajjate) (126).

The ŚBP says that the Supreme Being (bhūtātmā/Brahman) created the beings out of the three guṇas of His own projection and entered into them. Thus this Ātman residing in the body is really the Prabhu - the master of the body; it is thus the embodied being/dehabhīt (127). Thus this Ātman is never born (na jajāna), nor dies (na marisyati), nor grows (na edhate), nor weakens (na kṣīyate), is unchanging and present always and everywhere, is the continuing witness of all the changing conditions of the body (savanaḥ vyabhicarīṇām). However, It is seen as many and momentary when reflected in the modifications of the senses. In this respect, it is comparable to the prāṇa continuing in all the different changing conditions and bodies of various species, along with the Ātman. During the state of deep sleep, the Ātman remains as kūṭastha - immutable pure consciousness - devoid of senses, ego etc. (Aṇḍeṣu peṣiṣu taruṣu aviniścitesu prāṇah hi jīvam upadhāvatī tatra tatra lSanne yadindriyagāne ahami ca prasupete kūṭastha aśāyam ēte tadanusmṛtiḥ naḥ) (128). The Ātman is not affected by the body in which it resides and by its constituents like fire, water etc. just as the clouds though blown by the wind do not affect the sky (Tejāḥ-ap-annamayaḥ bhāvaiḥ meghādyaiḥ vāyunā ēritaiḥ | Na sprśyate nabhaḥ tadvat kālaśrūtaḥ guṇaiḥ pumān) (129). Further, all the 9 changes brought on the body from conception till death by Time, affect the body but not the Ātman, as do the waxing and waning of the moon refer only to its digits and not to the moon itself (Visargaḍyaiḥ śmaśāṇāntaiḥ bhāvaiḥ dehasya na ātmanaiḥ | Kailānām iva candrasya kālena -avyaktavarmanaiḥ) (130). These changes are not noticed immediately due to the torrential speed of Kāla just as the emergence and subsidence of flames in fire are not observed (agneh
yathā arciṣām (131). It is so because the guṇas that bring about these changes, belong to Prakṛtī while the Ātman is beyond these (132). The Ātman is Time Itself (tad-kāla-ātmakah asau) and is beyond the dualities of the empirical existence (133).

The ŚBP proclaims in the Upanishadic tone: all this world is the Ātman itself (ātmaiva tadidam visvam). It is the created and the creator (ṣṛjyate sṛjati prabhuh), It is the saved and the Saviour (trāyate trāti), and the all-encompassing Ātman is destroyed as also is the one who destroys (hṛiyate harati Īśvaraḥ) (134). Therefore, one and the only one entity, i.e. the Ātman is accepted as the existence (Tasmāt na hi ātmanah anyasmāt anyah bhāvah nirūpitaḥ) (135), which is undecaying (avyayah), pure (suddhah), light itself (svayam-jyotiḥ) and unenveloped by māyā (anavṛtaḥ) (136); sorrow, joy, fear, anger, greed, delusion, desires and various experiences belong to the ego-sense/ahaṅkāra, and not to the Ātman (137).

Thus, the ŚBP repeatedly refers to the falsity of the identity of the Ātman with the body and its true eternal nature at different places. Although we find that the ideology followed here echoes the same note as found in the Upaniṣads and the BG, the ŚBP has elaborated it greatly using appropriate imageries and ideas.

The Jagat :-

The above discussion not only treats the immortality and reality of the Ātman, but it also simultaneously asserts the false and temporary nature of the jagat which is the product of the three guṇas of Prakṛtī -- the same nature of the body with which the Ātman identifies itself.

The ŚBP explicitly states that though the jagat has false values in the same way as the reflection, echo and snake-in-the-rope have no real existence, still they generate pleasant or unpleasant experiences (chāyā-pratyāhvaya-abhāṣāḥ hi asantaḥ api-arthakāraṇaḥ) until Self-illumination
removes the identification of the Ātman with the jagat; the sāṁśāra holds existence till then (sāṁśāraḥ phalavān īvat) (138).

Further, the ŚBP borrows the symbol of the world as the āśvattha tree from the Kathopaniṣad (2.3.1) and the BG (15.1-5). The ŚBP, however, expands it considerably (139). Further, whereas in the earlier scriptures the entire idea is treated in a metaphorical manner, here it is stated explicitly as the sāṁśāra-taru or the world-tree. This tree exists since ages (purāṇah) and is of the nature of works yielding flowers of worldly enjoyments and fruit of mokṣa (karmātmakah puspaphale prasūte). It consists of two seeds in the form of merits and demerits (dvī asya bīje), has a hundred roots (śatamūlah) as the tendencies, three stems as the three gūṇas of Prakṛti (trinālah), five boughs as the five elements (pāñcaskandhaḥ), five kinds of rasas / sāps as the five sense-organs (pāñca-rasa-prasūtiḥ) and eleven branches in the form of the ten senses of jñāna and karma and the manas (daśaikasākkhaḥ). Two birds - God and the Ātman/Jīva nest on it (dvī - supaṇṭa - nīḍah). Having three layers of bark of the three humors of the body, namely, vāta, pitta and kapha (trivalkaḥ) and two fruits of (dviphalah), it reaches the solar sphere (arkam pravistah). Here, the author of the ŚBP imagines the ignorant or the worldly - minded people steeped in enjoying the sensuous pleasures to be the vultures of the countryside eating one of the two fruits of this tree - the fruit which causes sorrow and suffering; while the other fruit that brings happiness, is consumed by the forest - dwelling swans (i.e. the Paramahaṁsas and the seekers of mokṣa through the Bhāgavata Dharma).

It is interesting to observe here that in the strain of this description, the ŚBP brings in its belief in the authority of the Vedas (cf. Authority of the Vedas under Minor Concepts) and the significance of the guru in removing the ajñāna. It says that service and the one - pointed devotion for the guru helps one to sharpen the axe of knowledge (vidyākṣupṭrenā sitena) (cf. asaḥgaśastreṇa drṣṭhenā chitvā - at the BG. 15.3 d), cut open with alertness the - senses - the abode of the Ātman/Jīva (vivṛścyā jīvāśayam apramattah) and attain the Lord. One who knows then that He
manifests Himself as many due to His māyā knows the true purport of the Veda (saḥ veda vedam). Thereafter, one can give up the weapon (astra) i.e. the knowledge, through which one has attained the Lord.

The Brahman (cf. The Highest Reality).

Significance of Jñāna :

The ŚBP acknowledges the significance of jñāna in eloquent words as does the BG. However, unlike the BG, the ŚBP always makes its point clear, namely, jñāna stands next to bhakti.

The Lord proclaims that those devotees are greatest who worship Him whole-heartedly (bhajanti ananyabhāvena) irrespective of whether they have the knowledge (jñātvā ajñātvā atha) of the nature of God (140). Kṛṣṇa tells Uddhava that knowing one’s own Self and possessing jñāna as well as vijnāna, he must adore Him (bhaja mām) with bhakti (bhakti-bhavitāḥ) (141). The ŚBP believes that jñāna is, however, the vital element of bhakti (dharmasya tattvam jñānam) (141-A).

Despite this inclination towards bhakti, the ŚBP is perfectly aware of the significance of jñāna in spiritual life. The Avadhūta confesses to Yadu that he has become free from the desires the I-sense and the bondage of karmas by obtaining knowledge from 24 gurus (142) ; it has further brought him the light of vijnāna (143). Moreover, it further implies from the above discussion on jñāna in the ŚBP that the jñāna and vijnāna are the cause of the annihilation of the I-sense and the consequent identity between the Atman and the body i.e. ajñāna , -- leading to the rise of the awakening of the Reality and the eternal nature of the Atman and the falsity of the jagat. This is beautifully explained by giving a simile, namely, just
as the rays of the sun remove the darkness that is merely an obstacle in one's vision of things, in the like manner, the perfect knowledge (nipuṇā samīkṣā) removes the ignorance (tamisram) from the understanding of the aspirant (puruṣasya buddheḥ). In other words, jñāna is an instrument which rectifies the perspective, the vision of the aspirant to look at the Reality (144). This is a direct style of stating the fact which is conveyed in the BG through similes (145). Dr. Siddheshvara Bhattacharya observes - “.......... knowledge.... serves as a link between immanence and transcendence. .... Knowledge is a device by which the individual is torn from his limitedness to join the grand harmony of the Universal. That is to say, the puruṣa becomes Puruṣa” (146). The SBP asserts the significance of jñāna to achieve human goal in negative terms also, i.e. by denouncing and describing the ajñāna. The entire sermon of the Avadhūta, for eg., harps upon this point (147). This approach is more effective in proving its argument.

Characteristics of the Jñānī:-

(See the chapter on Paramahaṁśas and Sannyāsa in Minor Concepts).

Conclusion :-

Thus, we find that although the SBP treats Jñāna Yoga in a manner that is more elaborate, poetic and Upaniṣādīc than the BG, the place which jñāna along with karma holds here is only secondary, the reason being that the chief purport of this text is bhakti.

The SBP, in fact, casts this jñāna based on the Upaniṣads into the mould of bhakti and firmly believes that the qualitative progress of jñāna is instrumental in enhancing the quality of bhakti. “The Bhāgavata has thus built up its structure of devotional discipline on the Upaniṣādīc knowledge” (148).
1. RV II. 12.5; VIII. 103.3.

2. Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and the Upanishads (vol. II) by A. B. Keith.

3. Sarvopanişada gāvo dogdhā gopālanandanaḥ I

Pārtho vatsāḥ sudhīrbhokti dugdham gītāmṛtam mahat II

4. The Bhagavadgītā (Introduction) by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan.

5. BG 2.39.

6. BG 2.11.

7. BG 2.12.

8. BG 2.18.

9. BG 2.19.

10. BG 2.20.

11. BG 2.13.

12. BG 2.22.

13. BG 2.26, 27.

14. BG 2.29.

15. BG 3.39.

16. BG 3.38.

17. BG 3.42.

18. BG 3.43.

19. BG 6.5-6.

20. BG 15.16.

21. BG 15.7.

22. BG 15.8-9.

23. BG 15.10.

24. BG 8.3.

25. BG 7.2.

26. BG 7.5.


28. BG 15.16.

29. BG 7.5.


31. BG 8.3-4.

32. BG 13.3.

33. BG 13.5.

34. BG 13.6-7.

35. BG 7.4.

36. BG 14.3-4.

37. The Bhagavadgītā by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (Commentary on 8.3).

38. BG 8.3.

39. BG 8.18-19.

40. BG 2.12.

41. BG 16.4-5.

42. BG 13.8-12.

43. BG 14.1, 3 & 5.

44. BG 14.7-9.

45. BG 14.11.

46. BG 7.5-6.

47. BG 15.18.

48. BG 15.2.

49. BG 15.4 ab.
50  BG 15.4 cd. 51  BG 4.39 ab.
52  BG 3.31. 53  BG 3.32; 4.40.
54  BG 4.41. 55  BG 4.33.
56  BG 4.24. 57  BG 4.19.
58  BG 4.33. 59  BG 4.35 ab.
60  BG 4.35 cd. 61  BG 5.7.
62  BG 4.36. 63  BG 4.38.
64  BG 4.37. 65  BG 5.15.
66  BG 5.16. 67  BG 5.29.
68  BG 5.17. 69  BG 3.28.
72  BG 4.18. 73  BG 4.16.
74  BG 14.22-26. 75  §BP XI. 2.
76  §BP XI. 3-5. 77  §BP XI. 2.20.
78  §BP XI. 29.48. 79  §BP XI. 29.49.
80  §BP XI. 7.13. 81  §BP XI. 7.17.
82  §BP XI. 19.3. 83  §BP XI. 19.4.
84  §BP XI. 19.6. 85  §BP XI. 19.5.
90  §BP XI. 19.15 ab. 91  §BP XI. 19.15 cd.
92  §BP XI. 19.16. 93  §BP XI. 19.17.
94  §BP XI. 19.27 b. 95  §BP XI. 19.27 c.
98  §BP XI. 20.7 ab. 99  §BP XI. 20.7 cd.
100 §BP XI. 20.8. 101 §BP XI. 20.11.
104 §BP XI. 29.1. 105 §BP XI. 29.3.
106 §BP XI. 29.6. 107 §BP XI. 22.50
110 §BP XI. 22.52-54; 13.29-32.
111 ŚBP XI. 28.16. 112 ŚBP XI. 22.55.
113 ŚBP XI. 22.56 114 ŚBP XI. 23.43
115 ŚBP XI. 23.44 116 ŚBP XI. 23.45
117 ŚBP XI. 23.48 cd. 118 ŚBP XI. 23.50,60.
119 ŚBP XI. 3.40 ; 23.58. 120 ŚBP XI. 11.1,3.
121 ŚBP XI. 11.4-5. 122 Mundakopanaśad 3.1.1.
123 ŚBP XI. 11.6-7. 124 ŚBP XI. 11.10.
125 ŚBP XI. 10.10 ; 11.9-10. 126 ŚBP XI. 3.28.
127 ŚBP XI. 3.3-6. 128 ŚBP XI. 3.38-39.
129 ŚBP XI. 7.43. 130 ŚBP XI. 7.48.
131 ŚBP XI. 7.49. 132 ŚBP XI. 22.12 b.
133 ŚBP XI. 23.56. 134 ŚBP XI. 28.6.
135 ŚBP XI. 28.7 a. 136 ŚBP XI. 28.11 ab.
137 ŚBP XI. 28.15. 138 ŚBP XI. 28.512.
139 ŚBP XI. 12.21-24. 140 ŚBP XI. 11.33.
141 ŚBP XI. 19.5. 141-ŚBP XI. 7.15 c.
142 ŚBP XI. 7.32. 143 ŚBP XI. 9.30.
144 ŚBP XI. 28.34. 145 ŚBP XI. 3.38-39.
146 The Philosophy of the Śrimad Bhāgavata (vol.II) by Dr. Siddheshvara Bhattacharyya.
147 ŚBP XI. 7-8-9 ; 22.51-60; 23.43-62 etc.
148 The Philosophy of the Śrimad Bhāgavata (vol.II) by Dr. Siddheshvara Bhattacharyya.

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