

Janma Rāhityam (Liberation from Birth)

What is Janma Rāhityam? How is it Achieved? What is the Relationship Between Birth and Karma?

 This chapter draws from the Bhagavad Gita, Amritabindupanishad, Muktikopanishad, Subalopanishad, Brihadaranyakopanishad, Kurma Purana, and the verses of Yogi Vemana. It explores the nature of liberation from the cycle of rebirth — the wheel of samsāra — through Prāṇa mastery, dissolution of Chitta, and the wisdom of recognizing the difference between the dreamer and the dream.



Part I: The Meaning of Janma Rāhityam and the Cycle of Samsāra

Janma Rāhityam [Liberation from Birth] means the absence of rebirth — having no further birth. We must stop in this revolving cycle of 'the born die, the dead are born' — not by dying, but by not being born.

Those who die must take birth again in some form, somewhere — there is no freedom for them. Therefore, those who have taken birth must strive — while still in this body — to remain without dying.

Therefore, if one wishes to achieve Janma Rāhityam (liberation from birth), one must first attain Maraṇa Rāhityam (freedom from death).

Abandoning this effort, many people — more like beggars — pray to God: 'O Father, bless me with no rebirth.'

If one were to ask such people, 'Who wants Janma Rāhityam?' — the answer would come: 'Me.' Then if one further asks, 'And who are you? Where will you be after attaining Janma Rāhityam?' — there would be no answer.

Imagine a wave arising in the middle of the ocean, rising and reaching the shore.

Let us suppose that wave asks the ocean itself: 'Father, I was born from you, and rising and falling through many births, I experience sufferings. Is there no relief for me?'

Then the ocean would answer in this manner:

'My dear child! Just as you, there are countless waves rising and falling within me. Do any of those cause me any suffering? Am I dying and being born? Then how did the sufferings and births that you do not have become yours?'

While this answer was being given, that questioning wave reached the shore and merged back into the ocean.

The one asking the question was no more.

That which existed at one time and then ceased to exist is truly not real (Asat).

But the ocean that gave the answer remains forever.
It has no birth or death.
This very feeling is expressed in the Gita:

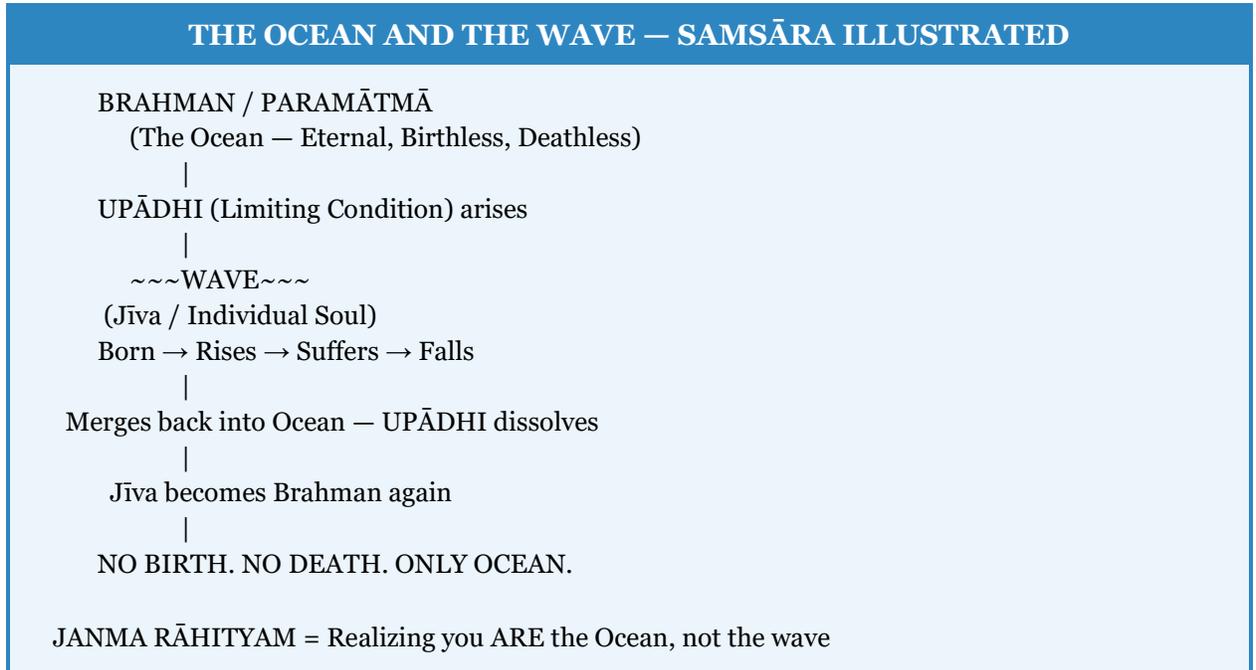
***Ajo'pi sannavyayātmā bhūtānāmīśvaro'pi san prakṛtiṃ svāmadhiṣṭhāya
sambhavāmyātma māyayā (B.G. 4-6)***

Though I am unborn, though I am the imperishable Self, though I am the Lord of all beings — I take birth through My own Māyā (divine illusory power), using Prakṛti (Nature) as My support.

***Janma karma ca me divyam evaṃ yo vetti tattvataḥ tyaktvā dehaṃ punarjanma
naiti māmeti so'rjuna (B.G. 4-9)***

'Whoever truly understands the divine nature of My birth and actions — upon leaving this body (the gross, subtle, and causal bodies), they attain Me and do not take rebirth again' — this is the meaning.

◆ **Diagram: The Ocean-Wave Analogy of Samsāra**



Part II: The Role of Chitta (Consciousness) in Birth, Old Age, and Death

Ghaṭa saṃvṛta māṃkāśaṃ nīyamāne ghaṭo yadhā ghaṭo nīyeta nākāśas tad vā jīvo nabhopamah (Amṛtabīndūpaniṣad –13)

Just as when a pot (Ghaṭa) is made, the pre-existing great space (Mahākāśa) becomes the pot-space (Ghaṭākāśa) — the inner space of the pot —

When the pot is destroyed, the pot-space immediately merges back into the great space and becomes the great space again —

Similarly, the Jīva (individual soul) born from Brahman, upon the destruction of the upādhi (limiting condition), immediately becomes Brahma-svarūpa (the form of Brahman) again.

Here, birth and death belong only to the upādhi — not to the consciousness within it.

While the pot-space analogy here is good, the question arises: how did the upādhi arise in the first place?

The Śrutis (Vedic scriptures) establish: the Chitta (mind-consciousness) alone is the cause for the upādhi arising, and it is from the Chitta that the sense of being born (Janma-bhāva) arises, and when the Chitta is destroyed, the Jīva becomes Brahma-svarūpa.

Cittaṃ saṃjāyate janmā jarā maraṇa kāraṇam (Muktikopaniṣad 2-6)

From the Chitta alone arise birth, old age, and death.

This Chitta (mind) has two seeds that constitute the tree of saṃsāra.

When one of them is destroyed, the other also immediately perishes.

Dvebīje cittavṛkṣasya prāṇaspaṇḍana vāsanā ekasmiṃśca tayoh kṣīṇe kṣīpram devāpi naśyati (Muktikopaniṣad 2-7)

Prāṇa-spaṇḍana (vibration/movement of Prāṇa, the vital force) and Vāsanās (latent impressions/desires) — these two are mutually connected.

Due to the movement/vibration of Prāṇa-vāyu (vital air/breath), the mind stirs and comes outward — and through the senses, perception, hearing, and other faculties arise — creating Vāsanās (impressions).

'Darśana śravaṇā iti vāsanāḥ' (Śruti)

Due to the arising of Vāsanās, the mind again turns outward and increases mental agitation.

The Prāṇa-spaṇḍana (Prāṇa vibration) increases further.

***Kriyānāsācintānāśo cintānāśāt vāsanā kṣayaḥ vāsanāpi kṣayo mokṣaḥ sajjīvan
mukti rucyate (Śruti)***

When the mind remains inside without going outward, Dṛśya-chintana (thinking about seen/external objects) diminishes.

When external-object thinking diminishes, Vāsanās (desires/impressions) diminish.

The diminishing of Vāsanās itself is called Mokṣa (liberation).

But to turn the mind inward, the Prāṇa-vāyu must be brought under control.

This is possible only through Yoga.

***'Yogenāntarmukhī buddhistato nāśayate tamah' (Kaṭhapaniṣad — Śrī Ādi
Śaṅkarācārya's commentary)***

Therefore, of the two seeds of the tree of Chitta, Prāṇa-spandana is the primary one.

Therefore, when Prāṇa-vāyu is subdued/restrained, mental agitation ceases.

Then the fears of birth, old age, and death disappear completely.

The Paramātmā — in the form of a bird (with wings/Pakṣa) — enters every living being.

(The word Pakṣa here signifies wings — the Prāṇa and Apāna — which are the two sides of breathing.)

***Puraścakre dvipādaḥ puraścakre catuṣpādaḥ puraśca pakṣī bhūtvā puraḥ
puruṣāviśet (Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad 4-5-18)***

Just as the wings of birds perform the breathing action of Prāṇa and Apāna, like wings —

To prevent a bird from flying, its wings must be tied.

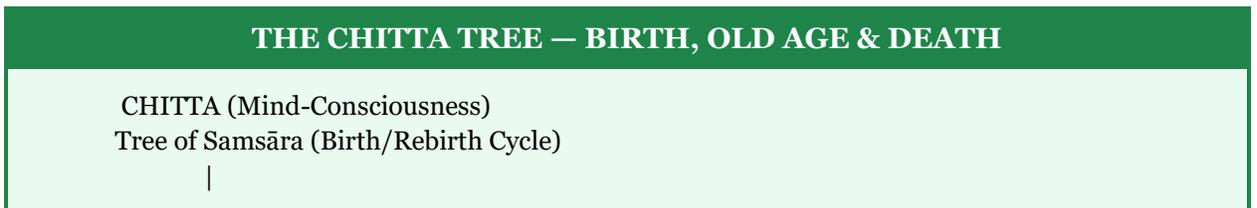
Similarly, to prevent this Jīva from flying (migrating) from this body to another body, the Prāṇāpāna (inward and outward breath) within us — its wings — must be tied through Prāṇāyāma.

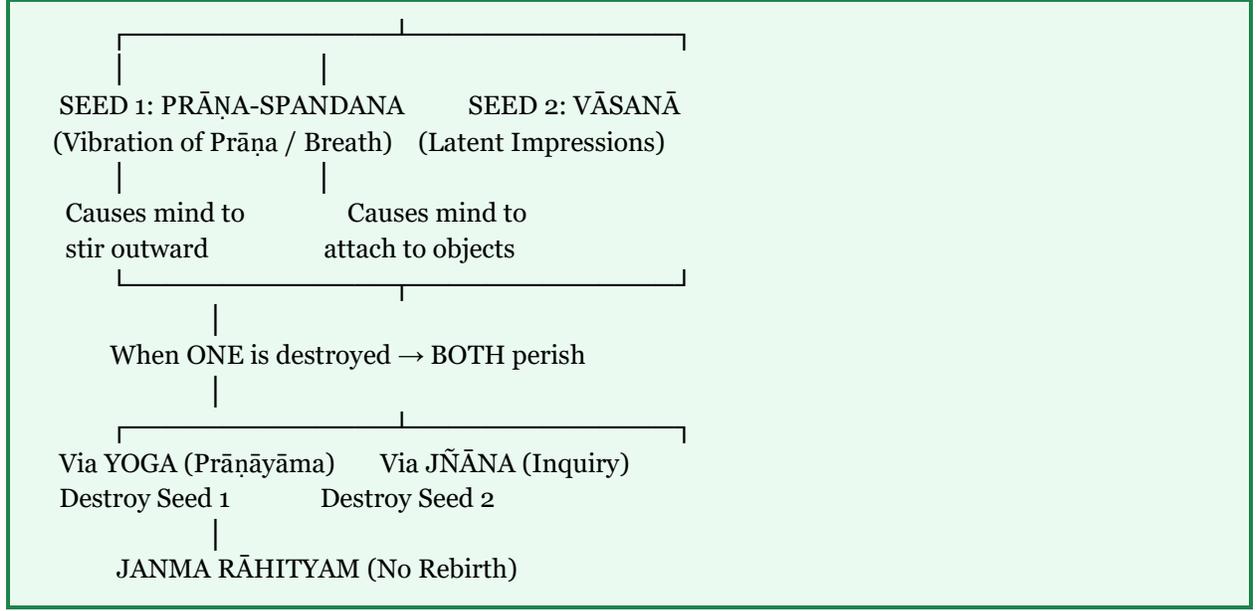
When this is done, this Jīva — without dying — becomes united with the Paramātmā within.

That is, through Maraṇa Rāhityam (freedom from death), Janma Rāhityam (freedom from birth) is achieved.



◆ Diagram: The Two Seeds of the Chitta Tree





Part III: Prāṇa, Death-Freedom, and the Wings of the Jīva

'Apāna prāṇayorektyaṃ cidātmānaṃ samāśraya' (Annapūrṇopaniṣad 5-4)

Those in whom the Apāna and Prāṇa have become unified become the very form of Chid-Ātmā (consciousness-Self).

Na tasya prāṇā utkrāṃanti atra'iva samavalīyante (Subalopaniṣad 3-2)

The Yogi's Prāṇas do not go outward/upward.

They become unified right here at his Bhrūmadhya (midpoint between the eyebrows).

Thus, without dying, the Yogi attains Janma Rāhityam.



Part IV: The Relationship Between Janma (Birth) and Karma (Action)

If birth is taken, action (Karma) must inevitably follow.

If action is done, experiencing the fruit of that action (Karma-phala) is unavoidable.

To experience the fruit of action, being born again is unavoidable.

Let us take an analogy here.

A person doing karma is like someone opening a Website.

Just as one must operate a Website for as long as it exists — after taking birth to experience karma-phala, continuing in that birth is unavoidable.

If it is no longer needed, the same person who opened the Website must close it (Close) again.

If not, the Website continuing to exist makes its maintenance unavoidable.

Similarly, if one dies without destroying the Upādhi (Antaḥkaraṇa / inner instrument of mind), being reborn is unavoidable.

Therefore, the one who performs karma — the Antaḥkaraṇa (inner instrument, also called Upādhi / Website) — must be dissolved (Closed) right here in this very birth, in this very life.

If this is done, there is no need to be born again.



◆ Diagram: The Website Analogy — Karma and Rebirth

THE WEBSITE ANALOGY — KARMA & JANMA (BIRTH)	
ACTION/KARMA	↔ WEBSITE OPENED
Karma-phala (Fruit)	↔ Website Data/Content
Experiencing phala	↔ Operating the Website
Need another birth	↔ Website still running
Antaḥkaraṇa (Inner Self)	↔ Website Owner/Operator

If you DIE without dissolving Antaḥkaraṇa:
→ Website (Upādhi) still running → Must be reborn to operate it

If you dissolve Antaḥkaraṇa IN THIS LIFE (Close the Website):
→ No outstanding karma account
→ No need to reborn
→ JANMA RĀHITYAM achieved!



Part V: The Yogic Fire and Dissolution of Karma

Prasannaṃ jñāyate jñānaṃ jñānannirvaṇa mṛcchati (Kūrma Purāṇa)

Through the Yogic fire, the entire cage of sins (Pāpa-pañjara) is burned without remainder.

Having attained Jñāna (True Knowledge), through that Jñāna one attains Janana-Maraṇa-Rahita-Nirvāṇa (liberation free from birth and death) — this is the meaning.



Part VI: The Advaita (Non-Dual) Teaching of Yogi Vemana

ॐ Yogi Vemana was a great Telugu saint and poet. His Advaita verses cut through philosophical complexity with simple, direct wisdom. The following verse summarizes the entire teaching of this chapter.

puṭṭuvārevarun puṭṭakuṁdurevaru? puṭṭi giṭṭanatti puruṣuḷevaru? puṭṭi puṭṭanattu bōdhiṁci cūḍarā viśvadābhirāma vinuravēma (Yogi Vemana's Verse)

Line by Line Commentary:

'Who are those who are born?' — When the Jīva (individual soul) and Brahman are One, who is there to be born?

'Who are those who cannot be born?' — As long as Ajñāna (ignorance) is covering, the cycle of birth cannot be stopped.

Puruṣaḥ prakṛtiṣṭho hi bhukte prakṛtijān guṇān kāraṇaṁ guṇasaṅgo'sya sadasadyoni janmasuḥ (B.G. 13-21)

Due to the Puruṣa (Self/consciousness) residing in Prakṛti (Nature), it experiences the Guṇas (qualities) born from Prakṛti.

The cause of birth in good or bad wombs is attachment to the Guṇas.

'Who are those who appear to be born but are truly not born?' — Even though the one who is not born appears to be born, when this truth is understood, one does not need to be born again.

Jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyuḥ dhruvaṁ janma mṛtasya ca (B.G. 2-27)

For one who is born, death is certain.

For one who has died, birth is certain.

'See! Understand the teaching that even the born is as if unborn!' — The one who sees dreams is the Truth.

The dream is unreal.

While in the dream, it appears as if one is born.

But when one wakes up, one understands: 'I was never born.' This is what Sadgurus teach.

*Janma karma ca me divyam evaṃ yo vetti tattvataḥ tyaktvā dehaṃ punarjanma
naiti māmeti so' rjuna (B.G. 4-9)*

Even though the one who is not born appears to be born and appears to perform karma — those who understand this truth will not take rebirth and will attain Me.



◆ **Diagram: The Dream Analogy — Birth and Liberation**

THE DREAMER AND THE DREAM — YOGI VEMANA'S TEACHING	
WAKING STATE	DREAM STATE
The Dreamer = REAL (Ātmā / Pure Consciousness)	Dream events = UNREAL (Perceived as real while dreaming)
In the dream: you appear to be BORN, to ACT, to SUFFER. On waking: you realize you were NEVER born in the dream.	
SAMSĀRA = A DREAM of the Ātmā	
AJÑĀNA (Ignorance) = Thinking the dream is real JÑĀNA (Knowledge) = Waking up — knowing you are the Dreamer	
JANMA RĀHITYAM = The permanent WAKING STATE = Knowing: 'I was never born. I am Brahman.'	



Chapter Summary

- Janma Rāhityam means freedom from rebirth — the cessation of the cycle of samsāra (birth, death, and rebirth) while still alive in this body, through Prāṇa-mastery and Self-knowledge.
- The wave-ocean analogy teaches the essential truth: individual souls (Jīvas) are like waves; Brahman is the ocean. The wave's suffering is not the ocean's suffering. Realizing oneself as the ocean — not the wave — is liberation.
- According to the Muktikopanishad, birth, old age, and death arise from Chitta (mind-consciousness). The Chitta-tree has two seeds: Prāṇa-spandana (vital force vibration) and Vāsanā (latent impressions). Destroying either seed destroys both.
- Prāṇa vibration causes the mind to go outward, creating Vāsanās (impressions through perception and hearing). Vāsanās increase Prāṇa vibration — a self-reinforcing cycle. Breaking this cycle is Mokṣa.
- Through Yoga (Prāṇāyāma), Prāṇa-spandana is restrained. When the mind turns inward, external-object thinking diminishes, Vāsanās diminish, and liberation follows.
- The Jīva has Prāṇa and Apāna as its 'wings' — just as a bird's wings enable flight. Tying these wings through Prāṇāyāma prevents the Jīva from 'flying' to another body at death — achieving Maraṇa Rāhityam (freedom from death) and thereby Janma Rāhityam.
- The Website analogy: karma is like opening a website — one must manage it until it is closed. Similarly, one must dissolve the Antaḥkaraṇa (inner instrument/Upādhi) in this very lifetime to end the obligation of rebirth.
- The Kūrma Purāṇa teaches: through Yogāgni (Yogic fire), the entire accumulated sin-karma is burned completely. Jñāna then leads to Janana-Maraṇa-Rahita-Nirvāṇa (liberation from birth and death).
- Yogi Vemana's verse presents the Advaita (non-dual) view in four questions: Who is born? Who cannot avoid being born? Who appears born but is truly not? See — the born is actually the unborn!
- The Bhagavad Gita confirms: the one who understands the divine mystery of God's birth and karma truly — that person, leaving this body, attains God and does not take rebirth.
- The dream analogy completes the teaching: just as in a dream one appears to be born and to act, but upon waking realizes 'I was never born' — so too the Jñāni realizes through true waking (Self-knowledge) that the Ātmā was never born.



Key Concepts — Glossary of Sanskrit & Telugu Spiritual Terms

Term	Meaning
Janma Rāhityam	Liberation from Birth — freedom from the cycle of rebirth; the state of no-more-birth

Maraṇa Rāhityam	Freedom from Death — the prerequisite to Janma Rāhityam; achieved through Prāṇa mastery
Samsāra	The cycle of worldly existence — birth, life, death, and rebirth driven by karma and desire
Jīva / Jīvātmā	The individual soul — the consciousness seemingly bound by upādhi (limiting conditions)
Paramātmā	The Supreme Self — Brahman as the universal source; the ocean to the Jīva's wave
Upādhi	Limiting adjunct/condition — the inner instrument (Antaḥkaraṇa/mind-ego) that causes individuality
Chitta	Mind-consciousness — the subtle mind that carries Vāsanās and is the cause of rebirth
Prāṇa-spandana	Vibration/movement of Prāṇa (vital force) — the first seed of the Chitta tree
Vāsanā	Latent impressions/desires — subtle mental imprints from past actions; second seed of Chitta tree
Antaḥkaraṇa	The inner instrument — mind, intellect, ego, and Chitta collectively; also called Upādhi or Website
Prāṇāyāma / Yoga	Breath control / Union — the primary practice for restraining Prāṇa-spandana and turning mind inward
Prāṇa / Apāna	Inward breath / Outward breath — the two 'wings' of the Jīva that enable flight to another body
Ghaṭa / Ghaṭākāśa	Pot / Pot-space — the upādhi and its inner space; when pot (upādhi) dissolves, the space merges back into Mahākāśa (infinite space = Brahman)
Mahākāśa	The Great Space — infinite Consciousness; Brahman; the eternal reality into which all upādhis dissolve
Vāsanā Kṣaya	Destruction of impressions — the result of turning the mind inward; equated with Mokṣa
Jñāna	True Knowledge — direct recognition of the Ātmā as Brahman; leads to Nirvāṇa
Nirvāṇa	Extinction of the ego-flame — liberation; the state of Janana-Maraṇa-Rahita (free from birth and death)
Advaita	Non-duality — the teaching that Jīva and Brahman are one; wave and ocean are one substance
Ajñāna	Ignorance — the veil that makes the unborn Ātmā appear as a born Jīva
Pakṣa / Prāṇa-wings	Wings of Prāṇa and Apāna — the metaphor for the breath that allows the Jīva to 'fly' to another body
Yogāgni	Yogic fire — the inner fire generated through Prāṇāyāma that burns accumulated karma

Pāpa-pañjara

Cage of sins – the accumulated karma from all previous actions,
burned by Yogāgni



Reflective Questions & Answers

Q1. What does Janma Rāhityam truly mean, and why is it not the same as simple death?

A. Janma Rāhityam means the permanent cessation of the cycle of rebirth — not merely physical death. Death is not liberation; in fact, death is followed inevitably by another birth. The text teaches that one must stop the cycle not by dying, but by not being born — by dissolving the Upādhi (the inner instrument of ego-mind) while still alive in this body. Thus, the goal is achieved through inner transformation in this very life, not through physical dissolution.

Q2. What does the wave-ocean analogy teach about the Jīva and Brahman?

A. The ocean represents eternal Brahman — birthless, deathless, ever-present. A wave arises from the ocean, rises, and falls — but the ocean never dies; it is always there. Similarly, the Jīva (wave) appears to suffer birth, old age, and death. But the Brahman (ocean) within never does. The wave's question — 'Father, how do I find relief from birth?' — resolves itself when the wave merges back into the ocean. The answer: realize you ARE the ocean. The questioner (wave/ego) dissolves, and only the ocean (Brahman) remains — this is Janma Rāhityam.

Q3. What are the two seeds of the Chitta tree, and why must both be destroyed?

A. According to the Muktikopanishad, the Chitta (mind-consciousness) that causes rebirth has two seeds: (1) Prāṇa-spandana — the vibration/movement of vital force, and (2) Vāsanā — the latent impressions from past actions. These two are mutually dependent: Prāṇa vibration stirs the mind outward to sense objects, creating new Vāsanās; Vāsanās in turn increase Prāṇa vibration. Destroying just one seed immediately destroys the other. Both must be addressed — Prāṇa through Yoga, and Vāsanās through Jñāna.

Q4. How does Prāṇāyāma lead to the cessation of birth and rebirth?

A. When Prāṇa-vāyu (vital force) is disciplined and restrained through Prāṇāyāma, the mind naturally turns inward (Antarmukhī). When the mind is inward, it does not engage with external objects, reducing Dṛśya-chintana (sense-object thinking). This causes Vāsanās to diminish. When Vāsanās diminish, there is no more karmic force to drive a new birth. The Subalopanishad confirms: the Yogi's Prāṇas do not exit the body — they merge at the Bhrūmadhya — and thus, without dying, the Yogi achieves Janma Rāhityam.

Q5. What is the 'wings of the Jīva' metaphor, and what does it mean in practice?

A. The Bṛhadāranyakopanishad uses the image of Paramātmā entering each being as a bird. The bird's wings represent the Prāṇa (inward breath) and Apāna (outward breath). Just as tying a bird's wings prevents it from flying away, controlling Prāṇa-Apāna through Prāṇāyāma prevents the Jīva from 'flying' — migrating to a new body at death. When these 'wings' are bound through Yogic practice, the Jīva cannot leave the body independently. Instead, it merges with the Paramātmā within — achieving liberation without physical death.

Q6. Explain the Website analogy for the relationship between Karma and Janma (Birth).

A. Performing karma is like opening a website. Once opened, the website must be operated and maintained as long as it exists. Similarly, once karma is performed, its fruits must be experienced — requiring another birth. The antaḥkaraṇa (inner instrument of mind-ego) is the 'website operator.' If a person dies without dissolving (closing) the antaḥkaraṇa, the karma-website keeps running, compelling rebirth to experience its contents. The solution: dissolve the antaḥkaraṇa completely — 'close the website' — in this very lifetime. Then there is no outstanding karma account and no necessity for rebirth.

Q7. What does Yogi Vemana's verse teach about the nature of birth?

A. Yogi Vemana asks four profound questions in his verse: Who is born? (Those caught in ignorance.) Who cannot be born? (The Ātmā — which is eternally unborn.) Who appears born but is not truly born? (The Jñāni — who appears to act and be born in the world, but knows the truth of Advaita/non-duality.) And: 'See — the born is truly unborn!' — This is the Advaita realization. Just as a dream-character appears to be born within a dream but has no true independent existence, the Jīva appears to be born but is in truth the eternal, unborn Brahman.

Q8. What is the role of Yogāgni (Yogic fire) in attaining liberation from birth?

A. Yogāgni is the inner fire generated through the practice of Prāṇāyāma — particularly through the friction (Samgharṣaṇa) of Prāṇa and Apāna meeting in the Suṣumnā Nāḍī. This fire burns the 'Pāpa-pañjara' — the entire cage of accumulated sins and karma. When karma is completely burned, there is no longer any force compelling a new birth. The Kūrma Purāṇa teaches that through this complete burning (Prasanna Jñāna), the Jñāna that arises leads to Nirvāṇa — liberation from both Janana (birth) and Maraṇa (death).

Q9. What is the difference between a Jñāni's (wise person's) experience of the world and an ordinary person's?

A. An ordinary person (Ajñāni) experiences birth, life, and death as absolutely real. They identify with the wave — the body, mind, and ego — and suffer through the cycle of samsāra. A Jñāni, however, recognizes themselves as the Dreamer — not the dream character. Like the Bhagavad Gita verse says: even God appears to be born and to perform actions — yet knows the divine truth of this. The Jñāni too appears to be born and act (as described in B.G. 4-9), but inwardly knows they are the unborn Ātmā. They thus do not accumulate new karma and do not need another birth.

Q10. What is the final state described in this chapter, and how is it reached?

A. The final state is Janana-Maraṇa-Rahita-Nirvāṇa — complete liberation from both birth and death. It is reached through: (1) Yoga Sādhana (Prāṇāyāma) to restrain Prāṇa-spandana and dissolve Vāsanās; (2) Jñāna (Self-inquiry and knowledge) to recognize the Ātmā as Brahman — the ocean, not the wave; (3) Dissolution of the Antaḥkaraṇa (inner instrument/upādhi) in this very lifetime — burning all karma through Yogāgni. The Yogi's Prāṇas merge at the Bhrūmadhya without exiting the body. The Jīva, freed from its 'wings,' unites with Paramātmā. This is Janma Rāhityam — achieved not by dying, but by permanently transcending the need to be born.