

The Courtroom, the Chemicals... and the Soul

written by Bhaskarananda | April 1, 2026

The Day “Science” Walked Into a Courtroom

Imagine this.

A man stands in court after hitting someone with his car.

His defense?

“My magnesium was low. My anxiety spiked. My brain chemistry made me do it.”

Silence.

No one in that courtroom buys it.

The judge doesn't say,

“Ah yes, molecular misalignment—case dismissed.”

Instead, the man is held responsible.

And right there—without anyone saying it out loud—something profound is revealed:

□ **We don't actually believe humans are just chemicals.**

The Lie We Learn vs The Life We

Live

In school, we're taught a neat, clean story:

You are your brain.

Your thoughts are neurons.

Your emotions are chemicals.

In short:

You are a biochemical machine.

But step outside the classroom, and reality demands something else:

- Control yourself
- Make better decisions
- Be accountable
- Take responsibility

So which is it?

Are you a machine...

or a moral agent?

Because you can't be both—at least not in the way we're told.

Bhagavad Gītā: The Missing Layer

Thousands of years ago, the Bhagavad Gītā addressed this confusion with surgical precision.

It doesn't deny the body.

It doesn't deny the mind.

But it makes a distinction modern thinking often ignores:

- You are not the body.
- You are not even the mind.
- You are the conscious self—the observer.

In Chapter 2, one of the most piercing ideas appears:

Just as a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies.

Let that sink in.

The body is like clothing.

The brain is part of that clothing.

So when chemistry changes, it affects the *instrument*—but not the *player*.

Chemicals Don't Crave Greatness

Here's where things get even stranger.

If we are just chemicals, then explain this:

Why do humans crave:

- Meaning
- Recognition
- Achievement
- Legacy

Why do even top scientists chase awards like the Nobel Prize?

Is that sodium chloride dreaming big?

Is dopamine building a reputation?

No.

Chemicals don't care about purpose.
But you do.

The Chariot Analogy (That Changes Everything)

The Vedas gives a powerful model:

- The **body** = chariot
- The **senses** = horses
- The **mind** = reins
- The **intelligence** = driver
- The **self (you)** = passenger

Now think about it.

If the horses run wild (impulses, chemistry),
the chariot may crash.

But we don't blame the horses.

We ask:

- Why didn't the driver control them?
- Why didn't the passenger direct the driver?

Because deep down, we recognize:

There is a hierarchy beyond chemistry.

Why the Courtroom Rejects Materialism

Back to the courtroom.

Why doesn't the "I'm just chemicals" argument work?

Because the legal system—without quoting scripture—operates on a deeper truth:

- You had the capacity to choose.
- You could have acted differently.

And that "you" is not reducible to molecules.

The Real Problem Isn't Science

Let's be fair.

Science is incredible.

It explains:

- Mechanisms
- Processes
- Biological reactions

But it cannot fully explain:

- Conscious experience
- Moral responsibility
- The sense of "I"

The problem isn't science.

It's when we stretch it into a **complete explanation of existence.**

The Inner Evidence You Can't Escape

Forget philosophy for a moment.

Look at your own experience:

- You feel regret
- You resist impulses
- You make decisions against your own urges

If you were just chemistry,
there would be no *conflict*—only reaction.

But you experience tension.

Choice.

Awareness.

That's your clue.

Final Thought: The Most Dangerous Half-Truth

"You are just chemicals" is not entirely false.

But it's incomplete.

And incomplete truths are the most dangerous—
because they sound convincing.

The Bhagavad Gītā completes the picture:

- You have a body
- You have a mind
- But you are something deeper

The conscious self—the one using them.

One Question to Leave You With

Next time someone says:

“You’re just a bunch of chemicals.”

Ask them:

Then who is hearing that sentence right now?