

# Srimad Bhagavad Gita

Chapter 2  
Saankhya Yogah: Yoga of Knowledge

Transliterated Sanskrit Text

Free Translation

&

Brief Explanation

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Published

In

Esamskriti.com

&

Medhajournal.com

Nagpur

September 2010

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Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 2 (Part-1)  
Saankhya Yogah : Yoga Of Knowledge  
**T.N.Sethumadhavan**

Preamble

In the 1<sup>st</sup> Chapter we have seen that Arjuna asked Krishna to place the chariot in the midst of the two armies. Krishna having placed the chariot between the two armies particularly in front of Bhishma and Drona, asked Arjuna to behold the Kurus. Having seen the kinsmen, Arjuna was filled with compassion and sadness and threw away his arms and sank into the seat of the chariot. His personality was destroyed by his overwhelming emotions erupting at the sight of his near and dear ones on the battlefield.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Chapter begins with Sanjaya telling Dhritarashtra about the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna when the latter continues to remain under the spell of melancholy and dejection. Arjuna, with a false sense of renunciation, argues that he would rather live on alms than slay the noble elders like Bhishma and Drona and that even an undisputed sovereignty over all the worlds would not drive away his grief. Arguing thus, he expressed his unwillingness to fight and became silent completely burnt out.

This is one of the longest Chapters in the Gita.

The Text

KRISHNA REBUKES ARJUNA

**sanjaya uvaacha  
tam tathaa kripayaavishtam ashruipoornaakulekshanam  
visheedantam idam vaakyam uvaacha madhusoodanah // 2.1 //**

*Sanjaya said*

*To him who was thus overwhelmed with pity and sorrow and whose eyes were dimmed with tears, Madhusudana (Krishna) spoke these words.*

The second chapter starts with a brief reference to the sad mental condition of Arjuna. His pity was not compassion but a form of self-indulgence. It is the shrinking of the nerves from an act which compels him to hurt his own people. Arjuna recoils from this task in a mood of self-pity. His teacher, Sri Krishna, therefore rebukes him especially because the fact that he had to fight against his own people was known to him even before entering the battlefield.

**sri bhagavaan uvaacha  
kutastwaa kashmalam idam vishame samupasthitam  
anaaryajushtam aswargyam akeertikaram arjuna // 2.2 //**

*Sri Bhagavan said*

*O Arjuna, at this moment of crisis, wherefrom have you got this weakness, un-Aryan like, disgraceful and which is not conducive to the attainment of heaven?*

The Lord is called Bhagavan because He possesses six 'bhagas' or divine traits viz. wealth, virtue, glory, greatness, knowledge and dispassion. Krishna, who was silent all along, started speaking.

During His very first utterance in these verses the core of the message of Gita was delivered with a tremendous force. Sri Krishna addresses him as Arjuna which means pure in heart, implying that despite this quality he became faint-hearted instead of showing valor and zeal. It is quite unbecoming of him. Krishna was surprised about this change in Arjuna.

The term 'Arya' refers to a highly evolved and cultured man who scrupulously adheres to Dharma. Arjuna, in whom manliness was in full all along, suddenly sunk into unmanliness at the moment of a crisis. The Lord rouses him from this set-back. Sri Krishna classified Arjuna's mind as confused. Consequently all the utterances of such confused Arjuna would be meaningless and devoid of discrimination. Hence he is termed un-Aryan.

Kirti or fame attends on the one given to laudable life on earth. But Arjuna's way was entirely to the contrary. For him who was wavering in facing a decisive moment there would be nothing but disgrace, neither this world nor the next for such confused and dejected minds.

The message of Krishna is that the goal of life or success cannot be attained by the weak. To be firm in body, mind and character is born of strength. This world and the next are for the strong. Strength brings forth right conduct and straightforwardness leading to enjoyment of this world and reaching Godhood. All divine traits have their source in strength. Strength is life; weakness is death.

The three words used by the Lord are 'anaryajushtam', 'asvargyam' and 'akirtikaram'. They mean respectively three types of persons. 1. Thoughtful whose aim is to Bliss. 2. Virtuous whose aim is to achieve heaven by performing honest actions and 3. Ordinary who want name and fame in this world. Arjuna is indicted that he belongs to none of these because of his affliction.

**klaibyam maa sma gamah paartha naitattwayyupapadyate  
kshudram hridaya daurbalyam tyaktwottishtha parantapa //2.3//**

*O Partha (Son of Pritha, Kunti), yield not to unmanliness. It does not befit you. Cast off this petty faint-heartedness and arise, O Paranthapa (scorcherer of foes - Arjuna).*

The man, who fails to face a critical situation, speaking and acting irrelevantly, is denounced as unmanly. But Arjuna was not really made of that stuff. He was a

vanquisher of his foes. The Lord seems to have deliberately used the strongest language to make him get out of his stupor and to goad him to perform his primary duty to wage war for which he came fully prepared.

The use of the words 'Partha' and 'Kaunteya' with reference to Arjuna is with a purpose. These words mean the son of Pritha, Kunti who is Krishna's father's sister. Krishna thus attempts to show his nearness to him and thereby convey something special to him for his welfare.

ARJUNA'S DOUBTS ARE UNRESOLVED

**arjuna uvaacha  
katham bheeshmamaham sankhye dronam cha madhusoodana  
ishubhih pratiyotsyaami poojaarhaav arisoodana //2.4 //**

*Arjuna said*

*But O Madhusudana, how can I strike Bhishma and Drona with arrows in this battle, for they are worthy of worship, O Arisudana (Destroyer of enemies - Krishna)?*

**guroon ahatwaa hi mahaanubhaavaan  
shreyo bhoktum bhaikshyam apeeha loke  
hatwaarthakaamaamstu guroon ihaiva  
bhunjeeya bhogaan rudhirapradigdhaan // 2.5 //**

*It is better to live in this world by begging than to slay these honored teachers. By slaying them I would enjoy in this world pleasures which are stained with blood.*

**na chaitad vidmah kataran no gareeyo  
yad waa jayema yadi vaa no jayeyuh  
yaan eva hatwaa na jijeevishaamas  
te'vasthitaah pramukhe dhaartaraashtraah // 2.6 //**

*I can hardly tell which will be better - to fight or not to fight, that we should conquer them or they should conquer us. The very sons of Dhritarashtra after slaying whom we do not even wish to live stand facing us.*

**kaarpanya dosho pahata swabhaavah  
pricchaami twaam dharma sammoodha chetaah  
yacchreyah syaan nischitam broohi tanme  
shishyaste'ham shaadhi maam twaam prapannam // 2.7 //**

*With my nature stricken with weakness of sentimental pity and my mind bewildered about my duty, I request you to tell me for certain what is good for me. I am your disciple. Please teach me. I am seeking refuge in you*

**na hi prapashyaami mamaapanudyaad  
yacchokam ucchoshanam indriyaanaam**

**avaapya bhoomaav asapatnam riddham  
raajyam suraanaam api chaadhipatyam // 2.8 //**

*For, even after obtaining an undisputed sovereignty and an affluent kingdom on this earth and lordship over the Gods, I do not see any means of driving away this grief which is drying up my senses.*

Arjuna wondered as to how he was being asked to fight Bhishma and Drona, who were not his enemies but respected elders and teachers worthy of worship. When even using soft words against them was considered sin, Arjuna was surprised about his being exhorted to wage war against them with arrows.

Arjuna continued that it would be better for him to eat food by begging, which was most unbecoming for a man of warrior class, than to slay his noble elders on the Kaurava side. He felt that even if they were killed, his subsequent enjoyment would be stained with their blood and therefore not worth anything and the life in this world would be nothing but hell.

A question arises, why is it that Bhishma and Drona, who are not his enemies, are on the side of Duryodhana? They are there because as Arjuna says Bhishma and Drona are 'arthakaman', which means even though they never approved the criminal ways of Duryodhana, they still sought, accepted and enjoyed the royal hospitality of Duryodhana for so long that they now feel obligated to him so much that they simply cannot abandon Duryodhana in his time of need. That is how Bhishma and Drona are now caught on the side of Duryodhana. Arjuna feels that it is their problem and he has nothing to do with it and so he sticks to his point of view that they are worthy of his worship.

He had also said that Duryodhana and his companions being goaded by greed were prepared to wage war; but for himself if he wages war, he will enjoy only blood-stained pleasure in the form of wealth and sensual enjoyment. Thus he perceives nothing but evil in waging war.

When an evil comes to us in the form of an evil, it is easier to do away with it, than when it comes in the garb of something good. Ravana could not be recognized by Sita because he disguised himself as a sage while Krishna killed Kamsa and others recognizing them as evil forces. Similarly Arjuna perceives that it is virtuous not to wage war and it is an evil to wage war. Hence Krishna had to give an elaborate explanation to convince Arjuna about the real wisdom.

When sentiment overtook and clouded his understanding Arjuna lost the faculty of judgment and started doubting as to who should conquer whom?

Realizing his complete helplessness in knowing the nature of his duty and admitting his incapacity to face the crisis and the challenges presented before him, he surrendered himself to Sri Krishna. He confessed before The Lord that he was his disciple and requested Him to tell him for certain what was good for him.

Arjuna does not ask for a metaphysic as he is not a seeker of knowledge; as a man of action he asks for the law of action, for his dharma, for what he has to do in this difficulty. “Master, what would you have me to do?” that is his question.

Arjuna made it clear that in spite of the victory in the war which will in any case bring him an affluent kingdom on this earth and lordship over the Gods, he could not see any way to drive away his grief which was eating away his vitals. He appealed to The Lord to show him a definite way which would remove his grief and guide him in his Dharma.

**sanjaya uvaacha**

**evam uktwaa hrishikesham gudakeshah parantapah**

**na yotsya iti govindam uktwaa tooshneem babhoova ha // 2.9 //**

*Sanjaya said*

*Having thus spoken to Hrishikesa (Krishna), Arjuna the destroyer of foes (Parantapa), said to Govinda (Krishna) I will not fight and became silent.*

**tam uvaacha hrisheekeshah prahasanniva bhaarata**

**senayor ubhayor madhye visheedantam idam vachah // 2.10 //**

*O descendent of Bharata (Dhritarashtra), then Krishna, as if smiling, spoke these words to him (Arjuna) thus depressed in the midst of the two armies.*

Even after taking refuge in The Lord and seeking His grace, the great warrior Arjuna decidedly told Sri Bhagavan that he would not fight and became silent and quiet. Becoming silent and quiet in the face of a crisis was an expression of bewilderment and helplessness. We may notice that despite asking his teacher to advise him, Arjuna already made up his mind not to fight without even waiting for the advice sought. This indicates the confused state of his mind. In this situation the teacher’s task becomes all the more difficult to convince the student.

The depiction of Arjuna as a person sorrowing in the midst of the two armies was in contrast with his description as an enthusiastic warrior ready to fight when he requested Krishna to place their chariot in between both the forces.

Sri Krishna’s virtual smile indicates that He saw through Arjuna’s attempt at rationalization of his wishful thinking. The attitude of the savior Lord who knows all the sins and sorrows of the suffering humanity is one of the tender pity and thoughtful understanding and not of reproach or censure.

## Concepts and Issues

It would be observed from the above dialogue that Arjuna was extremely grieved, his eyes were filled with tears and his heart was overcome with sorrow, thinking of those on

the battlefield and surveying both armies while the weapons were beginning to be discharged.

Krishna rebuked Arjuna, the great warrior and told him to shake of all weakness. Arjuna, being of the warrior class, was obliged to fight for a righteous cause and for justice. He did not think of his kinsmen or relatives before coming to the battlefield. He was very enthusiastic and did everything to organize. He was commanding a large army. But after seeing his relatives and friends and thinking of the result of the battle, he hesitated and thought what good would come out of such a fight.. His heart filled with pity and sorrow. He became nervous and lost his head and so he wanted to retire from the battlefield at that crucial moment.

Krishna said “No, that is not manliness”. Krishna found that the cause of his grief and sorrow was lack of right knowledge; it was attachment and ignorance and he tried to remove the cause of his sorrow and grief in the light of self-knowledge.

It may be noted from the long statement of Arjuna that the following real issues involved were sidetracked.

1. The war was between two sets of ideals, the just and the unjust, righteousness and covetousness.
2. On the battlefield there was no individual identity like father, son, grandfather, teacher, friend etc. Each one there represented his side and the values that it stood for and it was his duty to fight for them.
3. He committed the error of looking at the problem from his personal point of view. He did not look at the situation in totality but viewed it through his colored eye-glass of egoism, the sense of `I' ness and `my' ness.
4. He saw himself attached to others: as a student of Drona, grandson of Bhishma and overlooked his duty at that critical juncture which was nothing but to fight. On the contrary although Bhishma and Drona were on the other end of that relationship which was tormenting Arjuna they did not undergo any such sentimental pangs as Arjuna did and they were ready to fire the first shot.

The more one gets attached or identified with the sense of `I'ness and `my' ness the more he will be faced with problems and confusions in life. The moment he enlarges his vision and identifies himself with basic principles his confusions would disappear and he would discover his real identity with the Self. This is what Krishna's teachings will do to Arjuna.

In order to have the mist cleared from his mind Arjuna at last totally surrendered before The Lord and begged him to show what was good for him. Arjuna wanted to know from Krishna what was decidedly good for him i.e. Shreyas. The term ‘good’ did not mean good only for him but good to all those around him also. It also meant not only his material prosperity but spiritual enlightenment for perceiving the Reality or Self within himself.

He admitted his confusion with regard to his Dharma or duty. The question in Arjuna's mind was how he should act which was expected of him or what was his Dharma. The relationship of Arjuna with Krishna had now changed from a friend to a student, from an equal to a disciple. Weighed down by wretchedness, confused about what is right and wrong, Arjuna seeks light and guidance from his teacher, the Divine by his side. When one's world is in ruins, one can only turn within and seek illumination as the gift of God's infinite compassion.

It is the general experience of the seekers that they are assailed by doubts and difficulties even when they are on the threshold of light. The light as it begins to shine in any soul provokes the darkness to resist it. Arjuna faces difficulties, both inward and outward such as the resistance of the relations and friends, doubts and fears, passions and desires. They must all be laid to rest and consumed in the fire of wisdom. The struggle with the darkness will continue until the light fills one's whole being. The conflict in Arjuna must be healed. He must attain to a new, integral, comprehensive consciousness.

This frame of mind was a pre-requisite for the attainment of spiritual enlightenment. It was a turning point. The Lord took note of it, sympathized with him and infused courage in him which was the crying need of that hour. In His efforts to release Arjuna from his doubts Sri Krishna refers to the doctrine of the indestructibility of the Self, appeals to his sense of honor and martial traditions, reveals to him God's purpose and points out how action is to be undertaken in the world.

We all are self-deluded men in the battlefield of this world. So long as we are in the charming and enchanting power of the world (*samsara*) which is nothing but *maya*, we do not identify anything correctly as in the case of a man identifying a rope as a snake in the inadequate light. Similarly in the partial light of our knowledge we do not know what will be the right path. So when become a disciple to a wise man, we get the proper light and then we understand the right path to Dharma.

## Live as the Gita Teaches You to Live

Like Arjuna the aspirant must realize his weakness and ignorance and yet be anxious to do God's will and discover what it is.

So the description of the battle in the Bhagavad Gita can be applied to any one living in the world in any country at any time. We therefore study the Gita not because it was given by Sri Krishna but because it is helpful in our everyday life. In the path of everyday life, if we follow and take advice of the *buddhi* or intelligence and its right direction, then we can ultimately reach the goal of all religions.

Sri Krishna starts by saying "O! Arjuna, you are worried unnecessarily", and ends by saying "Don't worry; I will take care of you". In between these words, there is an entire teaching on the nature of Existence - the Nature of jeeva, jagat and ishvara and the most practical philosophy for right conduct in everyday life, leading to Absolute Happiness



and Total Fulfillment in life, which is indeed the teaching of all our scriptures - the Vedas and the Upanishads.

From here on, we are not particularly concerned with the Mahabharata War as an episode in human history, except in terms of context. On the other hand, we are concerned with the incessant war going on within every one of us, between the forces of good and bad, in our every day life. This war is of every human being, who is mature enough to realize that Joy of Life lies only in Enlightenment of the Best and the Highest in one's own self; and that is - Self-Knowledge - God Realization.

Striving towards such Enlightenment - such Self-Knowledge - such God-Realization is our heritage; is our philosophy; is our culture; is our religion. In order to gain such Enlightenment, one has to overcome so many obstacles within oneself - that is the Great War one has to fight every day of one's life. In this war itself, there is no violence. There are no bows and arrows, bombs or shells. There is no bloodshed. There is no death. There is only a continuous process of self-endeavor, to uplift oneself, which itself is a process of continuous joy.

The destructive weapons of ordinary war are completely useless in this process of self endeavor. The weapons needed to succeed in this war are constructive ones, and they are: - humility, modesty, non-violence, etc., about which the Gita tells us in Chapter 13.

Simply because the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita occurred in the context of the Mahabharata war, they do not constitute an incitement to violence of any kind, anywhere, at any time, under any circumstance. On the contrary, these teachings unfold the power of the all-inclusive war to dispel Self-ignorance and gain Extraordinary Enlightenment, Fulfillment and Joy of Life for every human being.

### Points to Ponder

1. Arjuna's thoughts about the impending war.
2. How Arjuna's decision not to wage war is incorrect?
3. Why surrendering like Arjuna for the guidance from the wise is necessary for everybody?
4. Sri Krishna's expression as if smiling.
5. Bhagavan's strong reaction to Arjuna's words.

**Next time we will proceed from the Verse 2.11**

*HARIH OM*

Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 2 (Part-2)  
Saankhya Yogah : Yoga Of Knowledge  
**T.N.Sethumadhavan**

## Preamble

We have seen the dejection of Arjuna and his determination not to wage the war. Since Bhagavan Krishna has discovered that the deep-rooted delusion and grief of Arjuna cannot be removed without the knowledge of reality, He immediately starts His discourse on the immortality of the Soul with a virtual smile on His face,

In that moment of depression, the sinking heart of Arjuna heard the Divine voice of Krishna. Krishna's virtual smile indicates that he saw through Arjuna's attempt at rationalization of what is now known as wishful thinking.

Krishna starts the sermon of the Gita by stating that

- The wise grieve neither for the living nor for the dead.
- The Self within is eternal, indestructible.
- The bodies enveloping the Self are ephemeral. They have a beginning and an end.
- Death is certain for the born and birth for the dead.
- Beings constantly pass through the repeated stages of unmanifest, manifest and again unmanifest. So why grieve over the inevitable?
- The indwelling Self remains eternally the same.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Chapter is considered as the epitome of all that stands for in the Gita.

## The Text

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE SELF AND THE BODY:  
WE SHOULD NOT GRIEVE FOR WHAT IS IMPERISHABLE.

**sri bhagavaan uvaacha  
ashochyaan anvashochastwam prajnaavaadaamshcha bhaashase  
gataasoon agataasoomshcha naanushochanti panditaah // 2.11 //**

*Sri Bhagavan said*

*You grieve for those who are not to be grieved for; and yet you speak words of wisdom!  
The learned do not grieve for the departed and those who have not departed.*

There are four propositions in this verse. 1. Arjuna is grieving 2. He is grieving for those not to be grieved for. 3. He speaks the words of the wise though he is not so, and 4. The wise do not grieve for the living or for the dead.

Let us have a closer look at these statements.

1. The cause for Arjuna's suffering and distress is because when he looked at his relatives, friends and teachers lined up on the opposite side, the feeling of 'me' and 'mine' became very strong in him, the central point being the sense of 'I.' A man is grieved when he categorizes some objects or persons as his own and some others as not his own. This sense of mine and not-mine - attachment for things considered as one's own and indifference for things considered as not one's own - is called ego which is the source of all grief, worry, fear and confusion. Rediscovering oneself to be really higher than one's ego is the end of all sorrows arising out of false identification or relationship.

So Krishna went to the bottom of this grief, sorrow, misery and suffering and explained that a wise man does not have the sense of 'I', 'me' and 'mine'. Such a man is not bound by any tie or attachment of any kind.

2. Here the phrase 'those not to be grieved for' refers to Bhishma and Drona. Why they are not to be grieved for? It is because they are beyond the sense of attachment and the feeling of "I", "my" and "mine". That is the reason why they are on the side of the Kaurava army despite the Pandavas being equally dear to them. They are aware of the difference between the real and the unreal, the soul and the body respectively. They are wise because they have realized the eternal reality behind the phenomenal changes and therefore do not grieve at the decay and death of the finite and the mortal in the form of the physical bodies.

When we go to the sea shore we do not grieve over each wave that rises and dissolves for we know that they are unreal and the real thing is the water in the waves. Waves are like the physical bodies which appear and disappear while the indweller of the body, the self or soul is like the water. Those who have realized this eternal truth have no sorrow for the change they perceive in the world of happenings.

Thus both real and unreal are not to be grieved at as the real is imperishable and therefore should not be grieved for. The unreal is bound to perish, as it is perishing at every moment, so it should not also be grieved at. It follows that Arjuna's grief over the bodies of his relatives getting perished is misplaced and is the consequence of his ignorance, lack of right knowledge, *avidya* although his words apparently look wise which in fact they are not. Hence Krishna says that he is grieving for those who should not be grieved for.

What Krishna means is "Arjuna, Look at those standing before you not as human beings; look at them as the souls (*atman*) and the soul is immortal; you cannot kill the soul if you have the real knowledge". The idea is, "You are sorrowing for those who are eternal in the real sense, and therefore who are not to be grieved for. Hence you are a fool".

"The wise do not mourn for the dead or for the living," says Krishna to Arjuna. Why? Because there are no "living" or "dead" in the sense that those with bodies are alive and those divested of a body are dead. Nor is there such a duality called life and death. These are only the illusions produced by the distorting veils of ignorance. "Lead me from death to immortality" is not a petition to gain a state where we will nevermore experience

bodily death, but a plea to be led from the outward-turned consciousness that produces death to the inward-turned consciousness that produces life. It is spirit itself that is immortality—nothing else.

In order to remedy this myopic view of Arjuna, Krishna administered the strongest medicine of the Knowledge of the Self to him at the very first stroke from the 11th verse of this chapter which is considered as the key verse of the Gita. All the subsequent teachings are an elaboration of the principle laid down in this verse.

He advised Arjuna to renounce his physical, emotional and intellectual estimate of his grand-sire and teacher and to re-evaluate the situation from his spiritual understanding whereby his problem at the battlefield would vanish.

**na tvevaaham jaatu naasam na twam neme janaadhipaah  
na chaiva na bhavishyaamah sarve vayam atah param // 2.12 //**

*It is not that I did not exist before, nor you nor these kings. Nor is it that we shall cease to exist in future.*

There are two things in the world, the soul which is real and the body which is unreal. Both of these are not to be grieved for because the soul never ceases to be and the body is ever perishable. Thus Sri Krishna speaks here of the immortality of the Self or the soul. The Self exists in the three periods of time - past, present and future.

He declares that the embodied soul in every one identifies itself with varied forms temporarily to gain preordained experiences. Neither Krishna himself nor Arjuna nor the other kings who have assembled in the battlefield are mere accidental happenings nor shall they cease to exist in future. It is not that they came from nowhere nor at their death they become nothing or non-existent. The soul remaining the same, it gets apparently conditioned by different body equipments and comes to live through its self-ordained environments.

All the living creatures existed before their birth; they exist now and would exist even after the disappearance of their present bodies. A man experiences his existence before sleep, after sleep and during sleep. While his existence is continuous, his body is changing every moment and ultimately perishes one day. Thus existence is beyond time while biological body is bound by time and space. Waves arise, they play and die away. But the ocean ever remains the same.

Prior to the pot, in the pot and after the pot it was only the mud or clay which has continuous existence. Just as the destruction of a pot does not lead to the destruction of clay, so also destruction of the physical body does not lead to destruction of the Soul. Therefore, Arjuna should not grieve for his relatives out of fear of their destruction.

IMMUTABLE CHARACTER OF THE SOUL

**dehino'smin yathaa dehe kaumaaram yauvanam jaraa  
tathaa dehaantara praaptir dheeras tatra na mhuhyati // 2.13 //**

*Just as in this body the embodied self passes into childhood, youth and old age, so also does he pass into another body; calm man does not grieve at it.*

Embodied self means the soul assuming a physical body. Calm man means he who has Self-Knowledge and does not grieve at it means that he does not grieve at death.

In the progress of growth of the body, childhood dies when youth is born and youthhood dies when the old age sets in. Even when childhood or youthhood no longer remains at the old age, man remembers his early days fairly well. Thus 'something' is common throughout the various stages of growth which could remember the past experiences and none feels unhappy about these changes.

For the SELF in this body, as is obtaining the change in the experiences of childhood, youth and old age, so also is the change in the experiences on obtaining another body. A wise person is not confused or overpowered by such change in experiences.

Let us understand this statement properly. The Indweller - The self in one's body is the same in one's childhood, youth and old age; similarly, on obtaining another body, the Indweller in that new body also is the same self or *atman*.

Childhood, youth and old age are only with respect to one's physical body. The SELF, without undergoing any change, remains the same in all the three stages of bodily experiences. It is the same *atman* which is the Indweller in any new body one may assume later, after the present body falls. There can never be a time when *atman* is not there. Thus at all times, "I am" does not change, but "what I am" may change. A wise person is not confused or overpowered by such changes. If one thinks that "I" changes from "childhood I" to "youth I" to "old-age I" and to another "I" in another body, one must simply ask oneself the question who is "That I" who recognizes all these changes in "I"s. That "I" - That Recognizer I - That Seer I - "That Knower - I" is indeed *atman*, The SELF which is Eternal - All-pervading, and is never subject to change.

The Self does not die at the cessation of the childhood stage nor is it born again at the commencement of the youth stage and so also with the next stage of the old age. As the Self passes unchanged from one stage of the physical body into another stage so it passes unchanged from one body into another. As one does not grieve for the body when it passes through childhood, youth and old age, similarly one should not worry or get himself deluded over when the soul passes over to another body at physical death. Thus birth and death are spoken of with regard to the physical body and not the soul.

At the moment of death, there is no extinction of the individual. The embodied ego of the dead body (the subtle and causal bodies) leaves its previous structure and according to vasanas or mental impressions gained during its embodiment it gets itself identified with

another physical body where it can express itself completely and seek its perfect fulfillment.

Now Arjuna may say: Well Krishna, all this talk about atman is interesting. It is nice to know that all of us are in fact eternal, and atman is *ananda svarupa*, Atma is All-Happiness. I have not experienced That Atma yet. Our scriptures say so; you say so; I accept all that to be true. But that does not help me much just now. The ups and downs of daily life do create pain and sorrow. This is common experience. Whether it is justified or not, it is still a fact that I am suffering from sorrow and distress at this time. Please tell me how I must handle this situation. Anticipating such a request from Arjuna, Bhagavan says:

**maatrasparshaastu kaunteya sheetoshna sukha dukhahaah  
agamaapaayinonityaas taamstikshaswa bhaarata //2.14 //**

*The contacts of the senses with objects, O son of Kunti, which cause heat and cold, pleasure and pain have a beginning and an end; they are impermanent ; endure them bravely, O descendent of Bharata (Arjuna).*

Objects are perceived not by the sense organs viz. skin, ear, eye, nose and tongue but through them. The sense organs are the channels through which the perceiving-ego gathers the knowledge of the objects such as touch, sound, form, smell and taste. If this process of perceiver contacting the objects through sense organs does not take place the objects as such can not bring any response or reaction in any individual.

The object remaining the same it can give different experiences to the same individual at different times or at the same time to different individuals. Cold is pleasant at one time and unpleasant at another. Heat is pleasant in winter and not in summer. Food is welcome to a hungry person but not to the one who just finished his lunch. So the sense contacts that give rise to feelings of heat and cold, pleasure and pain, favorable and unfavorable experiences come and go. They are therefore impermanent in nature, giving pleasure at one moment and pain at another. One should bear all the pairs of opposites patiently and thus develop a balanced state of mind. Do not give yourself to joy or grief on their account.

Joys and sorrows are all responses of the mind to the conducive and non-conductive world around us. They are but mental reactions - thoughts. Learn to be observer of these emotions rather than get identified with them. Do not react but reflect. Stand apart - be aloof in yourself - be just an uninterested witness to the tumults of the mind. This attitude gives poise and balance.

The pairs of opposites like heat and cold are impermanent as distinguished from the Permanent Self, the Indweller. Actually there is no affinity between the Self and the unreal pairs of opposites. But it assumed this affinity which can be rooted out only when we cease to accept it. A woman bereaved of her husband say fifty years ago, and if anyone called her as the wife of her husband Mr. so and so she becomes alert and feels sad even today. It shows that the assumed affinity has not yet broken off which means

that though the objects are lost, yet the assumed affinity persists which continues to cause anguish. The more one is able to distance oneself with this assumed affinity and identifies himself with the permanent Self, the less one is affected by the agreeable and disagreeable conditions of life.

Mere knowledge of agreeable and disagreeable senses is not bad. But attachment with and aversion to them is a fault. Not to be affected by such an evil is expressed by the term 'endure them'. Moreover, body, the sense organs and their actions have a beginning and an end. But the perceiver, the 'I' never changes and therefore we should remain unaffected by such transitory and fleeting experiences which is called 'endurance'.

WHAT GOOD COMES TO HIM WHO ENDURES THESE DESIRABLE AND UNDESIRABLE SITUATIONS?

**yam hi na vyathayantye purusham purusharshabha  
samaduhkha sukham dheeram so'mritatwaaya kalpate // 2.15 //**

*That calm man who remains unchanged in pain and pleasure, whom these cannot disturb, alone is able, O greatest amongst men, to attain immortality.*

Titiksha or the power of endurance of the pairs of opposites advocated here does not mean a meek submission to sorrows in life (Stoic philosophy) but signifies the equipoise of mind in both pleasure and pain entertained by a wise man based on the knowledge of the Soul's immortality.

Endurance, coupled with the discrimination between the real and the unreal and detachment from the worldly objects and pleasures, prepares the aspirant for right knowledge, which alone leads to liberation.

Vedanta defines endurance as the bearing of all afflictions without wishing to redress them, while being free from all anxiety or regret on their account.

This perfect sameness or equanimity amidst the ills of life means full and unbroken consciousness of our oneness with the immortal Self. At that stage a person becomes fit for attaining immortality or knowledge of Self - the ultimate goal of life. Immortality means the infinite experience of the Eternal and the Permanent. Eternal life does not mean survival of death, but it is the transcendence of life and death.

HOW THE SOUL IS ETERNAL AND HOW THE CONTACTS WITH SENSORY OBJECTS ARE TRANSITORY? THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE REAL AND THE UNREAL. ADDITIONAL EXPLANATIONS.

**naasato vidyate bhaavo naabhaavo vidyate satah  
ubhayorapi drishto'ntastwanayos tattwadarshibhih // 2.16 //**

*The unreal has no existence. The Real never ceases to be (never ceases to exist). Men possessed of the knowledge of the Truth fully know both these.*

This verse indicates that the mental tranquility can accrue only through right interpretation of life. Right interpretation of life involves knowing what is Real and what is un-Real. The distinction between these two is dealt with here.

The Real is that which has no change and remains the same in all periods of time - past, present and future. It always is. The unreal is that which does not remain the same for two successive moments. Whatever did not exist in the past or will not exist in the future cannot really exist in the present. That which is not in the beginning and which will not be in the end, but which seemingly exists in the present is called un-Real. Any object conditioned by the law of cause and effect is not absolutely real because every effect is a change brought about by a cause and every cause is temporary.

The life is finite. The body changes every moment, mind evolves and intellect grows with the passage of time. Each change in the body for example from childhood to youth and from youth to old age results in the constant death to its previous state. Body, mind and intellect constitute the continuous succession of the changes and all of them cannot be real. A thing which never remains the same for any given period is un-Real. The whole of the phenomenal world must be unreal because no one state in it endures even for a fraction of the time.

But there must be some real entity behind these changes. For the changes to take place there must be some changeless substratum just as a river bed is necessary for the rivers to flow. In order to hold together innumerable experiences at the levels of body, mind and intellect and to give them a cohesive whole which is called life, a changeless substratum is required for all.

That something which remains unchanged all through the changes is The Real and it is nothing other than the Self in all, the Pure Awareness, and Consciousness. What is changing must be unreal and what is constant must be real. When the soul is overpowered by ignorance, the un-Real which is the names and forms of the phenomenal world, veils the unchanging reality - the Atman, Consciousness - which is for ever manifest and which is not conditioned by causality. This Self is the unchanging Witness of the changes in the relative world as in the case of the river bed and a flowing river.

This Awareness by which one becomes conscious of things in one's life - because of which one is considered alive, but for which one will have no existence in the given embodiment - That Spiritual Entity, Eternal, All Pervading, Unborn and Undying, the One Changeless factor is the Infinite in him. And this is the Atman, Consciousness which is the Real.

Therefore the men of knowledge and wisdom have known the implications of these - the Real and the Un-Real, the Self and the Non-Self, which in combination is called the world.



Embedding this exposition into the practical world, we notice that Arjuna is grieved by thinking that the warriors will die. So, the Lord explains that the real never dies and the unreal never exists as it is continuously dying (changing). Therefore it is not wise to grieve.

WHAT THEN IS THAT WHICH IS ALWAYS REAL ?

**avinaashi tu tad viddhi yena sarvam idam tatam  
vinaasham avyayaasya na kaschit kartum arhati // 2.17 //**

*Know 'That' to be indestructible, by whom all this is pervaded. None can cause the destruction of That, the Imperishable.*

'That' is Brahman or the unchangeable Consciousness. It is the self of all. It is The Real that envelops everything that exists. It is the very substance of all the world of perceptions, the world of names and forms, which we experience. Brahman is the Witness and the innermost essence of the changeable world.

Different mud pots have different names and shapes depending upon the things they contain or the purposes for which they are made use of. Yet all of them are permeated with the same stuff i.e. mud without which no pot can exist. All the pots come from mud exist in mud and when they are destroyed all their forms and names merge back in mud. So the mud is The Reality holding all pots together.

So too, the world of finite objects and changes is enveloped by The Real, the Changeless Brahman. Sri Krishna says that there is no possibility of this Real ever getting destroyed at all. Destruction of an object is caused by the loss of its parts as in the case of the body or by the loss of something belonging to it. As Brahman is without parts and is One without a second, there is no question of its destruction.

The immutable Consciousness or Atman in the individual is the same as the all pervading Consciousness or Brahman in the universe.

The idea here is that while the soul is imperishable, the body is perishable and is perishing every day. Nobody can check the process of such destruction. Whether Arjuna wages the war or withdraws from it, the imperishable cannot be destroyed and the perishable cannot be saved from destruction.

WHAT IS THE UNREAL WHOSE NATURE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE?

**antavanta ime dehaa nityasyoktaah shareerinah  
anaashino'prameyasya tasmaad yudhyaswa bhaarata // 2.18 //**

*Only the bodies, of which this eternal, imperishable, and incomprehensible Self is the indweller, are said to have an end. Therefore, O descendent of Bharata (Arjuna) fight.*

Arjuna's grief which deters him from his duty is born of ignorance as to the true nature of the soul. Hence Sri Bhagavan's persisted attempts to illumine him on the subject.

The physical body may be injured or destroyed by illness or death. The Self is subject to neither of these. The Self is said to be incomprehensible because it is not comprehended by the senses, by the mind, or by any other instrument of knowledge. The self is *svatah-siddha*, determined by Itself. Being the knowing Consciousness, It cannot be known by any other instrument. Everything is known by the Self just as no other light is required to see the light of the Sun which is self-effulgent.

Here the earlier advice about the Permanent and Non-Permanent is repeated with an added call to Arjuna to fight. Krishna is not really commanding Arjuna to fight as it is commonly understood. Arjuna, following his Dharma, had come to the battlefield to fight. He refused to fight on account of his erroneous perception of the true nature of the soul and the body. The efforts of the Lord are towards removing this unawareness and leave him to do what he (Arjuna) considers to be right.

This is really not a command to fight but a call to Arjuna and through him to all of us to discard the defeatist mentality and face whole heartedly and sincerely all the situations in every field of activity at any given moment of existence in life.

IT IS IGNORANCE TO THINK THAT THE SOUL IS CAPABLE OF KILLING OR CAN BE KILLED.

**ya enam vetti hantaaram yashchainam manyate hatam  
ubhau tau na vijaaneeto naayam hanti na hanyate // 2.19 //**

*He who looks on the Self to be the slayer and he who looks on the Self as the slain - neither of them apprehends correctly. The Self neither slays nor is slain.*

The Self is a non-doer and as it is immutable; it is neither the agent nor the object of the act of slaying. He who thinks 'I slay' or 'I am slain' really does not comprehend the true nature of the Self. The Self is indestructible. It exists in all periods of time - past, present and future. It is The Existence itself i.e. 'Sat'. The physical body undergoes inevitable changes every moment but the Self is not affected in the least by such changes. When the body is destroyed, the Self is not. Both of them who think that they have been slain when their bodies have been slain and those who feel that they are the slayers of the bodies of others do not know the real nature of the Self.

The agent of slaying is the ego (*aham*) and the object of slaying is the body. Therefore the Self which is different both from the ego and the body is neither the slayer nor the slain. But by identifying with the body It assumes itself as the doer of actions performed by the body. If the man does not identify himself with the body he is not at all doer of any activity. One who holds the soul as slain is also ignorant because the soul remains unaffected and unchanged. Only that which is perishable and changeable can be slain. How could the imperishable and unchangeable be slain?

HOW IS THE SELF IMMUTABLE AND IMMORTAL?

**na jaayate mriyate vaa kadaachin  
naayam bhootwaa bhavita vaa na bhooyah  
ajo nityah shaashwato'yam puraano  
na hanyate hanyamaane shareere // 2.20 //**

*He is never born nor does He ever die; after having been, He again does not cease to be. Unborn, eternal, changeless and ancient. He is not killed when the body is killed.*

This verse describes the absence of the six kinds of modification inherent in every living thing viz., birth, subsistence, growth, transformation, decay and death. The Self is altogether changeless. These changes are the source of all sorrows and miseries in every mortal's life. All these are denied to the Self to prove Its changelessness. Birth and death are for the physical bodies only and they cannot touch the immortal Self just as the waves are born and die in the ocean but the ocean itself is not born with the waves nor does it die when the waves disappear.

Arjuna was grieved about the death of his kinsmen in the war. So the Lord explains that the soul is not killed when the body is slain and hence he should not grieve.

WHY THE SOUL DOES NOT KILL ANYBODY?

**vedaavinaashinam nityam ya enam ajam avyayam  
katham sa purushah paartha kam ghaatayati hanti kam // 2.21 //**

*Whosoever knows Him to be indestructible, eternal, unborn and immutable, how can that man slay O Arjuna, or cause another to slay?*

An enlightened person who knows the changelessness and the indestructibility of the Self cannot perform the function of slaying or cause another to slay. When we know the Self to be invulnerable, how can anyone slay it? The words 'how can he slay' refer to Arjuna and 'cause another to slay' refer to Krishna's own role.

Summarizing what has been said so far Krishna emphasizes that those who know the nature of the Self shall have no dejection or sorrow in the face of the realities of life. Therefore, one while discharging duty should not grieve, while slaying anyone or causing anyone to be slain, but should discharge one's duty, in accordance with the ordinance of scriptures.

ILLUSTRATION REGARDING INDESTRUCTIBILITY OF THE SOUL.

**vaasaamsi jeernaani yathaa vihaaya  
navaani grihnaati nara'paraani  
tathaa shareeraani vihaaya jeerna  
nyanyaani samyaati navaani dehee // 2.22 //**

*Just as a man casts off his worn-out clothes and puts on new ones, so also the embodied Self casts off Its worn out bodies and enters that are new.*

Here '*dehi*' means the *jiva* - the individual person, who is made up of the perceptible gross physical body, the imperceptible subtle and causal bodies, together with the *atman*.

The verse says: Just as an individual person gives up worn out or old clothing and takes up new ones, similarly, the same *jiva*, on giving up the worn out or old gross physical body, naturally takes up an appropriate new gross physical body. By giving up the old clothes and putting on new ones, the person does not change. Similarly, by giving up the old body and assuming a new one, the *atman* in the *jiva* - the individual person - does not change. The 'worn out condition of the body' does not refer to its biological condition but to the capacity of the body, mind and intellect equipments to earn the required experiences from the available environment for facilitating their evolutionary journey. This evolution and change is for the physical bodies and not for the Self.

The verse also tells something more about every individual person. By virtue of one's own 'karma' the *jiva* already becomes ready to assume a new body, prior to casting out the old worn-out body which has served its purpose. In other words, the mental make-up of a person does not die along with the death of the gross body. The mental make-up of the person, along with its karma-born tendencies and dispositions is called the subtle-body which is the core of every *jiva* and it survives the death of the physical frame. In its next step of evolution, the *jiva* assumes a new physical frame more suited to the fulfillment of its natural tendencies and dispositions. In all these changes, the self or soul or the *Atman* remains unchanged. In reality, the soul being immobile and non-active does not migrate from one body to another; it is ever fixed and steady and does not undergo any change whatsoever.

But just as when a pot is carried from one place to another, the space within the pot also appears to be carried, even so when the subtle body leaves a gross body and enters another, it appears that the soul also has moved from one body to another. Therefore, the acts of leaving one body and entering into another are attributed to the soul in order to explain the phenomenon of death to the lay people. The word '*dehi*' is indicative of the soul identifying itself with gross body it appears to be leaving and entering into another. In this sense it is said that the soul leaves a worn-out body and enters into a new one.

Now a question arises why this cycle of birth and death has been going on from times immemorial. While this question can be answered from the *Jnana*, *Bhakti* and *Karma* points of view, the basic factor behind this never-ending cycle is that God has granted the choice to the living beings to make proper use of their lives and to rediscover ultimately their own transcendental nature. Through innumerable births in the relative world they gain experience, through experience knowledge and through knowledge attain freedom or liberation or *moksha* from this cycle.

## Concepts and Issues

Krishna started the sermon of the Gita by stating that

1. The Self within is eternal, indestructible.
2. The bodies enveloping the Self are ephemeral and have a beginning and an end.
3. Death is certain for the born and birth for the dead.
4. Beings pass through this cycle of birth and death repeatedly but the indwelling Self remains eternally the same.

The one who understands these concepts is said to possess true knowledge which postulates that the soul or self or the atman alone is real and all things other than that are unreal.

The entire existence with respect to an individual is divided into two categories: 1. 'I' or *aham* and 2. 'This' or *idam*. Atman is 'I' and the rest is 'This' *idam*. But due to the ignorance of my real nature, I am always identified with my body, mind and intellect and thus developed a false notion about myself. This false notion is ego.

If I can differentiate what is different from me, I can apprehend my own nature. Thus the enquiry is to know first what is not I and then to assert what is I. In other words it is about knowing what is not I (the body, mind and intellect) and knowing my real nature i.e. Atman (I). This is the study of the nature of the atman and the body which is called *Sarira Traya Prakriya*.

The personality of an individual is considered to consist of three bodies or '*sarira*' viz. gross body (*sthula sarira*), subtle body (*sukshma sarira*) and causal body (*karana sarira*).

Gross body (*Sthula Sarira*): It is that which is composed of the five great elements viz. space, air, fire, water and earth. The volume of the body occupies 'space', the breathing and respiratory system is due to 'air', the warmth in the body is due to 'fire' and the body is made up of 'water' and the 'minerals'(earth). This physical body is considered to have been acquired as a result of past good deeds. This body is the locus or the hutment or the counter for experiencing pain and pleasure and such other pairs of opposites. It is subject to six modifications (*shad vikaras*) viz. existence, birth, growth, change, decay and death.

Subtle body (*Sukshma Sarira or Linga Sarira*): It is the counterpart of the gross body that keeps the latter alive, performs all the physiological functions and operates the organs of action and perception. The physical body dies when the subtle body departs. The subtle body consists of seventeen components. They are the five organs of perception, the five organs of action, the five vital airs (*Pancha Pranas*), the mind and the intellect.

The five organs of perception are 1. Ear (sense of hearing), 2. Skin (sense of touch), 3. Eyes (sense of vision), 4. Tongue (sense of taste) and 5. Nose (sense of smell). The five organs of action are 6. Mouth, 7. Hands, 8. Legs, 9. Anus and 10. Genitals. The five vital airs are: 11. Prana - its function being respiration - located in Nose 12. Apana - Evacuation or Excretion - Anus & Genitals 13. Vyana - Circulation - Entire Body 14. Udana - Reaction or Throwing out upwards - Throat 15. Samana-Assimilation or Digestion -

Central Region of the Body. 16. The Mind - Receives Stimuli through organs of perception from external sources and 17. The Intellect - Analyses situations or stimuli received and determines - Cognition faculty.

According to some the mind and intellect only are treated as the causal body and the other fifteen components mentioned above form part of the gross body. The subtle body is the instrument of experience while the gross body is the hutment or the place of the experience.

Causal body (*Karana Sarira*): It is inexplicable, beginningless and in the form of ignorance of the Reality and the cause for the other two bodies, ignorant of one's own real nature, free from duality or division. According to some our inborn tendencies or *vasanas* are treated as causal body.

Atman (Self, Soul): It is not any of the three bodies mentioned above. It is the "awareness" or "consciousness" by which we are aware of the three bodies. It is called '*chit*'. The Atman does not undergo any change during the three states of consciousness viz. waking, dream and deep sleep (*avastha traya*) or during the passage of time because it is beyond time. It is therefore called *Sat* or ever-existent. The atman is also beyond the limitations of body, mind and intellect. It is also beyond space and time because space and time also are creations of the mind.

It is in a constant state of bliss or *ananda*. Atman is therefore *sat-chit-ananda* or Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. It is the principle that is self-effulgent, that pervades everything including space and which is complete (*Purna*). The *Sat-Chit-Ananda Svaurpa* is the natural state of every living being but it is not experienced because we are struggling in a wrong direction and squandering our energies on inconsequential matters. Thus the purport of Krishna's advice to Arjuna is that the latter should change the direction of his mindset from the unreal to the real.

### Live as the Gita Teaches You to Live

- Don't be carried away by emotional attachment but be guided by rational analysis.
- Distinguish between the real and the unreal, appearance and reality, shadow and the substance, grain and the chaff.
- Discard the defeatist mentality and face whole heartedly and sincerely all the situations in every field of activity at any given moment of existence in life.

### Points to Ponder

1. Krishna's virtual smile.
2. Grieving for those who are not to be grieved.
3. Real and Unreal.
4. Pairs of opposites and why to endure them?
5. Three kinds of bodies.
6. Immutability of the Self.

**Next time we will proceed from the Verse 2.23**

*HARIH OM*

Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 2 (Part-3)  
Saankhya Yogah : Yoga Of Knowledge  
**T.N.Sethumadhavan**

Preamble

Last time we studied up to verse 2.22 dealing with Krishna's exposition about the permanent nature of the Soul and the impermanent nature of the physical body wherein the Lord proved it unreasonable to grieve over the process of leaving one body and adopting another.

Continuing the discussion from another angle the Lord in the next three verses reiterates the eternal and changeless character of the soul and proves that grieving for fear of its destruction is unbecoming and improper on the part of Arjuna.

The Text

**nainam chhindanti shastraani nainam dahati paavakah  
na chainam kledayantyaapo na shoshayati maarutah // 2.23 //**

*Weapons cannot cut It, nor can fire burn It; water cannot wet It, nor can wind dry It.*

Here the unseen has been explained by means of the seen to indicate its nature. The changeless Self is explained with the aid of ever changing world which is familiar to Arjuna and others. In the world of change, objects meet their end by means of instruments of destruction like weapons, fire, water and wind.

Arjuna's grief was based on the assumption that he would be killing the elders and other relatives by striking them with lethal weapons. Hence in order to remove his grief the Lord points out the immortality and formlessness of the soul by pointing out the inability of all the four elements of earth, water, fire and air to destroy it. The body is perishable and possessed of a form; the soul is everlasting and formless. Therefore, the soul can never be destroyed by the elements of earth in the form of weapons or by the elements of water, fire and air and so it is sheer ignorance to lament for it.

**acchedyo'yam adaahyo'yam akledyo'shoshya eva cha  
nityah sarvagatah sthaanur achalo'yam sanaatanah // 2.24 //**

*This Self cannot be cut, burnt, wetted or dried up. It is eternal, all-pervading, stable, ancient and immovable.*

Continuing the import of the previous verse, The Lord says that if a thing cannot be annihilated by any means of destruction discovered by man such an object must be everlasting. Since the Self is indestructible, It is necessarily everlasting. That which is everlasting or eternal will pervade everywhere. All-pervading indicates that It has only itself all around It and it is unconditioned by anything other than Itself.

That which is eternal and all-pervading must be stable meaning no change can ever happen to It. That which is stable is immovable. Mobility or moving implies the transfer of an object or person from one set of time and place to another set of time and place where they were not there already. Since Self is all-pervading there cannot be any place or period of time where It was not there before. As the Self is unconditioned by the concept of time It is said to be ancient.

Sri Bhagavan explains nature of immortal Self in a variety of ways giving several illustrations in order that the underlying idea can be grasped by everybody.

**avyakto'yam achintyo'yam avikaaryo'yam uchyate  
tasmaad evam viditwainam naanushochitum arhasi // 2.25 //**

*The Self is unmanifest, unthinkable and unchangeable. Therefore, knowing it to be as such, you should not grieve.*

The Self is not an object of perception. It cannot be perceived by any one of the senses. Therefore, it is unmanifest. The mind can think only about an object perceived by the senses. As the Self cannot be perceived by the senses, It is unthinkable and beyond comprehension.. As the Self is infinite and without any form it cannot undergo any change. Hence It is changeless or immutable.

Arjuna's grief is misplaced as the Self cannot be hurt or slain. Forms may change; things may come and go but that which remains behind them all is for ever. The Lord, therefore, advises Arjuna not to grieve on that account and he should not think that he is the slayer and that the others are slain by him.

IN THE NEXT TWO VERSES THE LORD SHOWS THAT IT IS IMPROPER TO GRIEVE FOR THE SOUL EVEN IF IT IS ASSUMED TO BE SUBJECT TO BIRTH AND DEATH.

**atha chainam nityajaatam nityam vaa manyase mritam  
tathaapi twam mahaabaaho nainam shochitum arhasi // 2.26 //**

*But even if you think of it as being perpetually born and perpetually dying, even then, O Mighty Armed (Arjuna), you should not grieve.*

Sri Krishna, for the sake of argument, takes up the popular assumption here. Granting that the Self is again and again born whenever a body comes into being and again and again dies whenever the body dies, even then one should not grieve, because birth is inevitable to that which dies and death is inevitable to that which is born. This is the inexorable law of the nature. As such, the occasion that Arjuna faces is not the one for lament.

**jaatasya hi dhruvo mrityur dhruvam janma mritasya cha  
tasmaad aparihaarye'rthe natwam shochitum arhasi // 2.27 //**



*Death is sure to happen to that which is born. Birth is sure to happen to that which dies. Birth and death are certainly unavoidable. Therefore you should not grieve over an inevitable occurrence.*

Here Krishna continues to view the whole situation from the materialistic angle. Even from this stand point, if life is a constant flow of appearances and disappearances one should not shed tears over the unavoidable.

IT IS NOT PROPER TO GRIEVE FOR BEINGS WHICH ARE MERE COMBINATION OF CAUSE AND EFFECT.

**avyaktaadeeni bhootani vyaktamadhyaani bhaarata  
avyakta nidhanaanyeva tatra kaa paridevanaa // 2.28 //**

*Beings are unmanifest in their beginning, manifest in their middle state and unmanifest again in their end O, Arjuna. What is there to grieve about?*

The world of beings which we see and experience i.e. the world which is manifest follows the law of causation. Effects rise from the causes. The effects are manifest i.e. visible while the causes are unmanifest. Projection from the unmanifest to the manifest is called the creation of a thing.

The manifest world of today was in a condition of unmanifest before its creation. Now temporarily it is manifest or available for cognition. It shall fade away one day again into unmanifest. The present came from the unknown and will return to the unknown. The physical body is a combination of the five elements. It is perceived by the physical eye only after the five elements have entered into such combination. After death the body disintegrates and the five elements return to their source. The body cannot be perceived then. Therefore the body can be perceived only in the middle state.

Thus before birth, beings had no connection with the bodies; after death too they would maintain no connection with these gross bodies. During the intermediate period alone viz. from birth to death, they are manifest and maintain relationship with their bodies.

The relationships such as son, wife, father, mother, brother, sister and teacher etc., are formed through the body because of delusion and attachment. Such relationships are only temporary as long as the bodies can perceive and are mere correlations as causes and effects just as we perceive the dream world only as long as the dream lasts and which was not existent before or after the dream.

It is just like a pot which was not there before it was made nor would it be there when it is destroyed. The only constant factor was the mud out of which the pot was made. The existence of the pot is visible only in the middle state and hence its existence is illusory. So also there is no body in the beginning or in the end. That which does not exist in the beginning or in the end must be having no real existence in the middle state as well. It can only be an illusory perception. He who thus understands the nature of the body and

all human relationships based upon it will not allow them to have any influence upon his mind and therefore there is no point in lamenting over the situation.

MARVELOUS NATURE OF THE SOUL

**aashcharyavat pashyati kashchid enam  
aashcharyavad vadati tathaiva chaanyah  
aashcharyavacchainam anyah shrinoti  
shrutwaapyenam veda na chaiva kaschit // 2.29 //**

*Some look on the Self as a wonder; some speak of It as a wonder; some hear of It as a wonder; still others, though hearing, do not understand It at all.*

The Self is incomprehensible because it is not known by the ordinary means of knowledge. Though the knowledge of the Self is freely accessible to all mankind, it is attained only by a very few who are willing to pay the price in the form of self-discipline, steadfastness and non-attachment. Though the truth is open to all, many do not feel any urge to seek. Of those who have the urge, many suffer from doubt and vacillation. Even if they do not have doubts, many are scared away by difficulties. Only a few rare souls succeed in braving the perils and reaching the goal.

Although it is difficult to comprehend the idea of the Self, if one starts the practice of listening (*sravanam*), continuous reflection (*mananam*) and long contemplation (*nidhidhyasan*) it is possible to realize the Self in him.

KRISHNA CONCLUDES THE DISCUSSION ABOUT THE DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN THE SOUL AND THE BODY

**dehee nityam avadhyo'yam dehe sarvasya bhaarata  
tasmaat sarvaani bhootani na twam shochitum arhasi // 2.30 //**

*This Self, the indweller in the body of everyone, is always indestructible. O, Arjuna, therefore you should not grieve for any creature.*

The body of any creature may be destroyed but the Self dwelling within it cannot be killed. Therefore, grief on account of death is improper, be it Bhishma or anyone else.

So far Krishna argued establishing the eternal nature of the soul and finite nature of the bodies. This verse concludes the idea opened in verse 11.

GRIEVING IS NOT PROPER TO ARJUNA EVEN ACCORDING TO HIS SENSE OF DUTY AS A KSHATRIYA

**swadharmam api chaavekshya na vikampitum arhasi  
dharmyaaddhi yuddhaachhreyo'nyat kshatriyasya na vidyate // 2.31 //**

*Further having regard to your duty (your own Dharma) you should not waver, for there is nothing higher for a Kshatriya than a righteous war.*

Sri Krishna, so far talked to Arjuna on the immortality of the Self and the perishable nature of the body to justify why he should fight. He now gives him worldly reasons for fighting. He tells Arjuna that fighting is the natural duty of a Kshatriya or the one born in the ruling class. His *svadharma* or law of action requires him to engage in battle for upholding law, justice and righteousness. To him nothing is more ennobling than a fair fight. Arjuna should therefore wage the war and ought not to waver from his duty.

**yadicchayaa chopapannam swargadwaaram apaavritam  
sukhinah kshatriyaah paartha labhante yuddham eedrisham // 2.32 //**

*Happy are the Kshatriyas who are called upon to fight in such a battle that comes of itself unsought as an open door to heaven, O Arjuna.*

Arjuna's opponents had precipitated the war by their own indiscretion and hence this war has been called to come of itself unsought. A Kshatriya who gives up his life in a righteous war is said to go to heaven.

**atha chettwam imam dharmyam samgraamam na karishyasi  
tatah swadharmam keertim cha hitwaa paapam avaapsyasi // 2.33 //**

*But if you will not fight in this lawful battle, then, having abandoned your own Dharma and honor, you shall incur sin.*

**akeertim chaapi bhootaani kathayishyanti te'vyayaam  
sambhaavitasya chaakeertir maranaad atirichyate // 2.34 //**

*People too will recount for ever your infamy; to a man who has been honored dishonor is worse than death.*

With these stinging words Krishna seeks to stiffen Arjuna's spirit.

**bhayaad ranaad uparatam mamsyante twaam mahaarathaah  
yesham cha twam bahumato bhootwaa yaasyasi laaghavam // 2.35 //**

*The great chariot-warriors (such as Bhishma, Drona, Kripa etc.) will think that you have withdrawn from the battle through fear and you will be ridiculed by them who held you in much esteem.*

**avaachyavaadaamshcha bahoon vadishyanti tavaahitaah  
nindantastava saamarthyam tato dukkhataram nu kim // 2.36 //**

*Your enemies also, finding fault with your abilities, will speak many a word that should not be uttered. What could be more painful than this?*

**hato vaa praapsyasi swargam jitwaa vaa bhokshyase maheem  
tasmaad uttishtha kaunteya yuddhaaya kritanishchayah // 2.37 //**

*If you are killed in the battle, you will go to heaven; if you win, you will enjoy the earth.  
Therefore arise, O Son of Kunti, resolved to fight.*

The idea is that whatever may be the outcome of the war, Arjuna will be the gainer. Krishna implies that everyone should discharge his duty very sincerely and enthusiastically, to the best of his power and ability, in whatever circumstances, he is placed. Humanity demands it.

**sukhaduhkhe same kritwaa laabhaalaabhau jayaajayau  
tato yuddhaaya yujyaswa naivam paapamavaapsyasi // 2.38 //**

*Treating alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, engage in battle for  
the sake of the battle, thus you shall not incur sin.*

Arjuna was thinking that by killing his kinsmen he would incur sin. So Krishna clarifies that it is the desire for and attachment to the result of an action that create bondage; but when an action is performed without any such desire, it leads to freedom of the soul. The injunction to fight is only incidental.

Pain and pleasure are the intellectual awareness of the unfavorable or favorable experiences. Gain and loss are such awareness at the mental level. Victory and defeat are the experiences felt at bodily level or physical fields. Arjuna's goal is not to think of victory and defeat etc. but to discharge his duty by treating the agreeable and disagreeable alike. By doing so he would not commit any sin. i.e. he would be free from bondage.

## Concepts and Issues

In these verses Sri Krishna comes down from the peaks of vedantic ideologies to the material philosophy and the average person's wisdom to drive home his teachings with a view to convince Arjuna that the war must be fought.

The thrust of the arguments is that the sin that is committed by not killing the one who deserves to be killed is as great as the sin of killing the one who does not deserve to be killed. When the struggle between right and wrong is on, he who abstains from it out of false sentimentality, weakness or cowardice would be committing sin.

The Lord reminds Arjuna about his name and fame he had already earned which he would now lose if he refuses to fight and thereby has touched the latter's sensitive point of self-respect. He tells that the world will always recall the infamy of Arjuna and it will last for a long time. Death is really preferable to disgrace to the one who has been honored as a great hero with noble qualities.

Sri Bhagavan continues that the great warriors and the battalion commanders in the enemy camp will laugh and ridicule Arjuna for his running away from the war as an act of sheer cowardice. He points out that the enemy line will not believe that Arjuna ran away because of his compassion and reverence for elders and teachers and that they will look down upon him with contempt. There is really no pain that is unbearable as that of the slanderous comments emanating from the side of the enemy.

Finally, Arjuna, is told by The Lord that he will stand to gain either he wins or loses in the battle - in case he loses his life, he attains *veera swarga* and in case he succeeds, he will rule over the kingdom and enjoy in this world.

Therefore, Sri Krishna exhorts Arjuna with these words: 'Arise, resolve to fight'. This is the divine call to all of us to throw away dejections at the life's challenges and to go forward to play 'the game of life' with a firm determination to win keeping in mind fairness to all. This verse brings out the true universality of the Gita and its practical applicability in our daily lives.

In these verses Krishna clarified several doubts that arose in the mind of Arjuna in the 1<sup>st</sup> Chapter. Some of them are illustrated below:

Arjuna's doubt: I don't foresee any good ensuing from the slaughter of my kinsmen - 1.31.

Krishna's clarification: There is nothing more welcome to a man of the warrior class than a righteous war - 2.31

A - How can we, by killing our kinsmen be happy? 1.37

K - Happy are the Kshatrias who get the opportunity of waging such an unsolicited war 2.32.

A - The consequences of war will lead to hell - 1.44

K - The war is an open way to heaven 2.32, 37.

A - Sin alone will accrue to us by waging the war and by slaying them 1.36, 39, 45.

K - If you do not wage such a righteous war with an equanimous mind and abandon your duty, you will incur sin 2.33, 38.

A - The result of the war will be that impiety will take hold of the entire family 1.40.

K - If you do not wage the war you will be abandoning righteousness 2.33.

A - It is better to live on alms than to wage war 2.5.

K - Arjuna is ordered to wage war 2.38.

## Live as the Gita Teaches You to Live

The advice that Sri Bhagavan gives here is that one must learn to keep oneself in equilibrium in all the different situations of life at the different levels of one's existence.

To expect life to be without the pairs of opposites such as favorable and unfavorable, gain or loss etc., is to anticipate the impossible. Therefore if one has come to live in this world one has to learn the art of living unaffected by the vicissitudes of life. To identify oneself with the life situations - favorable or unfavorable - is to drift along with the waves and not to stand on the shore as a spectator enjoying the sight of the same waves.

Sri Krishna advises Arjuna, while encouraging him to fight, that he should enter the war keeping himself unaffected by the debilitating mental tendencies like pleasure and pain, gain and loss, conquest and defeat etc. This is the Yoga of equanimity of the mind or the doctrine of poise in action.

Equanimity in all challenging situations ensures success in life and enables the purging of ego-sense and egocentric desires. This removal is blocked when the individual starts getting disturbed by all sorts of pairs of opposites when the ego sense overtakes him. To be equanimous is to act detached from ego. This kind of right living results in mental purification or vasana elimination or correction of mental tendencies.

If a person performs an action with the above mental attitude or with a balanced state of mind he will not reap the fruits of such an action. Such an action will lead to the purification of his heart and liberation.

It is always the desire for one of the pairs of opposites that binds. When an act is done without attachment either for itself or for its fruits then Karma can be worked out i.e. vasanas can be exhausted without adding any new ones leading to freedom.

The idea is that whatever may be the outcome of the war, Arjuna will be the gainer. Krishna implies that everyone should discharge his duty very sincerely and enthusiastically, to the best of his power and ability, in whatever circumstances, he is placed. Humanity demands it.

### Points to Ponder

1. Nature of the soul
2. Even if the soul is subject to birth and death why no one should grieve for it?
3. How the relationships derived from the bodies are illusory?
4. Why grieving is not proper to Arjuna even according to his sense of his duty as a Kshatriya?
5. What makes the performance of one's duty free from bondage or sin?

**Next time we will proceed from the Verse 2.39**

*HARIH OM*

Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 2 (Part- 4)  
Saankhya Yogah : Yoga Of Knowledge  
**T.N.Sethumadhavan**

Preamble

Up to the verse 2.38 we have seen the Lord establishing the propriety of Arjuna engaging in the war from the point of view of Sankhya Yoga or the Yoga of Knowledge about the soul and the body as also from the angle of duty of a Kshatriya. In conclusion He advised Arjuna to fight in a spirit of equanimity. Now Bhagavan Krishna advocates the same theme from the point of view of Karma Yoga

The Text

THE INSIGHT OF YOGA

**eshaa te'bhihitaa saankhye buddhir yoge twimaam shrinu  
buddhyaa yukto yayaa paartha karma bandham prahaasyasi // 2.39 //**

*What has been declared to you so far is the wisdom of sankhya. Now listen to the wisdom of yoga, armed with which, O son of Pritha, you will break through the bonds of Karma.*

Sri Krishna taught knowledge or Jnana to Arjuna till now. This is called Sankhya Yoga which is the path of Vedantic philosophy by which the true nature of the Self and the methods of attaining Self-Realisation can be comprehended through logic of reasoning.

From this verse onwards the focus of the Gita in this chapter is to explain the technique of Karma Yoga having known which one can break through the bonds of Karma or vasanas.

Let us see what these two yogas mean in the Bhagavad Gita and what is meant by the bondage of karma. Yoga means the technique of attaining knowledge or wisdom.

Sankhya or Jnana Yoga is the path of knowledge about the Absolute reality. It teaches discrimination between the Real and unreal and urges the renunciation of the unreal. The knowledge of Reality directly destroys ignorance, which is the cause of birth and death in the relative world and of grief and delusion inevitably associated with it.

Yoga or Karmayoga is the path of action. The follower of this path engages in action without any desire for or attachment to the result of such action. He regards himself as an instrument of God. It is desire and attachment that create the subtle impressions in the mind (*vasanas*) which are the seeds of future action. Action performed without attachment or care for the result does not create new karma, but leaves the will free to devote itself to the achievement of Self-realization. This is the secret of Karma Yoga. What are the bonds of karma? Merit and demerit, virtue and sin, pain and pleasure and other pairs of opposites constitute the bondage of all actions performed with a motive.

Sankhyayoga or the path of knowledge, which directly reveals the true nature of the self, is meant for very rare seekers, endowed with keen intellect for discrimination and undaunted will-power for renunciation. But the large majority does not belong to this category. Hence they should first of all purify their minds, through the discipline of karmayoga. They will then become fit to follow the path of knowledge. The pure in heart attain Self-knowledge through the grace of God.

Arjuna can qualify for the highest knowledge only through performance of his duty. Krishna all along adduced various arguments from the Upanishadic, materialistic, mundane standpoints to persuade him to perform his duty. Now Krishna describes karmayoga which is the special contribution of the Gita to the philosophy of life, a user's manual for every day living.

THE SPECIAL MERIT OF KARMAYOGA

**nehaabhikramanaasho'sti pratyavaayo na vidyate  
swalpamapyasya dharmasya traayate mahato bhayaat // 2.40 //**

*In this no effort is ever lost and no harm is ever done. Even very little of this discipline (Dharma) saves a man from the Great Fear.*

If a religious ceremony is left incomplete it is a wasted attempt as the performer will not derive any benefit like a house left unroofed. Again in the worship for an object, any imperfection in the process produces positive harm or loss instead of gain as in the case of sickness non-use of right medicines brings about adverse results. But it is not so in the case of Karma Yoga where every action and worship performed without desire brings about immediate purification of heart and protects one from the cycle of birth and death which is termed here as the great fear.

KARMA YOGA LEADS TO THE HIGHEST GOOD

**vyavasaayaatmikaa buddhir ekeha kurunandana  
bahushaakhaa hyanantaashcha buddhaya'vyavasaayinaam // 2.41 //**

*O Joy of the Kurus (Arjuna), in this blessed path, there is a concentrated one-pointed determination. Scattered and endless are the thoughts of the irresolute or the undecided.*

In this Karma Yoga, even the highest achievement of Self-realization is possible because the man works with single-pointed determination with concentrated mind. Those who perform actions with endless desires for results get their inner personality disintegrated and dissipated. With the scattered minds they are not able to apply themselves to the tasks involved and therefore their attempts invariably end in failure.

Karma yoga is the path in which the seeker with concentrated resolution strives hard to reach his goal while in the Karma Kanda, the seeker, to satisfy his unending desires, performs various rituals as instructed in the Vedas meditating upon the prescribed Devata. As this process is more desire prompted there is always an inner agitation.



NO WISDOM FOR THE WORLDLY MINDED

**yaam imaam pushpitaam vaacham pravadantyavipashchitah  
vedavaadarataah paartha naanyad asteeti vaadinah // 2.42 //**

**kaamaatmaanah swargaparaa janmakarmaphalaprdaam  
kriyaavisheshabahulaam bhogaishwaryagam prati // 2.43 //**

**bhogaishwarya prasaktaanaam tayaapahritachetasaam  
vyavaasaayatmika buddhih samaadhau na vidheeyate // 2.44 //**

*Arjuna, those who are obsessed by desires, who look upon heaven as the supreme goal and argue that there is nothing beyond heaven and pleasures and who are devoted to the letter of the Vedas are unwise. They make this type of flowery speeches recommending many acts of various kinds, for the attainment of pleasure and prosperity and with rebirth as their motive. Those whose minds are carried away by such flowery words (who are attracted by and attached to pleasures and prosperity) are not well-established in the Self (in concentration).*

Here the reference is to the Karma Kanda or the ritualistic portion of the Vedas, which lays down specific rules for specific actions for attaining specific results. Those who give too much importance to this section of the Vedas are called as unwise and lacking in discrimination.

These people are highly enamored about such Vedic passages which prescribe ways for attaining heavenly enjoyments. They say that there is nothing else than the sensual enjoyments and power here and happiness in heaven hereafter which can be achieved by performing the rites of the Karma Kanda of the Vedas. They regard such attainments as the ultimate object of human existence. Hence ordinary individuals are attracted towards their flattering talk. They ignore the philosophical section of the Vedas dealing with the knowledge of the soul and which alone leads to liberation.

Life in heaven is also transitory. After the fruits of one's good actions have been exhausted, one has to return to this earth-plane and liberation can be attained only through knowledge of the Self.

Although it is stated here that the Karma Kanda of the Vedas cannot give us final liberation and a declaration is made that such persons tossed by desires shall never experience any tranquility in their inner lives, we have to keep in mind that if these rituals when performed without desire for results purify the mind which is also an initial step in the Jnana Yoga. The point to note is that the results of the rites and sacrifices performed with desires are ephemeral for they are limited by time, space and the law of causation.

PRACTICE OF VEDIC RITES DOES NOT LEAD TO LIBERATION

**traigunyavishayaa vedaa nistraigunyo bhavaarjuna  
nirdwandwo nityasatwastho niryogakshema aatmavaan // 2.45 //**

*The Vedas deal with three attributes (of nature); you be above these three attributes, O Arjuna. Free yourself from the pairs of opposites and ever remain in the quality of sattwa (goodness), freed from all thoughts of acquisition (of what you lack) and preservation (of what you have) and be established in the Self.*

After advising Arjuna about the ineffectiveness of the blind obedience to the Karma Kanda, Sri Krishna tells him to transcend himself from the triple Gunas. Guna means attribute or quality. Nature is made of three Gunas viz., Sattwa - purity, light, harmony; Rajas - passion, restlessness, motion; and Tamas - inertia, and darkness. These three Gunas remain in all the living creatures in varying degrees. The mind and intellect are constituted with these qualities. Going above these temperaments means going beyond the mind and intellect to re-discover one to be the Supreme Self. How such transportation from imperfection to perfection can take place is explained here.

Pairs of opposites like heat and cold, pleasure and pain, victory and defeat, honor and dishonor, praise and censure etc. are the experiences of man in his life. To ever remain in the quality of Sattwa means to keep oneself least agitated in one's perceptions of objects and persons and in the assessment of their true nature.

Every activity in this world is guided by two prime motives viz. acquisition for purposes of possession and preservation of possessions acquired. These two motives in all actions indicate our selfish desire to acquire and hoard. Renouncing these two temperaments implies getting away from the source of restlessness and sorrows in life.

Sri Krishna advises Arjuna the practical method to be free from all the pairs of opposites and from the thought of acquisition and preservation and ever remaining in the quality of Sattwa by establishing himself in the Self by remaining on guard and not yielding to the objects of the senses. The sorrows of the pairs of the opposites, the temptation to be impure and the desire for acquiring and preserving all belong to the ego-centre arising out of the Self identifying with not-Self i.e. body, mind and intellect.

To keep ourselves detached from these ego-centric ideas through constant awareness of our pure divine nature is the path shown by The Lord to establish oneself in the Self when the individual ego finds itself free from all anxieties of the world. Necessarily then one will be beyond the three Gunas free from the pairs of opposites remaining always in the Sattwic quality. This attitude implies that one should be balanced and not swayed by either extremes. Sattva enables an aspiring soul to go beyond the Gunas and attain freedom.

Arjuna is asked to follow these injunctions while engaged in the performance of his duty.

WHAT IS THE USE OF THE VEDAS?

**yaavaanartha udapaane sarvatah samplutodake  
taavaan sarveshu vedeshu braahmanasya vijaanatah // 2.46 //**

*To the Brahmana who has known the Self, all the Vedas are of as much use as is a reservoir of water in a place where there is a flood.*

Only for a sage who has realized the Self or truth concerning Absolute Reality, the Vedas (Karma Kanda) are of no use because he is already in possession of the highest knowledge of the Self. This however does not imply ridiculing or ignoring the Karma Kanda of the Vedas. They are certainly a useful means for achieving the goal by the aspirants who just started their spiritual journey and serve the purpose of the unenlightened. Through the performance of the works prescribed by the Vedas one becomes fit for the path of knowledge.

All the transient pleasures derived from the proper performance of rituals enjoined in the Karma Kanda of the Vedas are comprehended in the Infinite Bliss of Self Knowledge as the utility of a reservoir in a place having floods. All kinds of limited bliss are included in the Infinite Bliss. A knower of the Self does not need to follow the Vedic injunctions.

WORK WITHOUT CONCERN FOR THE RESULTS

***karmanyevaadhikaaraste maa phaleshu kadaachana  
maa karmaphalahetur bhoor maa te sango'stwakarmani // 2.47 //***

*Your right is to work only, but never to claim its fruits. Do not become an instrument for making your actions yield fruit, nor let your attachment be to inaction.*

This is one of the most quoted verses of the Gita. This famous verse contains the essential principle of disinterestedness in action. When we do our work we will be sidetracked from disinterestedness if we think of name, fame, income or any such extraneous consideration. Nothing should matter except the willing fulfillment of the purpose of God keeping in mind that success or failure depends upon other forces as well.

Sri Krishna's advice here is a call to the man not to waste his present time in imaginary fears about the future but to bring out the best in him and live fruitfully every present moment of his life. Thereby the future will take care of itself and provide the Karma Yogins with supreme achievement.

Arjuna is advised that all that is given to him is to act and having known the cause of action to be noble, bring into that activity all that is the best in him and immerse himself in the activity. That will be the inspired action and its fruits will be such action itself.

This verse gives the following four guidelines to a Karma Yogin:

1. His concern is with the action alone
2. He has no concern with the results
3. He should not become a tool for gaining a desired result of a given action since such desired result oriented action produces bondage and
4. The above mentioned ideas should not be taken to mean advocating inaction.

The advice is to make the worker release himself from his mental anxieties and make him aware of the divinity through work alone. The work itself is his reward -- satisfaction of the job well done is the end in itself.

By performing actions in this manner one gets peace and his vasanas get reduced. Freed from the bondage of expectations he becomes purified for realizing the knowledge of the Self and attain God-Realization or Salvation. Through this knowledge one is freed from the wheel of births and deaths.

Bhagavan, however, warns that one should be careful not to lapse into inaction thinking that there is no use performing actions without expecting any rewards.

Various meanings are attached to the word Karma. The followers of Karma Kanda mean it as rituals and sacrifices. Another meaning is one's duty as per the caste or station in life. Karma also means action. But a deeper meaning of the word is destiny or the tendencies, impulses, characteristics and habits-Vasanas-which determine his next birth and environment. But Karma in the present verse means action or performing one's duty.

IF A MAN HAS TO WORK WITHOUT ANY DESIRE FOR ITS RESULTS, HOW, THEN, SHOULD HE GO ABOUT IT?

**yogasthah kuru karmani sangam tyaktwaa dhananjaya  
siddhyasiddhyoh samo bhootwaa samatwam yoga uchyate // 2.48 //**

*Perform your actions, O Dhananjaya (Arjuna), being established in or integrated with Yoga, abandoning attachment and remaining even-minded both in success and failure. This Evenness of mind is called Yoga.*

From here the technique of Karma Yoga is discussed exhaustively wherein Yoga means evenness of mind through work. In this path towards progress, a complete erasure of individuality and its false sense of values are essential.

Evenness of mind, tranquility of mental composure in all pairs of opposites, is Yoga. In this context the term Yoga indicates a special condition of mind in which it comes to a neutral equilibrium in all the ups and downs of life's situations. It is a state of being an instrument in the hand of God, having given up even the desire that through our action we shall please Him. Only thus one can remain unconcerned as to success and failure.

Attachment is the notion that arises when a man regards himself not as an instrument but as a doer of an action. It is necessary for the true worker not only to have equanimity and poise in his behavior but he should reinforce it with a total renunciation of his attachment to the anxieties for the results. By this way he may transform even his ordinary chores as inspired actions. During the performance of such inspired actions, the performer becomes self-forgetful and would not care for success or failure for his venture. This equilibrium is Yoga.

The attainment of knowledge of the Self through purity of heart obtained by performing actions without the expectation of the fruits is success - Siddhi. Failure is the non-attainment of such knowledge by doing actions with the expectation of fruits.

The secret of karmayoga is complete effacement of one's individuality and total identification with God's will. Thus alone does the worker become free from the joy or grief that results from the success or failure of his works; this alone ensures that he enjoys peace while performing his duties.

AN ACTION PERFORMED WITH A VIEW TO THE RESULT IS OF VERY INFERIOR VALUE.

**doorena hyavaram karma buddhiyogaad dhananjaya  
buddhau sharanamanwiccha kripanaah phalahetavah // 2.49 //**

*O Arjuna, far inferior, indeed, is mere action, to action performed with evenness of mind. Seek refuge in this evenness. Wretched are they who work for results.*

Actions performed to gain a result are the cause of future birth and death and hence create bondage. Such actions are referred to here as inferior. The state of not being exalted or depressed by success or failure is called evenness. It is not callousness or indifference but a total devotion of the worker to his duty, whereby he regards himself as an instrument of God. One attains true evenness only as a result of the Knowledge of the Supreme Reality. This Knowledge alone, not any incidental result, should be the goal of work.

They are wretched indeed who busy themselves with calculation of the gains or losses resulting from their actions and thus depart from the world without realizing the Supreme Reality.

RESULT OF PERFORMING ONE'S DUTY WITH EVENNESS OF MIND.

**buddhiyukto jahaateha ubhe sukrita dushkrite  
tasmaad yogaaya yujyaswa yogah karmasu kaushalam // 2.50 //**

*Endowed with evenness of mind, one casts off in this very life both good and evil deeds. Therefore, devote yourself to Yoga (of equanimity); skill in action lies in the practice of this Yoga.*

A person, endowed with equanimity becomes free from virtue and vice. In such a state while living in the world, he detaches himself from the trappings of the world and remains untouched by virtue and sin. Virtue and vice accrue to a person when he identifies himself with the body, the unreal. If he does not so identify himself, virtue and vice have no effect on him.

Therefore, Krishna says 'devote yourself to the yoga of equanimity' i.e. remain continuously even-minded through realization of God. If a man performs his duties, maintaining this evenness, then his mind rests on God all the while. Work that otherwise enslaves, becomes a means to freedom when performed with evenness of mind. Work

becomes worship. Skill in action, therefore, lies in the practice of this equanimity (of yoga) in success and failure. It should be noted that here Krishna does not define Yoga as skill in action but explains the importance of Yoga (equanimity) in action. Otherwise, the action of a thief carried out skillfully also can come within the meaning of the Yoga which will be obviously ridiculous.

HOW DOES ACTION LEAD TO LIBERATION?

**karmajam buddhiyaktaah hi phalam tyaktvaa maneeshinah  
janmabandha vinirmuktaah padam gacchantyanaamayam // 2.51 //**

*The wise, possessed of equanimity, having abandoned the fruits of their actions and being freed from the fetters of birth, attain the state that is beyond all evil (reaches the blissful supreme state).*

Clinging to the fruits of actions creates vasanas to exhaust which one has to get into the cycle of births and deaths. If actions are performed as a dedication to the God in fulfillment of his purpose, without desire for the fruits, one is released from the bonds of birth and death and attains bliss. Birth and death is called bondage because it is the result of action in a previous life.

The wise i.e those who know the art of true living undertake all work with evenness of mind (renouncement of ego) and abandoning the anxiety for the fruits of their actions (renouncement of ego-motivated desires). Thereby, they have no occasion to enter into the cycle of birth and death as there are no vasanas left in them for fulfillment.

Such an entity who is called a Karma Yogin will attain bliss i.e, the state which is beyond all evils. As knowledge is superior to action, the implication is that selfless actions purify the mind and prepare the individual for higher meditations through which he ultimately discovers himself as the Self which lies beyond all blemish. This is also called as Buddhi Yoga.

WHEN DOES ONE ATTAIN THE WISDOM THAT IS THE RESULT OF THE PURITY OF MIND INDUCED BY KARMAYOGA?

**yadaa te mohakalilam buddhir vyatitarishyati  
tadaa gantaasi nirvedam shrotavyasya shrutasya cha // 2.52 //**

*When your mind crosses beyond the mire of delusion, then you shall achieve indifference regarding things already heard and things yet to be heard (about enjoyments of this world or the next).*

Delusion is the non-discrimination between the Self and the non-Self or ego and it turns the mind towards the sense objects. This is the state which favors egoism in this body and attachment for the body, family, kinsmen and objects. When the man gets entangled in this slough of delusion, he is perplexed and therefore cannot think properly.

When the intellect crosses over this delusion and attains purity of mind one develops disgust and indifference regarding things heard (enjoyed) and those yet to be heard (to be enjoyed in future). The things known and yet to be known being finite in nature are considered futile. The means to achieve this goal are by discrimination between the real and the unreal and selfless service.

The words 'things heard and yet to be heard' mean all the sense-organs oriented experiences already undergone and those that are yet to be experienced. Logically when the intellect becomes purer, it loses all its infatuation, fascination and attraction for the sense experiences that it had before and that may arise in future.

A question may arise how long this process of attaining freedom will take? The answer is that it is not a question of time. Freedom refers to the experience which can be attained at any moment, the only condition being the desirelessness of the aspirant or absence of attachment to objects attained or attainable.

WHEN DOES ONE ATTAIN THE TRUE YOGA OR KNOWLEDGE OF THE SUPREME TRUTH?

**shrutivipratipannaa te yadaa sthaasyati nishchala  
samaadhaavachalaa buddhistadaa yogam avaapsyasi // 2.53 //**

*When your mind, now perplexed by what you have heard, stands firm and steady in the Self, then you will have attained Yoga or Self-Realization.*

The mind gets agitated due to the continuous stimuli it receives from the external world through the sense organs. When an individual in spite of such disturbances and agitations of the mind does not lose his cool, inner serenity and equipoise, and remains concentrated in the knowledge of the Self, he is considered as having attained Yoga or Samadhi or Self Realization (God-Consciousness).

Samadhi is not the loss of consciousness but the highest kind of consciousness wherein the object with which the mind is in communion is the Divine Self which is the result of the discrimination between the Self and the Non-Self, the Real and the Unreal.

We must act with equanimity which is more important than the action itself. The question is not what shall we do but how shall we do and with what spirit shall we do? While Karma implies action, Buddhi implies how to act. Buddhiyoga is the method by which we go beyond Vedic Ritualism and do our duty without any attachment for the results of our actions.

Sri Krishna's advice made so far reduces the dejection in Arjuna and induces him to seek clarifications from Him as to what are the characteristics of the man who has attained wisdom through Samadhi. This is dealt with next.

## Concepts and Issues

The Lord, establishing the propriety of engaging in the fight from the point of view of the path of knowledge and the duty of a Kshatriya, exhorted Arjuna to fight in a spirit of equanimity. Now He establishes the same thing from the point of view of Karma Yoga.

The insight and special merits of karma yoga.

- Karma yoga leads to the highest good.
- The use of the Vedas, practice of Vedic rites and their ineffectiveness to liberation.
- Work without concern for the results
- Character, outlook on life and conduct of men devoted to action with a selfish motive and the necessity to reject such an attitude. Inferior value of an action performed with a view to the result.
- If a man has to work without any desire for its results, how, then, should he go about it?
- Result of performing one's duty with evenness of mind.
- How does action lead to liberation?
- When and how does one attain the true yoga or knowledge of the supreme truth by karma yoga?

## Live as the Gita Teaches You to Live

- Avoid desire ridden actions:
- Pursue desireless actions:
- Be free from the endless pairs of opposites that plague this world and rise to the state of sattwa. Act steadfastly towards the goal of Realization without worldly attachments and remain balanced in success or failure. Keep the mind calm and composed while the body acts dynamically towards the higher ideal.
- The process of pursuing the supreme goal steadfastly with an equanimous mind is Yoga. Continuing on the path of yoga one sheds vasanas / desires and the mind turns introvert. An introverted mind alone can meditate and realize the supreme Self.
- Free yourself from the mania of acquiring and preserving and instead slowly merge with the Self. Such an enlightened soul remains ever in supreme peace and bliss. In that state one will find even the Vedas as redundant as a pond would be in a flooded village.

## Points to Ponder

- Equanimity of mind
- Technique of Karma Yoga
- Action with and without selfish motive
- Attainment of Supreme Knowledge through Karma Yoga.

**Next time we will proceed from the Verse 2.54**

*HARIH OM*



Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 2 (Part-5)  
Saankhya Yogah : Yoga Of Knowledge  
**T.N.Sethumadhavan**

Preamble

The Lord told Arjuna that when his mind would have crossed the mire of delusion and would develop indifference towards the enjoyment of this world and the next and when his mind would rest steady and undistracted in meditation on God, he would realize God or attain union with Him. With reference to this advice, Arjuna desires to know the marks and conduct of the perfect Yogi, possessed of a stable mind who is termed as a *sthita prajna*. He asks Krishna to describe the nature of such an enlightened Soul. Viz. How would he express himself in the world? What happens to him internally? How does he contact the external world?

Krishna answers, “Reveling in the bliss of the Self, the enlightened one stays free from all egocentric attachments and desires. In the state of absolute fulfillment, all worldly enjoyments fall into insignificance and fail to have any impact on him. He is like a river which has entered the ocean. Having reached that supreme state he has merged with eternity. He is liberated, attained *Moksha*, the ultimate *Purushartha* and the goal of life.

The last eighteen verses of this chapter give a brilliant exposition of a Self-realized soul, a perfect personification of a stress-free complete man. These verses can be easily taken as a dissertation on Stress Management Technique from a spiritual angle eliminating the necessity to use anti-depressant drugs without any side effects.

The Text

CHARACTERISTICS OF A PERSON WHO HAS ATTAINED WISDOM THROUGH SAMADHI.

**arjuna uvaacha**  
**sthitaprajnasya kaa bhaashaa samaadhisthasya keshava**  
**sthitadheeh kim prabhaasheta kimaaseeta vrajeta kim // 2.54 //**

*Arjuna said*

*O Keshava, what is the description of him who has steady wisdom and is merged in the super conscious state (Samadhi)? How does one of steady wisdom speak? How does he sit? How does he walk?*

With the advice thus far given, Arjuna seems to have got a better understanding and a doubt appears to have crept in his mind as to whether a person after gaining the goal of life through Buddhi Yoga may yet have a vigorous life at all in the outside world. This doubt is because of the common notion that a perfected individual is ill-suited to lead a normal day-to-day life.

‘The man of steady wisdom’ means the one who, through direct realization, has the settled knowledge of his identification with Brahman, the Self. He is the one who realizes that he is Brahman.

The two questions asked by Arjuna are:

1. How is a man of steady wisdom described by others?
2. How does the influence of wisdom manifest itself in his actions in the outer world when he comes out of Samadhi?

The answers to these questions occupy the rest of this Chapter. They comprise of the characteristic attributes of a man of steady wisdom and also the means of attaining such wisdom. These attributes apply equally to Jnana Yogis and Karma Yogis.

Arjuna’s questions simply mean

- How does a wise person respond to the daily situations in life?
- What are the distinguishing marks or characteristics of a wise person?

The characteristics of a wise person are also the characteristics of one who wants to be wise. In the case of a wise person, such characteristics are natural to that person; but, in the case of one who is not yet wise – but wants to become one– such characteristics need to be cultivated by proper attitude, discipline and practice.

In the next 18 verses, Sri Krishna responds to the question of Arjuna. Sri Krishna does not say how a wise person talks, sits or walks. Appreciating the spirit of Arjuna’s question, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna – and indeed all humanity, the characteristics of a wise person, and also, what makes a person wise.

These verses are of extraordinary significance for two reasons - they tell precisely what wisdom means in practical every day life - with that knowledge, one can help oneself, to uplift oneself spiritually by understanding and appreciating these verses and by meditation and contemplation on the content of these verses. For these reasons these 18 verses are the best known and the most often recited verses in the entire Bhagavad Gita. Therefore, let us now try to understand these verses as well as we can.

**sri bhagavaan uvaacha  
prajahaati yadaa kaamaan sarvaan paartha manogataan  
atmanyevaatmanaa tushtah sthitaprajnastadochyate // 2.55 //**

*Sri Bhagavan said*

*O Partha, when a man completely casts off all the desires of the mind, his Self finding satisfaction in itself alone, then he is called a man of steady wisdom.*

An exhaustive exposition of the inner and outer life of the ‘man of steady wisdom’ or the ‘man of Self-realization’ follows now. This section of the Gita enumerates the guidelines one should follow as to what types of values and mental attitudes he should develop during his spiritual practice in order that he may come to realize the Divinity in himself.

The man of steady wisdom does not long for external possessions for he enjoys the Supreme Bliss of Self-Knowledge. Such a man of wisdom has renounced all cravings like progeny, wealth and attainment of heaven etc. and enjoys the bliss of communion with the Self. This is what is meant by the self finding satisfaction in itself alone.

Man is a bundle of desires. They may be strong or weak and have an origin and a seat in his mind for whatever cause it may be. Therefore when the mind along with the intellect rests stable in God, all the desires will vanish. After the cessation of all the desires, when a seeker perceives the Supreme Self and rests in the perpetual calm, he is known as 'satisfied in the self through the self'.

A spiritually ignorant or immature person hangs on to desires, because that person depends on the fulfillment of such desires for his happiness. When a person grows into maturity, and naturally and completely casts off one's dependence on the fulfillment of one's desires for one's happiness, one then becomes a wise person.

Now, when does that happen? Bhagavan says that in the second line - When one discovers happiness in oneself by oneself - then one is called - a wise person.

When one recognizes that one's very nature is "*ananda*" - one's very nature is happiness, then there is no need for one to depend on the external objects for fulfillment of one's happiness. When one recognizes that one's very nature is *sat-chit-ananda-svarupa-atma* - one discovers that one has nothing to gain from outside to be happy - and also, one realizes that one has already gained everlasting happiness in the form of Vision of oneself everywhere and in everything including oneself.

The happiness arising from such vision is called "one discovering Happiness in oneself, by one self in the wake of self knowledge". When that knowledge takes place, there is no craving for any object or experience external to one's own self, to be happy. At that time all desires have no hold on oneself and they naturally fall from one's mind and buddhi, which is same as telling that one naturally and completely grows out of one's dependence on the fulfillment of one's desires for one's happiness. Discovering happiness as one's own very self, one has no need to go after something else to be happy. Such discovery is indeed the mark of a wise person.

Negatively, this state is one of freedom from selfish desires and positively, it is one of concentration on the supreme. This verse answers the first part of Arjuna's question.

**dukhshwanudwignamanaah sukheshu vigatasprihah  
veetaraagabhayakrodhah sthitadheer munir uchyaate // 2.56 //**

*He whose mind is not shaken by adversity, who does not hanker after pleasures and who is free from attachment, fear and anger, is called a sage of steady wisdom.*

Verses 56 - 58 answer the second part of Arjuna's question as to the conduct of the man of steady wisdom.

Times of pain and sorrow hit everybody and a wise man is no exception; but his mind does not get bogged down by them. His pain is localized, and it stops there. Similarly, in times of pleasure, the one who has no craving has no thirst for more of that pleasure. Thus the one who does not feel depressed in times of pain and sorrow, and who in times of pleasure has no craving for more of that pleasure is a wise man.

The one whose mind and intellect are totally free from intense longing or passion for anything outside of oneself, free from fear of any kind and devoid of anger or temporary madness about anything is called one whose is steady and well rooted in self knowledge. Such a person is also called one who is capable of reflection, analysis and proper judgment at all times being always immersed in God Consciousness. He is called the wise person.

In this world there is no end to sorrow and unfavorable situations. Here a man of steady wisdom is described as the one who maintains equanimity in pleasure and pain. An individual who remains undisturbed in sorrow or in joy, unattached, fearless and without anger is described here as a *muni* - a sage, a man of steady wisdom.

It may be noted of all the emotions that must be absent in the perfected individual only three have been emphasized here viz., attachment -Raga, fear -Bhaya and anger -Krodha because attachment to things is the root cause for the fear of non-winning the desired object. If it is won then the fear of losing it and therefore anxiety to keep it safe and secure is equally strong. Attachment and fear lead to anger against those who create obstacles between the person infatuated with the object and the desired object. It is self-mastery, conquest of desire and passion that is insisted upon.

**yah sarvatraanabhisnehas tattat praapya shubhaashubham  
naabhinandati na dweshti tasya prajnaa pratishthitaa // 2.57 //**

*He who is not attached to anything, who neither rejoices nor is, vexed when he obtains good or evil - his wisdom is firmly fixed.*

The ideas expressed in the previous verses are repeated:

- The enlightened sage or the Perfected one has evenness of mind.
- He does not rejoice in pleasure nor is he averse to any pain.
- He has no attachment to any worldly object.
- He does not get disturbed when praised or censured.
- He is always identified with the Self.

A mere detachment from life and retiring to the jungles is not implied here. Such aimless detachment cannot lead a man to any higher level of existence and it is merely an escapist view of life. The detachment from the outside world should be coupled with capacity to face all challenges in life - auspicious and inauspicious - with a balanced mind in both. Life by its very nature is a mixture of good and bad. The perfected one experiences both of them with equal detachment because he is ever established in the Self.

Since the perfect man of wisdom has neither aversion for the sorrows nor attraction for the pleasures of life he neither compliments nor condemns anything in the world. For him everything is fine. He looks at the world through the plain glass and not through colored glasses. Flowers bloom and they also wither away. There is no need to praise the former and condemn the latter. We must accept whatever comes without excitement, pain or revolt.

This verse is in reply to Arjuna's query about the speech of a perfect master. His speech has for its background the mental state as described above.

**yadaa samharate chaayam koormo'ngaaneeva sarvashah  
indriyaaneendriyaarthebhyas tasya prajnaa pratishthitaa // 2.58 //**

*When like the tortoise which withdraws its limbs on all sides, he withdraws his senses from the sense objects, then his wisdom becomes steady.*

So far a man of steady wisdom has been described as the one who (a) is ever satisfied in the Self (b) lives in perfect equanimity in pleasure and pain and (c) in whom there is complete lack of attachment for feelings of joy or aversion. Now it is mentioned in this verse that a man of steady wisdom has the capacity to withdraw his sense organs from the field of their objects just like a tortoise can draw back its limbs from all sides within its shell when apprehending danger.

The sense organs receive the stimuli from the objects of the external world which are passed on to the mind. The mind has got a natural tendency to run after such worldly objects. The yogi withdraws the mind again and again from the objects of the senses and fixes it on the Self and makes himself free from the disturbances of life.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE SENSE-CONTROL BY AN ORDINARY PERSON AND A REALIZED SOUL

**vishayaa vinivartante niraahaarasya dehinah  
rasavarjam raso'pyasya param drishtwaa nivartate // 2.59 //**

*The objects of the senses fall away from the abstinent man but not the taste for them. But even the taste falls away when the Supreme is seen.*

The sense objects reach out to only those who is badly in need of them and not to those who do not want them. Even then, the sense objects are capable of leaving their taste behind even in an abstinent seeker who may find it difficult to erase them completely from his mind. Sri Krishna says here that all such longings created even at the mental level because of ego will be made ineffective when the seeker transcends ego and comes to experience the Self - attains wisdom. But the reverse i.e. with the disappearance of the taste a striver attains steadfast wisdom is not true.

Sri Krishna is explaining the difference between outer abstention and inner renunciation. We may reject the object but the desire for it may remain. Even the desire is lost when

the Supreme is seen. The control should be both at the body and mental levels. Liberation from the tyranny of the body is not enough; we must be liberated from the tyranny of desires also which presupposes realization of the Supreme.

Thus in the restraint of the senses evinced by a man of realization, not only the sense objects turn away from him but also attachment itself with its roots vanish.

WHAT IS THE HARM IF ATTACHMENT DOES NOT DISAPPEAR?

**yatato hyapi kaunteya purushasya vipashchitah  
indriyaani pramaatheeni haranti prasabham manah // 2.60 //**

*The turbulent senses, O son of Kunti, do violently carry away the mind even of a wise man though he may be striving to control them.*

Sri Krishna has so far emphasized that a perfect master is the one who has a complete control over his sense-cravings. Sense cravings are like turbulent horses. If these horses are kept under control destination can be reached with safety; otherwise the rider gets thrown out.

Even a man of discrimination falls prey to the temptations of the world. Therefore, the aspirant must not relax his effort for self-control. He should bring all the senses under his control; otherwise his mind will be dragged into the field of sense objects leading to a sorrowful experience. This is more likely to happen even to a highly evolved seeker whereby he will not be able to reach his spiritual destination of final liberation. This is an advice of caution to the seeker.

SENSE CONTROL IS A MEANS OF GOD-REALIZATION FOR A PERSON OF STABLE MIND

**taani sarvaani samyamya yukta aaseeta matparah  
vashe hi yasyendriyaani tasya prajnaa pratishthitaa // 2.61 //**

*Having restrained all the senses he should sit steadfast, intent on Me; his wisdom is steady whose senses are under control.*

Sri Krishna warns Arjuna here that as a seeker of Self-perfection he should control his mind by withdrawing all his sense organs from their wanderings and should concentrate his entire attention on 'me' i.e. The Lord, The Supreme. The idea is that the mind should be made completely calm to meditate on Him, the Supreme Lord.

Such a Yogi, having brought under control all his senses, is called a person of steady wisdom and established in the Self. Self-discipline is not a matter of intelligence. It is a matter of will of the mind and vision of the Highest. This is a technique of Self-Development.

THE VERY THOUGHT OF SENSE-OBJECTS CAUSES FUTURE MISFORTUNE

**dhyaayato vishayaan pumsah sangas teshoopajaayate  
sangaat sanjaayate kaamah kaamaat krodho'bhijaayate// 2.62 //**

*When a man thinks of objects, attachment for them arises; from attachment desire is born; from desire arises anger.*

**krodhaad bhavati sammohah sammohaat smriti vibhramah  
smritibhramshaad buddhinaasho buddhinaashaat pranashyati // 2.63 //**

*From anger comes delusion, from delusion the loss of memory, from the loss of memory the destruction of intelligence; from the destruction of intelligence he perishes.*

From here onwards Sri Krishna explains the theory of fall of man from God-hood to sense-entanglements. The source of all evils is wrong thinking and false perceptions. When a man constantly thinks upon the alluring features of the sense objects the consistency of such thought creates an attachment in him for the objects of his thought. When similar thoughts come to play on his mind continuously they become strong desire for possessing and enjoying the objects of attachment.

He tries his level best to obtain them. When this motive energy encounters with forces creating obstacles in the way of fulfillment of his desires it is called anger. He starts hating the people who come in the way of satisfying his wants, fights with them and develops hostility towards them. When a person is afflicted with anger, his mind gets confused casting a shadow on the lessons of wisdom learnt by him through past experience. Thus deprived of the moral strength, he loses his power of discrimination between right and wrong which is called destruction of intelligence.

Failing in discrimination, he acts irrationally on the impulse of passions and emotions and thereby he is unable to attain the spiritual goal paving the way for self-destruction. Here Krishna traces moral degradation to those first breaths of thought that come softly and almost unconsciously to the mind.

Desires may prove to be as rebellious and challenging as the most powerful external forces. They may lift us into glory or hurl us into disgrace. Kalidasa in Kumarasambhavam says that they are really brave whose minds are not disturbed when the sources of disturbance are face to face with them

What is called for is not a forced isolation from the world or destruction of sense life but an inward withdrawal. To hate the senses is as wrong as to love them. The horses of the senses are not to be unyoked from the chariot but controlled by the reins of the mind.

The movement from desire to destruction can be illustrated as under:

Brooding on the objects of senses ► attachment ► desire ► anger ► delusion ► loss of memory ► loss of reason ► utter ruin.

HOW A PERSON OF STABLE MIND MOVES AMONG SENSE OBJECTS AND WHAT IS HIS REWARD?

**raagadweshā viyuktaistu vishayaanindriyaishcharan  
aatmavashyair vidheyaatmaa prasaadamadhigacchati // 2.64 //**

*But the self-controlled man, moving among objects with his senses under restraint and free from both attraction and repulsion, attains peace.*

The mind and the senses are endowed with the two natural currents of attraction and repulsion - liking some objects and disliking certain others. But a man with mental discipline approaches these sense objects with a mind free from attraction or repulsion thereby attaining the peace of the Eternal. The senses and the mind are his servants but not the masters; he is the Master of wisdom. Running away from the sense objects cannot ensure mental tranquility because mind's agitations for getting the desired objects or to get rid of the undesired ones will continue.

When the mind is trained in these two aspects viz., (a) to live in self-control and (b) to move among the sense objects with neither attachment nor hatred towards them, its agitations caused by the charm of such objects are brought under control. This condition of the mind, which has the least sense disturbances because of the ineffectiveness of the sense objects upon it, is called tranquility or peace or 'Prasada'.

This verse answers Arjuna's question as to how does the man of steady wisdom move about?

WHAT DOES ONE ATTAIN THROUGH SERENITY?

**prasaade sarvadhukhaanaam haanirasyopajaayate  
prasannachetaso hyaashu buddhih paryavatishthate// 2.65 //**

*In that serenity there is an end of all sorrow; for the intelligence of the man of serene mind soon becomes steady.*

What happens when peace is attained is explained here. Sri Krishna says that when mental peace is attained there is no hankering after sense-objects. The Yogi has perfect mastery over his reason and sense of discrimination. The intellect abides in the Self. It is quite serene and steady. The miseries of the body and mind come to an end.

Peaceful mind is a condition- precedent for happiness. Peace is happiness; happiness is peace. The least agitated mind is the proof of absence of sorrows and sorrows are the proof of the state of mental disturbance. Destruction of sorrows or pain indicates the elimination of vasanas in as much as vasanas are the cause for delusion which creates all sorrows. Keeping the mind under tranquil atmosphere through a life of self-control is the secret for the elimination of vasanas.



PEACE OF MIND ALONE LEADS TO HAPPINESS

**naasti buddhir ayuktasya na chaayuktasya bhaavanaa  
na chaabhaavayatah shaantir ashaantasya kutah sukham // 2.66 //**

*The man whose mind is not under his control has no Self-Knowledge and to the unsteady no meditation is possible and to the unmeditative there can be no peace and to the man who has no peace how can there be any happiness ?*

The necessity for the quietness of mind for practicing the technique of Self-perfection is explained here. The unsteady mind cannot practice meditation. The mind which cannot be focused on meditation cannot acquire the knowledge of the Self.

Such a person will not have intense devotion and longing either to Self-knowledge or to liberation. A person with these negative qualities cannot have peace of mind. How can a man who has no peace of mind enjoy happiness? Insatiable thirst for sense-objects is the enemy of peace and there cannot be even an iota of happiness for a man with no peace. His mind is always restless and runs after worldly objects. Only when this thirst dies down a man can enjoy a real and abiding peace when he will be able to meditate and rest in the Self.

True happiness is not in the thirst for objects but in the restraint of the senses from thirst for enjoyment. Thirst is misery indeed.

WHY IS THE UNSTEADY MAN INCAPABLE OF KNOWLEDGE?

**indriyaanaam hi charataam yanmano'nuvidheeyate  
tadasya harati prajnaam vaayur naavam ivaambhasi // 2.67 //**

*When the mind runs after the wandering senses, it carries away his discrimination as the wind carries away a boat on the waters.*

The mind which constantly thinks about the sense objects and moves only in pursuit of such objects destroys altogether the discriminatory faculty in man. Just as a gale carries away a rudderless ship from its charted course and drives her away from reaching its destination, so too the unsteady mind carries away the aspirant from his spiritual path and turns him towards the worldly objects by taking away his discrimination.

CONDITION OF THE SEEKER WHO CONTROLLED HIS SENSES

**tasmaad yasya mahaabaaho nigriheetaani sarvashah  
indriyaaneendriyaarthebhyas tasya prajnaa pratishthitaa // 2.68 //**

*Therefore, O Mighty Armed Arjuna, his wisdom is steady whose senses are completely restrained from their objects.*

The man of steady wisdom can, at his will, withdraw the senses, from their objects and enter into communion with the Self.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WISE AND THE IGNORANT

**yaanishaa sarvabhootaanaam tasyam jaagarti samyamee  
yasyaam jaagrati bhootani saa nishaa pashyato muneh // 2.69 //**

*In that which is night to all beings, the self-controlled man is awake and where all beings are awake, that is the night for the man who sees (has vision).*

To the ignorant the Supreme reality is like the night. They see in it confusion and darkness. But the man of steady wisdom is fully awake with regard to reality.

Again, the multiplicity of the world of time and space is as clear as a day to the ignorant. But the man of wisdom sees in it the confusion of a night.

Ignorance creates the idea of multiplicity and duty while the wise never deviates from the knowledge of the Self. Error stands in the same relation to truth as sleeping to waking.

IF THE WORLD IS DARK TO A SEER, THEN HOW DOES HE LIVE IN THE WORLD?

**aapooryamaanam achalapratishtam  
samudram aapah pravishanti yadwat  
tadwat kaamaa yam pravishanti sarve  
sa shaantim aapnoti na kaamakaami // 2.70 //**

*He attains peace into whom all desires enter as the waters enter the ocean, which is full to the brim and grounded in stillness, but not the man who is the desirer of desires.*

Just as the ocean is not at all affected by the waters flowing into it from all sides an enlightened person, who rests in his essential nature or Self is not in the least disturbed by desires produced by the objects of enjoyment which he happens to come across during his sojourn on earth. Such an individual who maintains true peace in spite of being a target for the stimuli conveyed through his sense organs by innumerable sense objects is called a man of perfection, a true saint. A man attains such a state through constant awareness of the unchangeable Reality that constitutes his innermost Self. He who looks outside for enjoyments never attains peace. The principle behind this phenomenon is that the insentient cannot satisfy the sentient; the sentient can be satisfied by the sentient alone.

**vihaaya kaamaan yah sarvaan pumaamshcharati nihsprihah  
nirmamo nirahankaarah sa shaantim adhigacchati // 2.71 //**

*That man attains peace who, abandoning all desires, moves about without longing, devoid of the sense of 'I'-ness and 'my'-ness.*

This verse explains the mental condition of such a one who finds peace in himself. Such a sage renounces all desires and is without any longings or attachments. Affinity for the world exists only because of desires. If desires are given up, no affinity for the world remains. Such a person's intellect is without any sense of 'I'-ness or 'my'-ness i.e. without any ego which is the cause for the sense of attachment.

All the sufferings in the world are caused by our egocentric misconception and consequent eruption of endless wants. He is a genuine *Sanyasin* who leads a life of constant inspiration gained through an intelligent renunciation of his egocentric misconceptions.

The well-known Upanishadic saying is "The human mind is of two kinds, pure and impure. That which is intent on securing the desires is impure; that which is free from attachment to desires is pure".

This verse answers Arjuna's question 'how a man of steadfast mind walks or what is his mode of conduct?'

ULTIMATE STATE OF A PERSON OF STEADY WISDOM

**eshaa braahmee sthith paartha nainaam praapya vimuhyati  
sthitwaasyaamantakaale'pi brahmanirvaanamricchati // 2.72 //**

*This is the Brahmi-state, O Son of Pritha. Attaining this, none is deluded. Being established therein, even at the hour of death, one attains final liberation in Brahman.*

Where ego ends and the individuality is completely wiped out, a state of Selfhood, the state of Brahman - Existence, Knowledge, Bliss Absolute - Sat Chit Ananda - dawns. Renouncing every thing and living in the Self is the Brahmi state or the state of God-realized soul. If the aspirant attains this state he never falls into delusion again; never again deluded by the world. It is the highest state of happiness. This experience needs to take place at an early age. But if it is attained even at the time of death he attains liberation. Hence what doubt can there be about liberation of a man who practices the discipline of renunciation from an early age and dwells on Brahman throughout life?

"Wisdom is the supreme means of liberation, but this wisdom is not exclusive of devotion to God and desireless work. Even while alive, the sage rests in Brahman and is released from the unrest of the world. The sage of steady wisdom lives a life of disinterested service. The descriptions of the ideal man, the *jnani*, the *sthitaprajna*, the *yogarudha*, the *gunatita* or the *bhakta* agree in all essentials. (Ref. 6.4-32; 10.9-10; 12.13-20; 13.7-11; 14.21-35; 16.1-3; 18.50-60)". - Dr. S.Radhakrishnan.

Working without attachment and desires, egoism and vanity, always equanimous with pairs of opposites is to control the ego and experience the Self. This technique of Karma Yoga is not different from the technique of meditation or knowledge or devotion. Such a sage of steady wisdom lives a life of disinterested action. But Arjuna remains confused and so The Lord explains Karma Yoga further in the next chapter.

**om tat sat iti srinad bhagavadgeetaasu upanishatsu brahma vidyaayaam  
yogashaastre sri krishnaarjuna samvaade saankhya yogo naama dvitiyo'dhyaayah ||**

Thus in the Upanishads of the glorious Bhagavad Gita, the science of the Eternal, the scripture of Yoga, the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna ends the second discourse entitled The Yoga of Knowledge.

## Concepts and Issues

This section of the Gita is the fulcrum around which all its teachings revolve. The basic issue is how to live a God-realized life by continuing to perform the duties with a disinterested attitude? What are the techniques available to get rid off egoism and a sense of mine? A comprehensive knowledge of life is given here by understanding which all human sufferings could be relieved by getting over duality and conflicts.

As this Chapter symbolizes all the teachings of the Gita it's full summing up is given below for an easy recapitulation of the issues involved.

### I ~ ARJUNA'S DESPONDENT CONDITION ~ VERSES 1-10

- Arjuna continues in his state of dejection. His personality is destroyed by his overwhelming emotions erupting at the sight of his near and dear ones on the battlefield.
- Assuming a false sense of renunciation, he argues that he would rather live on alms than slay noble elders like Bhishma and Drona and that even an undisputed sovereignty over all the worlds would not drive away his grief.
- Arguing thus, he expresses his unwillingness to fight and completely spent he becomes silent.

### II ~ INDESTRUCTIBILITY OF THE EMBODIED ~ VERSES 11 – 30

Krishna starts the sermon of the Gita by stating that

- The wise grieve neither for the living nor for the dead.
- The Self within is eternal, indestructible.
- The bodies enveloping the Self are ephemeral. They have a beginning and an end.
- Death is certain for the born and birth for the dead.
- Beings constantly pass through the repeated stages of unmanifest, manifest and again unmanifest. So why grieve over the inevitable?
- The indwelling Self remains eternally the same.

### III ~ YOUR DUTY TO ACT ~ 31 – 40

Krishna explains to Arjuna the importance of performing his duty.

- A kshatriya (warrior) is fortunate to find an opportunity to fight a righteous battle.
- Abandoning such an opportunity will only incur infamy and sin.

- In victory a kshatriya enjoys sovereignty over the worlds. If slain in battle he will gain heaven.
- Therefore, Krishna advises Arjuna to arise from his paralyzed state and fight the battle without concern for the results.

The knowledge imparted up to verse 38 in this chapter is Sankhya. Thereafter Krishna turns towards Karma Yoga, the practice of which will eradicate the deepest fear in Arjuna.

#### IV ~ DESIRE RIDDEN ACTIONS ~ VERSES 41 – 44

- Those who fanatically adhere to mechanical rituals are the irresolute whose desires dissipate their minds. They eulogize the ritualistic portion of the Vedas and declare in flowery speech that there is nothing beyond these rituals.
- Despite regular performance of the rituals their attention in life remains focused on enjoying the pleasures and power in the world.
- Such people possess a vacillating mind unable to concentrate and meditate on the Suprem Self.

#### V ~ DESIRELESS ACTIONS LEAD TO SELF-REALIZATION ~ VERSES 45 – 53

- The Vedas deal with three gunas – sattwa, rajas and tamas. They explain the process of evolution from tamas to rajas and from rajas to sattwa. Krishna advises Arjuna to free himself from the endless pairs of opposites that plague this world and rise to the state of sattwa. To free himself from the mania of acquiring and preserving and instead slowly merge with the Self.
- An enlightened soul remains ever in supreme peace and bliss. In that state he will find even the Vedas as redundant to him as a pond would be in a flooded village.

Krishna induces Arjuna

- To act steadfastly towards the goal of Realization without worldly attachments and remain balanced in success or failure. and to keep the mind calm and composed while the body acts dynamically towards the higher ideal.
- The process of pursuing the supreme goal steadfastly with an equanimous mind is Yoga. Continuing on the path of yoga one sheds vasanas / desires and the mind turns introvert. An introverted mind alone can meditate and realize the supreme Self.

#### VI ~ DESCRIPTION OF AN ENLIGHTENED SOUL ~ VERSES 54 – 72

Arjuna asks Krishna to describe the nature of enlightened Soul.

- How would he express himself in the world?
- What happens to him internally?
- How does he contact the external world?

The last eighteen verses of this chapter give a brilliant exposition of a Self-realized soul. Reveling in the bliss of the Self the enlightened one stays free from all

egocentric attachments and desires. In the state of absolute fulfillment all worldly enjoyments fall into insignificance. He is like a river which has entered the ocean. Having reached that supreme state he has merged with eternity.

## Live as the Gita Teaches You to Live

Control of the senses and the mind is prescribed as a stepping stone to spiritual progress as these faculties have a natural propensity to engage with objects. This underscores the fact that the spiritual quest involves directing the mind within by withdrawing it from objects. When the mind engages in the world it is constantly subjected to attachment, likes and dislikes, and anger because the external factors are not under one's control. To realize one's true nature as the Self (Atman) within it is necessary to exercise control over the mind by restraining its tendency to do what it likes.

If the mind is given the freedom to do what it wants only constant restlessness would result as a result of desires that arise one after another. This prods the individual to action to fulfill his desires giving rise to frustration and anger when they are not fulfilled. Even when he is able to realize his desires the joy that he enjoys is fleeting and thus the quest for worldly joy only subjects the person to further bondage by his actions. To become free from this quagmire, which traps man, is the objective of spiritual quest. The basic requirement then is disentanglement from the world slowly by restraining the mind.

As long as an individual is subject to bondage—due to ignorance of his true spiritual nature—his identification will be with his body and his actions will be to preserve and pamper it, while a man of wisdom (Jnani) will identify with the Self and thus be free from attachment to his body.

The equanimity of mind that a Jnani has is a consequence of his constant abiding in the Self, which is tranquil and blissful. The afflictions of his body will not disturb his mind as he is aware of their transience. The relationship between the body and the mind is an illusion created due to superimposition (Adhyasa), which is primordial. Just as the Moon shines because of the Sun's light, so also does the mind acquire the properties of the objects it engages with. When the mind attains union with the Self it reflects its serenity and bliss.

Krishna's advice to Arjuna is to have equanimity of mind to achieve the ultimate objective. He says, "One who has control over the mind is tranquil in heat and cold, in pleasure and pain, in honor and dishonor and is ever steadfast with the Supreme Self". This is in accordance with the saying in the Rig Veda "The mind is fickle like a fast galloping horse and the only way to control it is by involving it in good actions beneficial for the welfare of all".

If a man can control his mind he can find the way to enlightenment and all wisdom and virtue will naturally come to him. The mind is like a white cloth. Dip it in red dye, it turns red, dip it in green, it turns green. Put it out in the sun for long, it loses its color. The mind is truly the Self itself with no color.

What we think determines what happens to us. So if we want to change our lives we need to stretch our minds. The world is as the mind perceives it. The world is as the mind thinks of it. (*"mano matram jagat, mano kalpitam jagat"*).

If the Bhagavad Gita is viewed as a spiritual metaphor the persons portrayed are ingenious depictions symbolizing the various stages in the transformation of spirit into matter. The battle proper represents the real struggle that ensues within a person who realizes that all along it was the mind and its deep-rooted tendencies that were playing a devious game of deception with him, leading to false perceptions of truth and happiness and so, under proper guidance, sets out to rectify all this.

Kurukshetra, the battlefield refers to our own bodily domain, where the action must take place. Pandu was the rightful monarch of Bharata, the bodily kingdom. Pand in Sanskrit means white or pure, referring to the faculty of discriminating between right and wrong, which humans inherently possess. If man lives as per this discriminating power he will live life in such a way that slowly but surely, the soul's body-consciousness ascends to spirit-consciousness and thus one attains independence from false providers of happiness, namely, the five senses.

As the story goes, Pandu has five sons representing the power of dispassion and the power of persisting therein. The bodily kingdom comes to be ruled by the blind king Dhritarashtra who represents our own infatuated sense and hence "blind" mind. The blind king's eldest son Duryodhana represents vain, material desire, most difficult to fight off. His ninety nine other sons represent other sense-entrenched tendencies of the mind.

The victory of Pandavas represents self-purification. Similarly, in day-to-day working life too, if one starts taking right action, his efforts will eventually lead to total realization of the Self, the ultimate goal of life.

### Points to Ponder

- Man of steady wisdom.
- How a person's degradation takes place?
- Control of mind.
- Brahmi state.

**Next time we shall take up Chapter 3**

*HARIH OM*