

THE BHAGAVAD GITA

A Simple Paraphrase in English



By
S. Parthasarathy Iyengar, B.A., B.L.,

Lord Sri Krishna

Gokulam, Mysore



THE BHAGAVADGITA

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INTRODUCTION

By

RAJAJI

By

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FOREWORD

Late S. Parthasarathy Iyengar, B.A., B.L., Advocate, Madras, my close relative and friend, was born in a wealthy and learned family in the year 1880, and died in 1929 in his 49th year. Even from his student days he was a great patriot of Mother India and an admirer of ancient Indian spiritual culture. He imbibed the inspiration of achieving high ideals in life by the messages of the great Swami Vivekananda and personal guidance under the noble-minded and heroic woman, Miss Margaret Noble well known as Sister Nivedita, who renounced her home and property to lead a life of spiritual discipline under the guidance of Swamiji. He resolved even in his college days at Madras to fight for the national freedom of India, long before the time of the Non-co-operation movement of Mahatma Gandhiji, being inspired by the ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity of the French Revolution, which he developed in his heart when he studied in the French High Schools at Pondicherry. And along with his two brothers, he did some notable services to the revolutionary struggle for liberating India. He was also a brilliant Natural Science graduate Gold Medalist in Botany a good sportsman and a fine athlete.

After he obtained the degree of Bachelor of Arts and before he became an Advocate several years later, passing the B.L. Degree examination, he devoted his life earnestly to the following three objects :- (1) He studied the sacred books of ancient Indian culture, especially, the *Prasthāna Trayī* (i.e., the *Upanishads*,

the *Gītā* and the *Brahma Sūtras*), and the *Darśanas* with the help of capable pandits and learned modern scholars. (2) He wrote books in simple and idiomatic English for the benefit of graduates and undergraduates employed in service and for the spiritual education of College students on topics relating to the *Bhagavadgītā*, the *Upanishads* and the *Brahma Sūtras*. He composed also English poems describing graphically the adventures of Rajaput heroes who sacrificed their fortune and life for the cause of defending Indian culture and *dharma* against foreign onslaughts. (3) He not only studied the *Darśanas* and the *Prasthāna Trayī*, but also practised in his, daily life the *yogic sādhanas* described in the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali. He died prematurely and suddenly as a result of high blood-pressure brought about by his hard *hatayoga* and *rajayoga* practices.

As a soldier for freedom, he fought side by side with his two brothers. Sri S. Thirumalacharya, the eldest of the three, was a bitter opponent of British rule and a source of inspiration to many revolutionaries. His zeal continued unabated even in his closing years, and one of his last contributions to the cause of national honour was his participation in the *satyagraha* for removing the statue of General Neill from Mount Road, Madras.

Sri S. Srinivasacharya, the immediately elder brother of Sri S. Parthasarathy Iyengar, is still happily spared to us. He lives at Delhi with his son. In the early years of this century, he helped his cousin, Sri S. N. Thirumalachari, in running the revolutionary journal, *India*, in Tamil, from Pondicherry. And it is thus that he met Subrahmanya

Bharati, the great Tamil poet, took him to Pondicherry to edit *India* and helped him and encouraged him when he was obscure and neglected.

While this revolutionary journal was spreading its fiery message from Pondicherry, Sri S. Parthasarathy Iyengar had occasion to go to Calcutta. There he met Sri Aurobindo, then known as Babu Aurobindo Ghose, the chief contributor to the journal, *Karmayogin*. He was already famous as a fervent nationalist and a devoted exponent of India's spiritual culture. Sri Aurobindo appears to have then spoken about the difficulties he experienced from the police even in carrying out spiritual *sādhana*s and in working for a revival of Hindu culture. His nationalism had made him suspect, and the C.I.D. spared him no worry or vexation. It was then that Sri Parthasarathy, who had similar interests, pointed out the advantages of Pondicherry. A number of patriots, passionately devoted to the twin causes of India's political emancipation and spiritual regeneration, had already gathered there and they were carrying on their work with reasonable freedom. Sri Parthasarathy suggested that Sri Aurobindo might find Pondicherry congenial for his mission.

Some weeks later, Sri Suresti Chandra Chakrabarty, more familiarly known as 'Moni', came to Pondicherry with a letter from Sri Aurobindo addressed to Sri S. Parthasarathy Iyengar, c/o 'India', Pondicherry. The latter was then away at Madras, and Sri S. Srinivasacharya received Sri Chakrabarty. When the absence of Sri S. Parthasarathy Iyengar from the city was mentioned, Sri Chakrabarty said that the letter should be regarded as being addressed

to whoever was in charge of 'India' at Pondicherry. So Sri S. Srinivasacharya opened the letter and learnt that Sri Aurobindo proposed to come to Pondicherry with a view to settle down there. He, along with Bharati, gladly made the necessary arrangements to receive and accomodate Sri Aurobindo. The Bengali yogin and patriot arrived at Pondicherry in due course, and some years later founded there his *āśrama*, now famous throughout the world. It may thus be seen that a suggestion from Sri S. Parthasarathy Iyengar lay behind Sri Aurobindo's visit to Pondicherry, which led in turn to the establishment of the Aurobindo Ashram.

His other companions in this political revolutionary movement were V. V. S. Iyer, V. O. Chidambaram Pillai, M. Singaravelu Chettiar (later well known as a labour leader) and others. He moved closely with the late Bepin Chandra Pal, when he toured in Madras. He, along with his brothers, gave a large portion of his family wealth for the establishment, during the early years of this century, of the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company, Tuticorin. How that Company was ruined by the combined efforts of the British Government and the British vested interests is too well known to need repetition here. With the kind help of the Maharaja of Dharbhanga at that time, he sojourned in Nepal for a year with great difficulty in order to join the army. Soon he won for himself a position, whence he could exercise influence on the army and its commander, and waited for an opportunity to help in achieving the freedom of India from outside in that capacity. But the British police followed him and nipped in the bud his heroic

attempts in this directions, and he returned to Madras to continue his political work with his revolutionary friends and relations.

As already stated, Sri S. Parthasarathy Iyengar wrote some books in English on the sacred books of India and composed poems on the glorious achievements of the heroes of Rajasthan. But none of them have been published, and mostly the manuscripts are not available. However, I have been able to secure now three old notebooks, containing the spiritual messages of Śrī Krishna in the *Bhagavadgītā* written in English.

Unfortunately, the first notebook covering the first six chapters of the *Bhagavadgītā* is torn here and there, and some pages are missing also. But the second notebooks though written in pencil, deals completely with Chapters VII to XVIII. I have written the following missing portions in the first six chapters, as far as possible adopting the author's style and way of exposition. All the one hundred and twentyone divisional headings contained in this book, along with the references to the stanzas of the *Gītā* for each heading, have been prepared by me.

(1) Chapters I & II —	Pages 1 to 15 (exclusive of the last paragraph)
(2) Chapters III & IV —	Pages 27 (last paragraph) to 29 exclusive of the last paragraph) and pages 34 (last two paragraphs) to 42 (first 3 lines)

(3) Chapter VI

— Pages 58 to 67.

Sri S. Parthasarathy Iyengar has given in the work what amounts to a simple, running paraphrase of the *Gītā*, based mainly on the exposition of Śrī Rāmānuja. It may be noticed that the choice of the paragraph rather than the stanza as a unit has helped in the coherent and consecutive presentation of Śrī Krishna's teachings. In the course of editorial revision, a few footnotes have been added, mostly for the purpose of explaining ideas and principles taken for granted in the *Gītā*.

On behalf of the Sri Gauthamasramam Trust, which is publishing this handbook on the *Bhagavadgītā*. I heartily thank the following gentlemen and ladies for their kind cooperation in this holy work : — (i) Sri R. A. Sriranga Rajan, the brother-in-law, intimate friend and spiritual companion of the late S. Parthasarathy Iyengar, who handed over to me the second manuscript notebook containing the Chapters VII to XVIII ; (ii) Smt. H. R. Ranganayakiammal, daughter of the late Sri S. Thirumalacharya, referred to above, for collecting about Rupees five hundred as donations from close relations of Sri S. Parthasarathy Iyengar; (iii) Sri S. Krishnaswamy, M.Sc., son of the late Sri S. Parthasarathy Iyengar, and his mother, Smt. S. Singammal & five daughters, for having permitted the Gauthamasramam Trust to publish the book and giving a liberal donation towards the cost of its publication; (iv) Sri M. R. Sampatkumaran, M.A., Madras, for editing the whole book from beginning to end, making a few alterations, wherever absolutely necessary; (v) Sri M. O. Alasingra Chari, B.Sc., B.L., Editor, *Bhaktiham*, Triplicane, Madras-5,

who undertook and supervised the typing of the manuscript matter completely; (vi) Sri H. R. Alasingrachar, B.E., Retired Executive Engineer, Madras, for having helped in correcting the proofs and offering suggestions for improvement here and there ; (vii) my two daughters, who helped me in various ways while preparing the manuscript of this book completely, to be handed over to the press ; (viii) Sri M. C. Krishnan of Sri Vidya Press for seeing the book through the press ; and (ix) Sri S. Srinivasacharya, the grand old patriot of India referred to above, who is the president of the Sri Gauthamasrama Trust, Triplicane, for his spiritual fervour, able guidance and efficient supervision, regarding the publication of this work.

M. A. Narayana Iyengar,
Retired Deputy Director of
Public Instruction, Mysore State.
Cousin of Late S. Parthasarathi Iyengar

Bangalore
13-4-59.

INTRODUCTION

Parthasarathi Iyengar's BHAGAVADGITA is an excellent rendering of the original. It is appropriately called 'a simple paraphrase in English' of the holy book. For there is expansion and explanation where such is necessary.

It is presumptuous for me write in commendation of a book so well done. But I could not resist the request of my old and respected friend, Srinivasacharya, brother of Parthasarathi Iyengar, who did so much for India's freedom in the difficult days of the first decade of this century. I have no doubt this small English book will serve its purpose in turning readers to thoughts of higher things. There are many who are educated but who do not know Sanskrit enough, who will benefit greatly from this book which has been published by the relatives of the deceased author in affectionate memory.

25-5-59

HIS EXCELLENCY

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

Ex-late Vice Roy General of British India
First Governor General of Independent free India



Father :

Late Sri S. Parthasarthy Iyengar B.A.,
Gold Medalist in Botany Presidency
College, Madras.
Freedom fighter – 1880-1929.



Father in Law :

Late Dr. M. A. Sampath Kumaran also
Botany Presidency College, Madras.
Did his Ph.D in Botany Chicago
University U.S.A. Retired as Principal
Bangalore Central College 1881-1944.



Sri M. A. Alwar was posted as
Controller of Stores & Purchase
Indian Refineries Limited, Gauhati
who was elected as President of the
Lions Club, Gauhati Branch, for the
year 1961. Sri Alwar had been
actively associated with social
welfare work and youth activities in
many parts of the country. He was
interested in spiritual & cultural

activities. Sri M.A. Alwar also studied in the Central College,
did his M.B.A. at Syracuse University U.S.A. Retired from,
O.N.G.C. as Director 1919-1977. This book is dedicated in their
memory by Smt. Janaki Alwar, Mysore, Founder President
Nandagokulam Welfare Trust (R) & President Sri Krishna Seva
Samithi Charitable Trust (R), Gokulam, Mysore.



KRISHNARPANAM

My husband Late Sri. M.A. Alwar lived from 1919-1978. After getting a degree from Central College Bangalore, did his MBA from Syracuse university U.S.A. He was selected by the Central Government for the Indian Management Pool and Posted to the Indian Oil Corporation Refinery at Guahati in Assam. He was appointed as the controller of stores and purchase for the first public sector Refinery. This Refinery was inaugurated in 1962 by the Honourable prime minister late Pandit Jawaralal Nehru After Gauhati he was posted to Barauni Refinery in Behar. He joined the "Lions Club" and served as president of the club at various places. He also became its charter chairman. He took a lot of interest in helping the poor and Needy. He along with me started many cultural and spiritual activities. At this time this "Bhagavad Geetha" was released for the first time during 1959. In 1972 Sri M.A. Alwar was posted as the Director of stores and purchase in the Oil and Natural Gas Commission at Dehradune. He retired in 1977 and settled at Gokulam III stage, Mysore and continued service to the poor and needy. He read Bhagavad Geetha daily and followed the principles executed by Lord Krishna to Arjuna unfortunately he passed away during 1978 before he could fully implement his vision and thoughts. My brother and I took the responsibility on our shoulders to fulfil the thoughts of my husband.

I am living with the children of my brother Late S.P.Krishnaswamy retired Assistant Director of R.R.L.Jammu. When he was alive he helped me in fulfilling the wishes of my Late Husband Sri.M.A.Alwar. Huge contributions have been given in his name by me for the needy. My brother and his family planned to

build Lord Krishna temple at 151-E, 6th main, Gokulam 11th stage, Mysore. After consulting with my well wishers and honourable residents of the locality we formed a Trust called "Sri Krishna Seva Charitable Trust Samithi" and registered it. The honourable trustees have named me as founder president of the Trust.

Lord Krishna Temple was constructed with the help of huge contributions of Krishna Bhaktas and my family members major contributions. Lord Sri Krishna's idol concenterated by His Holiness Abhinava Ramanuja Sri Sri Sri Swamiji of Parakal mutt mysore during 1991. Lord Ganapathy, Abhaya Anjaneya swamy and Navagraha were also concenterated in the Premises of the Temple.

I continued as president of the Nanda Gokulam Welfare Trust (R) which is specifically meant for helping the poor students who exel in education and other Social and spiritual activities. I have also contributed major portion to build an auditorium as planned by the Trustees, Krishna Bhaktas and lovers of music and dance activities. We built the Auditorium in the name of my late husband Sri. M.A.Alwar to be called "Alwar Kala Bhavan" in the Krishna Temple Premises. I have also donated funds to built two city Bus shelters: one at Doctor's corner circle and another at the main road of vain vilasa mohalla (vantikoppal) Mysore.

This Bhagavad Geetha was first drafted in prose style by my father Late Partha sarathy Iyengar who lived during 1890 to 1929.

It was first printed during 1959. For the first edition. His Excellency chkravarthy Rajagopalachary (RAJAJI) last viceroy General of British India and First Governor General of independence free India has kindly written the introduction Note. The book was released in memory of

my Elders by my late husband Sri M.A.Alwar. The first edition a become very popular and all stock got exhausted.

After lapse of five decades my foreign friends, relatives, local krishna Bhaktas and my family members, Late S.P.Krishnaswamy, Sri S.N.Koushik, Smt.Ranjani and one of the devotee Sri M.V.Prakash who served as Ex-convenor of Panchamuki Anjaneya Temple, Irvin Road, Mysore helped me to bring out this edition in short period to distribute the same to the Krishna Bhakthas. I humbly request one and all to read Bhagavad Geetha in their hard days to get peace and prosperity in their life. Our thanks are due to Sri.Keshavan and Smt.Gayathri of Sagar Printers where the book was Printed.

27-3-2009

Janaki Alwar



M.V.PRAKASH

Ex-Convenor

Sri Panchamakhi Arjaneya Swamy Temple
1213, 10th Main, Gokulam, IIIrd Stage,
Mysore-2.

The term "BHAGAVAD GEETHA" means "THE ETERNALSONG" and is contained in Chapters 25 to 42 of the Bhishma Parva. The Mahabharata written some five thousand years ago is an unusual text amongst all religious work. Its setting is in the thick of the war field Kurukshetra, where the almighty Lord Vishnu in his Avatar as Lord Krishna advises a disillusioned Arjuna on the various facts of life and work. This is in contrast to other works which are usually set in the more powerful ambience of penance grove or amidst the glitter of the royal court or in the exalted forum of scholars and experts with seven hundred slokas. It is not a book merely teaching you how to worship God. It teaches three paths to reach the Almighty namely BHAKTHI, KARMA and JNANA. In simple language, even teenage can understand. It also paves the path for a house holder to lead a more rewarding and meaningful life in these hard days.

I wish all the readers to read this Bhagavad Geetha and get Lord Krishna's blessings in their life. I thanks Smt. Jananki Alwar for the efforts made to release this edition and dedicate it to her elders.

"Sarve Bhavanthu Sukhinaha
Sarve Santhu Neraamayaa
Sarve Bhadrani Pashyantu
Makschit Dhukhabhagavat"

3-4-2009

M.V.Prakash

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"Om Tat Sat"

BHAGAVADGITA

A SIMPLE PARAPHRASE IN ENGLISH

CHAPTER I

ARJUNA VISHADHA YOGA (THE SORROW OF ARJUNA)

Introduction.

The *Bhagavadgītā*, or the Song of the Divine Lord, is a famous poem, which forms part of the sacred scriptures of the Hindus. It is held in high reverence as giving out the words of God Himself on the great problems of human conduct and destiny. All the great teachers of our religion have sought inspiration from and written about it.

The *Gītā*, as it is more familiarly known, forms part of the great Sanskrit epic, the *Mahābhārata*, which tells the story of a long rivalry between two branches of the royal house of the Kurus, with their capital at Hastinapura, near modern Delhi. That rivalry finally resulted in a great war, fought on the plains of Kurukshetra.

The contending cousins were the sons of two brothers, Pāndu and Dhritarāshtra. The former had five sons, known as the Pāndavas. They were Yudhishtira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva. Draupadi was their queen. Dhritarashtra had a hundred sons, of whom the eldest was Duryodhana.

Śrī Krishna, a Yādava prince, was related to the Pāndavas. He was believed to be an incarnation of God. He tried His best to mediate before the war, but Duryodhana took up a stubborn attitude and made

war inevitable. He offered His army to one side and His counsel to the other. Duryodhana took His army, and the Pandavas preferred His advice and guidance. Thus it came about that He became the charioteer of Arjuna, the greatest warrior among the Pāndavas, during the war.

The *Gītā* is in the form of a narration by Sañjaya, a minister, to Dhṛitarāshtra, the old blind king, of a dialogue between Śrī Krishna and Arjuna just before the commencement of the battle. Sañjaya, according to the epic, had been endowed with extraordinary powers to report the progress of the war correctly to Dhṛitarāshtra. His report began with the famous dialogue in which Śrī Krishna overcame Arjuna's dislike for doing the unpleasant duty of fighting his kinsmen and friends by teaching him the basic principles of philosophy, religion and ethics.

The whole trend of the *Bhagavadgītā* is to inculcate the way of attaining the Supreme Lord through intense *bhakti* (exclusive love and devotion to Him), which is to be acquired by the performance of duties according to one's caste and station and by the realization of one's own self by means of *jñāna-yoga*. In the first *śaṭka* or the division of the first six chapters, the paths of *karma* and *jñāna* which lead to the realization of the soul are taught. In the second *śaṭka* or second division of six chapters, the *bhakti yoga* which results from the practice of *karma* and *jñāna-yogas* and which is necessary for the realization of God, is explained. In the third *śaṭka*, or the third division of six chapters, the several points mentioned in the last two *śaṭkas* are discussed in detail, namely, *prakṛiti* and *puruṣa* (matter and soul), the nature of the universe and God, and the paths of *karma*,

jñāna and *bhakti* (works, wisdom and devotion) for reaching the Lord.

The Kurukshetra Battle (Stanzas 1 to 27)

The *Bhagavadgītā* starts with the description of the preparations for battle between the Pāṇdavas and Kauravas in the battle-field of Kurukshetra. Dhritarāshtra requested Sañjaya to explain to him clearly what happened when the two armies of his party and the Pāṇdavas met together in the holy plain of Kurukshetra with the object of fighting in a war. Sañjaya replied to him thus:

When Duryodhana, the leader of the Kaurava party, surveyed the army of the Pāṇdavas ready to engage themselves in battle against his own army, he was struck with fear, and so he immediately went to *Āchārya* Drona and addressed him in the following words: "*Āchārya!* Do you not see before you the great army of the Pāṇdavas? Your clever disciple, the son of Drupada, has made them stand in front of our army in battle—order. Many heroes with mighty bows are there, who are great heroes equal to Bhima and Arjuna. Among such are Yuyudhāna, Virāta, the great master of the chariot, Drupada, Dhrishtaketu, Chekitāna, the king of Kāśi, Purujit, Kuntibhoja, the strong and powerful Śaibya, the strong Yudhāmanyu, the valorous Uttamaujas, the son of Subhadrā and the sons of Draupadī, who are all great charioteers. May I remind you also of the heroic leaders on our side who are ready to fight under you as the Chief Commander? They are Bhīshma, Karṇa, the ever victorious Kṛpa, Aśwatthāman, Vikarṇa, Saumadatti, Jayadratha and many others ready to sacrifice their *lives* for my sake. They are all well-skilled in the art

of war and fully equipped with varied weapons. But I do not know why I get the feeling of fear again and again that the army of the Pāṇdavas under the leadership of Bhīma is stronger than our army under the leadership of Bhīshma. Is it because our army is inadequate? No, our army is adequate, and it is stronger than the Pāṇdava army! Go on cheerfully and courageously, stay in your respective places and obey the command of Bhīshma ungrudgingly and unfailingly."

Immediately after this final appeal of Duryodana to Droṇāchārya, there was the signal of the tremendous sound of the blowing of conch-shells on all sides of the battle-field simultaneously. Bhīshma, the Kuru elder and grandfather, famed for his prowess, mightily roared out the lion's roar and blew his conchshell, bringing joy to Duryodhana. Then the conch-shells of the subordinate commanders on the Kaurava side were blown, and the battle-drums, the cymbals, the drums, and the horns were sounded. Thus there was a tumultuous uproar.

Then the Pāṇdava (Arjuna) and his charioteer, Śrī Krishna, blew their conch-shells, Devadatta and Pāṇchajanya, respectively, from their chariot drawn by white steeds. Bhīma of terrible deeds also blew his conch-shell, Paundra. The king, Yudhishtira, son of Kuntī, blew the Anantavijaya, while Nakula and Sahadeva blew upon Sughoṣha and Manipushpaka. Naturally, the other subordinate commanders on the Pāṇdava side like the king of Kāśī, Śikhandin, Dhṛishtadyumna, Virāṭa, Sātyaki, Drupada, the sons of Draupadī, the mighty Abhimanyu the son of Subhadra—all blew their respective conchshells. This great sound, produced by the conch-shells on the

Pāṇḍava side, with echoes from every part of the earth and sky, caused fear in the hearts of your sons.

Arjuna, seeing the Kauravas take their places for the battle and feeling the clash of arms to be imminent, took in his hand his mighty bow and spoke to Krishna :— "Oh Krishna, drive my chariot to a central position between the two armies, so that I may personally survey those who are ready and anxious to fight against one another, once this battle starts. I desire particularly to see all those warriors who are eager to please in battle the evil-minded Duryodhana". Requested thus by Arjuna, Śrī Krishna drove that excellent chariot between the two armies in front of Bhīṣma, Drona and all the kings who had joined the Kaurava side. He said to Arjuna, "See these Kurus who have gathered together". What did Arjuna see before him? He saw his grandfather, Bhīṣma, and his *āchārya* Drona standing in front to fight against him. He saw, on both sides of the army, fathers, grandfathers, teachers, maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, comrades, fathers-in-law and friends, all ready to fight with a cruel heart and cut the throats of one another in this terrible battle of nearest relations engaged in prosecuting selfish ambitions.

Arjuna's Dejection and Grief (Stanzas 28 to 47)

When Arjuna saw them all, he was suddenly overpowered, as if by some outside force, by a strong feeling of pity, due to his lifelong attachment towards them, and cried out in grief to Śrī Krishna : —

"Oh, Krishna! What do I see before me! My own relations and friends are standing before me as enemies, ready to fight one another, and I have to slay

them in the battle. I do not know the reason why my very limbs faint away in weakness, my mouth becomes dry, my body trembles and my hairs stand on end now. What is this! My Gāndīva¹ slips down from my hand. There is a burning sensation in my skin. I cannot stand, and my mind is not at all steady. Moreover, I see everywhere bad omens! With all these physical and mental troubles, do you think that it is right on my part to kill my own kindred in battle? Let me now recover presence of mind and reflect calmly as to whether there is any real good to me, if I engage myself in this war.

"When all my relations and friends are killed, there is no use in ruling a kingdom without them. How can I enjoy pleasures of life without them? Why, I do not think that it is worth living for me after the death of my relations and friends. Therefore, I have now no desire to win victory and rule the kingdom afterwards, nor to enjoy the pleasures of conquest. We want to rule empires in order to enjoy life with our relations and friends in a grand way. But now the very men for whose sake we desire to have the kingdom and all enjoyments and pleasures are to be killed by me, and their wealth confiscated at the same time. Will any human being with ordinary commonsense engage himself in a fight, where he has to kill his own revered teachers, fathers, sons, grandsires, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons and brothers-in-law, as well as friends who are not related to us? A cruel-hearted, selfish, brutal man may adopt this course, but I do not wish to kill them. You may say that they will attack me, if I do not kill them. Let them attack me, it does not matter.

1. Arjuna's bow.

No, I will not fight against them, even if for doing so, I am offered sovereignty over the three worlds. Surely, I will not engage myself in this war for the sake of a small kingdom on this small earth.

"Oh Krishna! You may think that I hesitate to fight, because I am weak-minded and physically afraid to fight; on account of attachment to my near relations and friends. It is true that I derive no pleasure or happiness by killing the sons of Dhṛitārāshtra, but that is not my only reason for my decision not to fight in this war now even against our murderous opponents. Sin will cling to us, if we kill our own relations and friends. The minds of the sons of Dhṛitarāshtra, being overpowered by callousness, cannot realise the harm done to society by the destruction of heads of families and the practice of treachery against one's own friends and relations. But we, who are the brothers of Dharmarāja, the embodiment of righteousness itself, should not commit the sin of killing all the heads of families of our society in this cruel battle.

"Just reflect on the bad effect of ruining the families! Then the everlasting virtues of different families will all be destroyed. Of course, unrighteousness overcomes the whole family, when the special virtues of the family are destroyed. What will happen when unrighteousness prevails in the family? Then the family women become highly polluted, and this will surely result in the evil of *varna-saṅkara* or the mixing up of racial colours, cultures and civilizations, leading to confusion in our social organisation. The members of the family who lead immoral lives, as well as those who cause the destruction of family virtues, go to hell after death,

being responsible for the confusion of castes. Even if we do not mind their going to hell, we cannot forget about the fact that by killing all the heads of families, the manes of their departed ancestors will have to suffer, being deprived of the religious offerings of food and water from their descendants. Certainly, the gates of hell are widely opened after death to all such cruel and unrighteous persons who destroy families in war, and thereby give rise to the confusion of castes, destroying at the same time the duties to be performed by the different castes in our society. Their worst crime is that they destroy the virtues of family life!

"As I am now reflecting about the gravity of the sin that I will be committing by taking leadership in this war, I am staggered at its manifold evil consequences. Alas! We have now undertaken to kill our own kindred, being goaded by the greedy desire to enjoy the kingdom and its pleasures. Oh! we have started committing terrible sins. O Krishna! I will not fight. Let the sons of Dhritarāshtra, with weapons in their hands, kill me, when I do not defend myself. I will not retaliate. Surely, this procedure of non-violence on my part gives me greater happiness than what I would get by the conquest of the kingdom under dispute now."

Then, suddenly in a surprising manner, Arjuna throw aside his bow, along with the arrows, and sat down within the chariot, as his mind was completely merged in the feeling of sorrow.



CHAPTER II

SANKHYA YOGA

(THE NATURE OF THE SOUL)

Arjuna's dejection continued (Stanzas 1 to 10)

As Arjuna was thus overpowered by pity at the prospect of the death of his near relations and friends, his eyes were filled with tears and appeared to be disturbed. He was also much depressed in mind. The Blessed Lord spoke the following inspiring message to him : "Oh Arjuna! Why has this unworthy weakness come upon you in this critical juncture? It is only men who are ignoble, that are overpowered by this kind of mental weakness. What are the bad effects of this weakness of mind? It not only prevents one from going to *Svarga* (or the celestial world of the gods), but also gives rise to disgrace in this world. Therefore, do not become womanly and behave like an impotent coward. That is unworthy of a hero like you! Give up this debasing weakness of heart, which has come upon you in this critical moment, arise and fight, O tormentor of foes!"

Arjuna again appealed to Śrī Krishna in the following words: "Oh destroyer of enemies! Bhīshma and Drona deserve to be worshipped by me, as they are my *gurus*. How then can I, in battle, attack them with arrows? It may be that they are actuated by desire for selfish gains, yet they are my teachers. I feel now that it is better to live in this world by begging than to slay these honoured teachers. Even if I should slay them, what is the gain? I will have to enjoy afterwards in this world only delights which are well dipped in blood! We do not know which is better for

us—our winning over them or their conquering us. The very sons of Dhritarāshtra are standing before us in battle-array, and we have no desire to live at all after killing them. O Krishna! I am your disciple, I have come to you for guidance. My very being is stricken with the weakness arising from pity. I am greatly perplexed in my mind in respect of my duty. I humbly request you to tell me decisively that course of action which shall be good for me to do. Command me in this respect. Somehow, at present this grief of mine is drying up all my senses, and I do not think that it will disappear, even if I should obtain both a kingdom from enemies on earth and the supreme rulership over the gods themselves. O Krishna! I will not fight."

Arjuna then became silent in a surprising manner and kept quiet without making any preparation for the ensuing battle. Śrī Krishna smiled at his curious behaviour in this critical situation. He then gave a message to Arjuna¹.

The 'Deha' or Body is Distinct from the 'Dehin' or Soul (Stanzas 11 to 18)

The Blessed Lord said :—

When a person dies, really wise and learned, persons do not feel sorry either about the body or the, soul of the dead man. But you are overpowered by sorrow even for the death of those persons who do not deserve to be sorrowed for. And you cannot take

1. The details of this message are graphically described in seventeen chapters, inspiring the hearts of all human beings on this earth for all time to come. It calls upon all to work for achievement of perfection or the attainment of salvation by discharging their prescribed duties with courage and without attachment.

shelter under the plea that you are not a wise man, because you are putting forth rationalistic arguments like wise men! Now understand from me the true principles of philosophy and ethics and become truly wise.

Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor these kings. Surely, there will never be a time hereafter when we shall all cease to be! Do you not observe that even in the case of a living man, the embodied soul has childhood, youth and old age in relation to the body? Understand that, in the same manner, the soul obtains another body after death. The sage, ripe in his wisdom, therefore does not become perplexed at the thought of his own death or the death of near relations and friends. Oh Bhārata, son of Kuntī! the contacts of senses with their objects give rise to the sensations of heat and cold and to the feelings of pain and pleasure. But they come and go frequently, affecting us only for short periods. The only way to become free from their clutches is to learn to bear them with firmness. Endure them, O Bhārata! What do we gain, if we endure heat and cold or feelings of pain and pleasure? Such brave and wise men who are not troubled by these limited material contacts of heat and cold and keep a calm, balanced attitude during pain and pleasure alike, become fit to lead the immortal or eternal life.

What have the seers of truth concluded as a result of their spiritual experiences, or vision of Reality? *Asat* (or the non-existent) has no permanent existence, and at no time *sat* (or the existent) has non existence. What does this mean? Understand that the soul, by which this whole universe is pervaded, is

indestructible, and no one is capable of bringing about the destruction of this immutable entity. But these bodies of the eternal embodied soul, which is imperishable and incomprehensible, have all been declared to be finite. They come to an end.

**We Should Not Grieve for What is Imperishable
(Stanzas 18 to 25)**

Why do you hesitate to fight, Arjuna? One cannot kill the soul in the battle, nor can it be killed under any circumstances. But whoever understands this soul to be the killer and whoever thinks it to be killed, both of them do not know the truth. The *ātman* or soul or *dehin* is never born, nor does it ever die. It has not been brought into being at any time in the past, and therefore it will not come into existence newly at any time in the future. Realise well that, when this body is slain in battle, this unborn, immortal, eternal and ancient soul is not killed at all! O Pārtha! if you realise that the *ātman* is indestructible, eternal, unborn and unchanging, you will not surely agree with the statement that a person slays or is slain by another. Who indeed can kill whom, and how? But we see thousands killing and being killed in war. It is only that their bodies are separated from their *ātmans* — though the souls are not killed at all. Just as a person casts off worn-out dresses and puts on new ones, even so does the embodied soul cast off worn-out bodies and take on others that are new.

What then are the characteristics of the *dehin* or the soul? Weapons do not cleave the self, fire does not *burn* it, water does not make it wet, nor does the wind make it dry. The *ātman* cannot be cut, burnt, made wet, or dried;

it is eternal, all pervading, firm, immovable and everlasting. If you understand that the *ātman* is non-manifest, unthinkable and unchangeable, you will not at all feel sorry in relation to it, even when men are slain in battle.

Nor For What is Perishable (Stanzas 26 to 30)

Arjuna, probably you may not be convinced yet that the *ātman* is immortal with all these characteristics. Let us then grant for the sake of argument that the soul is constantly born and that it constantly dies. Even then it is not proper for you to feel sorry for such a soul. Something is not produced out of nothing; only things change their forms and evolve into different forms. Every form with a name has a beginning and an end. The end of one form gives birth to a new form, which again after its allotted time disappears. So death is certain to occur in relation to whatever form is born, and the birth of a new form is certain to occur in relation to whatever has died. Therefore, it is not proper for you to feel sorry for this kind of series of changes in the bodies of the embodied soul, which must be deemed to take place under an unavoidable natural law. O Arjuna, as you know, all the beings in this world have an unknown beginning. We know only the history of their middle period after birth and up to death. Again, their disappearance is a mystery, as it is unknown in what condition or whether at all they exist afterwards. Why should you then lament only for the unknown end, while you do feel pleased with the unknown beginning? One looks upon this soul which has an unknown beginning and only a known middle as a marvel, another likewise speaks of it as a marvel, and even after learning about it,

no one whatsoever has known it. Instead of having this confused idea about the embodied soul, you may firmly believe, O Bhārata, that it is eternal and can never be slain. Then you will not grieve for the disappearance of any creature.

Appeal to Arjuna's Sense of Duty (Stanzas 31 to 37)

O Arjuna! now you may say that you are not interested in the philosophy of the *ātman* and that you are only a man of the world. Even then, you cannot sit quiet without fighting in this war, which is intended to establish righteousness against unrighteousness. You are a Kshatriya, and considering the nature of your own duty in life, it is not proper for you to tremble and falter. There can be no other good opportunity for you than a righteous war enjoined by duty. Happy are the Kshatriyas when such a war comes of its own accord and opens the doors of heaven. But you may be so selfish as to be negligent of your duties as a Kshatriya and decide that you will not engage yourself in this lawful war. But if you fight shy of this righteous battle, you will lose name and fame and commit sin by shirking your duty. Then evil consequences will flow from your indifference. You will be abandoning your own natural duty; you will lose your good fame and acquire sin also. You may say that you do not care for your duty and the effects of sin; but being a man of honour, when all men recount your ill-fame, you will feel that ill-fame is worse than death for you! It is but natural that 'the warriors of the great chariot' who have thought highly about you till now, will not have hereafter any regard for you, on the ground that you have kept back from the battle out of fear. Your enemies also will then decry

your strength and will talk scandals about you in such a manner that you cannot bear them. Could anything be more painful to your mind than this situation? Oh son of Kuntī! hear my advice, firmly resolve to fight in this battle, arise and engage yourself in the war. Do not waver in the least in the matter. In case you are slain in battle, you will go to *Svarga*, or luckily, if you should be victorious in the war, you will enjoy the lordship of a vast kingdom.

Importance of Buddhi-Yoga (Stanzas 38 to 46)

Arjuna, somehow, you are worried by the feeling that you will be committing a great sin by fighting in this war against your own kith and kin, friends and teachers as well as responsible heads of families. I will now teach you the *yoga*¹ attitude of discharging your duties in life, by adopting which you will not incur any sin at all. Surely, you will be rid of the bondage of *karma*, if, while discharging your primary duty as a Kshatriya of waging war in this critical situation, you possess the *buddhi*² attitude of treating alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss and victory or defeat.

Since you now know the nature of the soul, and its essential properties, I shall now instruct you in the rule of conduct which you should observe, to be in conformity with this knowledge. So listen to My instruction about the means of attaining the soul or

1. *yoga* - here *karma-yoga* or the path of performing duties dispassionately.

2. *buddhi*-literally, the faculty of intellection or discrimination; here the outlook resulting from a knowledge of the true nature of the soul.

the regulation of conduct which would lead to liberation or *mukti*. I will first tell you about the importance or the eminence of this *buddhi-yoga*¹ in order to make you pay your full attention to it. In the practice of this *yoga*, there is no failure of effort or disappointment, as in the case of secular *karmas*, where success is reached only after completion. Even a very little of this *dharma* saves one from great calamities and sins. But during its practice, you must have a steady *buddhi*, which is always one with regard to this *dharma*. The *buddhi* of the unsteady and wavering is many branched and endless. In devoted or loving service, the mind is steady and exclusive. But the activities of the unloving or undevoted minds are endless and manifold. This *yoga* is not intended for those unsteady persons that have *kāma* (desire) for their soul and *Svarga* or celestial enjoyment for their fruits of action. For these, the *Vedas* abound in ceremonies that lead to *bhoga aiśvarya* (enjoyment and material prosperity). You may be astonished to hear that the *Vedas*, which are a highly sacred scripture, should deal with ceremonies for procuring material prosperity and enjoyment, which are by far inferior in comparison with the eternal bliss of *moksha*. But you should know that the *Vedas* are a vast storehouse, good, bad and mediocre, suiting temperaments dominated by the *sattva rajas* or *tamas*²; in short, they are all-comprehensive, all-embracing and universal. Only you should take the *sattvika* portion alone of the *Vedas*, and

1. *buddhi-yoga* - the performance of *karma-yoga*, preceded by a knowledge of the nature of the soul.

2. regarded as 'qualities' or 'constituents' of matter, representing energy in a state of balance, doing creative work and causing disintegration respectively. Domination by these qualities leads respectively to wisdom, aggressive achievement and lazy perversity.

remaining above the admixture of these three *gunas*, you must be ever established in *sattva* alone—a *niradvandva* (i.e., above the opposites of pleasure and pain), indifferent about your own welfare and always abiding in the soul. The *Vedas* are like a tank of water, replenished from all sides, which is made use of for various purposes by an intelligent person.

Characteristics of Buddhi-Yoga (Stanzas 47 to 53)

Now, having told you of the importance and eminence of this *yoga*, I shall teach you its very essence or *dharma*. It is this. Your right is only to the action, never to the fruits thereof. So let not the fruit be an incentive to action, or rather the motive for its performance. But do not get attached to inaction.

This attitude of mind, when performing an action, corresponds to and properly fits with the above mentioned characteristics of the soul. Now what are the essential features of the *ātman* or the soul? It is *nitya*, *avyaya*, *avikārya*, *avadhya*¹ etc. It is eternal, deathless, beyond change, and immortal, and can desire nothing in this world². It is, as we have seen, above heat and cold, above pleasure and pain, as no weapon, fire, water or wind can in any way affect it. All these defects of the *dvandvas* (pairs of opposites) are mere superimpositions upon it, which is *nitya*, (eternal) *sthāna*, (firm and everlasting), *avikārya* (not subject to modifications) and *avyaya* (unchangeable); and these superimpositions are caused by the *dehātma-bhrama* or its mistaken identification with the body brought about

1. Not liable to be killed.

2. Which is one of limited material contacts.

by *avidyā* or ignorance. The pure and perfect soul mistakenly identifies itself with the impermanent and imperfect body and hankers after things which are unnecessary for its essential nature. To desire the fruit of an act is to be bewildered by the idea of its imperfection and to confess weakness and subjection to the *dvandvas*, which is foreign to the real nature of the *dehin* (or the soul). The *baddha-dehin* (or the bound soul) must work in order to get free, and that in such a way that it will be conformable to and in apposition with its genuine nature.

The *karma-yoga*, here taught, can be analysed into three parts. (1) Do not be attached to inaction, for otherwise the veil of ignorance can never be destroyed. Indolence can never remove ignorance. (2) You must work, that is, perform actions in order to rend this veil. (3) Do not desire the fruit, because it is foreign to your real nature. This is the real secret of work. This is *yoga*. So, firmly established in this *yoga*, perform work, giving up all attachment. Never mind about *siddhi* or *asiddhi* (success or failure), remain the same, unperturbed, in either case fully convinced that what comes as the result of the fruit of acts, can neither add to, nor diminish anything from you, who are perfect, *avyaya* (unchangeable) and *avikārya* (not subject to modifications). This calmness, this indifference about the result, this imperturbability is called *yoga*. It will be difficult at the beginning, but if you steadily practise the giving up of all attachment, gradually this sameness or imperturbability will arise.

Karma or mere work is far inferior to this *yoga* of *buddhi*. Therefore take refuge in *buddhi* (this attitude of mind)) resort to the practice of this *buddhi-yoga*.

Truly miserable are they that work for fruit, devoid of this mental attitude. But the man who works with this *buddhi* gives up both the good and the bad in this world. They do not affect him at all. So attempt to practise this yoga, for it is skill or wisdom in action. And, what is the result of this yoga practice, where does it lead to and what is its effect? The wise, renouncing all fruits born of action, and being united with this *buddhi*, get freedom from the bonds of birth and go to the blissful state. This is the effect of its practice—freedom from birth and the attainment of a blissful state.

You will realise the truth of what I have said, when your *buddhi* goes beyond the mass of *moha* or delusion. Then you will feel a sort of disinclination or disgust for the things that you have heard already and for those you have yet to hear, that is, disgust for your past and future experiences. In other words, as you get more and more experience of the world, you will feel a strong apathy for all mundane things, and then your *moha* or delusion will be cleared. And when your *buddhi* gets well convinced by hearing the sublime truths and is firmly fixed and stands unshaken in *xamādhī* or steady meditation, then you will attain this yoga.

Characteristics of the Sthitaprajna or Perfect Sage. (Stanzas 54 to 61)

When Śrī Krishna had finished teaching the metaphysics, or rather the moral discipline called *buddhi-yoga* to Arjuna, its effect of breaking all bonds and leading to a blissful state and the necessity of *sthira-buddhi* or steadiness of mind while undergoing this discipline, naturally there arose in Arjuna's mind a desire to know the characteristics of the man, who had

attained success in yoga and who had acquired this-*sthira-buddhi*. So he asked the Lord to describe to him the characteristics of a *sthita-prajña* (or the sage of steady wisdom). To this question, Śrī Krishna answered thus :—

I will now describe to you the four stages of a *sthitaprajña*, beginning with the highest. That man is a *sthitaprajña* who, leaving off all the desires of his *manas*, finds solace ever in his soul alone. He is always merged in the bliss of his soul and is absolutely unconcerned about the things of the world. A man is a *sthita-dhī* (of steady mind), when no grief can affect his *manas*, when he is a *nispriha* or has no attachment for any sort of *sukha* (enjoyment), and consequently when he is free from *rāga*, *bhaya* and *krodha* (passion, fear and anger). In this second stage, the *sthitādhī* satisfies the first qualification of the *sthitha-prajña*, viz., the giving up of desires; but he has not acquired the second qualification, that is, he is not finding solace and delight in his soul alone. (For example, Janaka Mahārāja¹).

In the third stage, a man's *prajñā* (wisdom) is getting *pratishthā* or a settled position, when he does not much rejoice at or hate the good or the evil, that may come to him, by remaining without much attachment to anything in this world. Here the man has not completely thrown off the *dvandvas* (opposites) of *sukha* and *duḥkha* (joy and sorrow), but his mind is not greatly affected by them — (*Nābhinandati, na dveshti*—he is not pleased, nor does he hate.)

1. A famous king and sage, who figures in the *Upanishads* and who is later mentioned in the Gita as having attained perfection by the performance of duty without attachment to fruits. The example of Suka may be cited for the first stage, though the Gita does not mention him.

In the fourth or the lowest stage, he begins to struggle and draws his *indriyas* (senses) away from the *arthas* or sense-objects, like a tortoise drawing in its limbs. In these two last stages, the man is in the course of training himself. He is in the initial stages disciplining his mind. Especially at the beginning or lowest stage, he will find it very hard to control his mind. He will have to struggle with great effort, and that is why no mention is made even about his being free from exultation at success or hatred at failure. As he is untrained, there will naturally come to him *vikāras* of the mind, such as *rāga*, *bhaya*, *krodha* and *dvesha* (hatred) etc., but he must persist in refusing to satisfy the cravings of his senses and must physically draw them from their objects, as a tortoise does its limbs. By this training, a man's *prajñā* gets more and more *pratiṣṭhitā* (established). By thus refusing to gratify his senses, he loses the worldly enjoyment, and the objects remain unenjoyed, and gradually lose their control over the mind. Though he may not feel the craving so mightily as before, yet the taste for them, the *rasa*, will not leave him so easily. But even this *rasa* goes away, when he beholds the Supreme *Ātman* (i.e., God), just as a man who realises a higher bliss loses his taste for lesser enjoyments. Until this realisation, a man should be very careful in controlling the *indriyas* (senses), because, if once aroused, they violently and with great force carry away the *manas* of even a wise man. So he should restrain them all by *saṁnyama* (self-control), and being calm should be wholly devoted to Me. His *prajñā* is *pratiṣṭhitā*, whose *indriyas* are completely under control.

Beware of Sense-Contacts and Temptations (Stanzas 62 to 67)

I shall now show you how, if the conquest over the senses is not made, the objects corrupt the *manas* through the *indriyas* and ultimately lead to ruin. If a person begins to think of the sense-objects, an attachment for them arises in his mind, and *sañga* or *āsakti* (loving attachment) is created. This *sañga* or attachment then gathers strength and becomes a *kāma* or desire, and this desire, if frustrated or not satisfied, generates anger. When passion taints the mind of a person, it is obscured by *moha* (delusion); that is, the person becomes blind, not knowing the *kartavya* and *akartavya* (the things to be done and avoided). From this arises the failure of the *smṛiti* or the remembrance of the right thing, and his discrimination begins to reel and whirl, leading to the total loss of his *buddhi*, which ultimately lands him on the shores of ruin.¹ This is how the demon of attachment or *sañga* operates upon the mind of its slave. Whereas the person who has conquered or killed this *sañga*, even though he might move among the sense-objects, with his *indriyas* that are free from *rāga* and *dvesha* (love and hatred) and that act in obedience to the dictates of the *ātman*, gets the supreme peace (*prasādam adhigachchhati*).

When this peace arrives, then all sorts of afflictions and sorrows are destroyed, and the *buddhi* gets firm and steady. There is no *buddhi* for the undeserving or the man who has not conquered his senses, and there is also no *bhāvana* or concentration for him, and he who has no

1. In this passage, *manas* is the faculty of attention and *buddhi* the faculty of discrimination, or intelligence; *manas* elsewhere may simply mean 'mind'.

steadiness of mind can never get *śānti* or peace, and for the *aśānta* (the unquiet), happiness is impossible. So *sthītaprajñatva* (the quality of being a sage of steady wisdom) consists essentially in mastering the senses, for if the *manas* that roves amidst the senses is left uncontrolled, it carries away the *prajñā* (wisdom) of a person, just as a tiny barge is overcome by the wind at sea. Therefore, he is a *sthītaprajñā* whose *indriyas* are completely drawn away from the sense-objects by *nigraha* or restraint.

The Bliss of the Perfect Sage (Stanzas 68 to 72)

This *samyamīn* or the man of self-control differs very greatly from the ordinary man of the world. Whatever is night to one (i.e., the worldly or ignorant man) is day to the other (*samyamīn*), and vice versa: that is, the sense-objects in which the ordinary man plunges himself and is busily engaged at day-time, are completely dead as night to the *yogin*; and the *ātmānubhava* (or experience of the self) in which the *yogin* is steadily occupied is totally dark to the man of the world. It is only persons of such merits that are deserving of *śānti* and not the *ayuktas* (or undisciplined ones). *Śānti* is only for him, who stands unmoved and is completely full in himself, even though *kāmas* or desires may flow into him, as the ocean remains full and unaltered, in spite of the rivers that enter into it. It is he that attains peace, not he that is a prey to desires - *Na kāmakamī*. *Śānti* is for him who, casting away all desires, wanders freely as *nispriha*, *nirmana* and *nirahañkara* — free from all sorts of selfish desires, the sense of possession and egoism. This state is called the *brāhmī sthiti* (or the divine state), O Arjuna, and having reached this, none becomes subject to *moha*. Even at the last moments of a man, such a state leads to *brahma-nirvāna* or the supreme state of the bliss of the *ātman*.



CHAPTER III

KARMA YOGA (THE DISCIPLINE OF WORKS)

Introduction:

In the second chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*, Śrī Krishna teaches Arjuna the *Sāṅkhya*¹ and the *buddhi-yoga*. In the *Sāṅkhya*, He mentions all the essential characteristics of the soul, and in the *yoga* the method of realising its true condition. In the *buddhi-yoga*, He differentiates the *karma* from the *jñāna* portion, or rather He points out that in the performance of an act, there are involved two factors, namely, (1) the actual bodily labour or work, and (2) the motive with which the work is done. According to the law of *karma* or causation, every act in the general sense produces an effect, and the agent necessarily enjoys or suffers by the result of his act. If this state of things were to continue, that is, if the person who does an act has to enjoy or suffer according to the result of his act, it would be impossible to release ourselves from the bonds of *karma*, unless we could totally abstain from doing any sort of work, which is absolutely impossible as long as our lives last in this world. How then are we to free ourselves from the fetters of *karma*? Śrī Krishna says: "By not desiring the fruits of our acts, not caring for the result at all, by remaining unaffected and indifferent about the success or failure of the acts."

How does this attitude of indifference help us out? How does it break the fetters of *karma* and destroy

1. Name of a school of philosophy : here theoretical knowledge of the nature of the soul.

their binding force ? We must remember that *mukti* is release from the bonds of *karma*. Let *karma* or work produce its result or effect, but what we want is that it should not bind us. This is brought about by giving up all attachment, by turning away all the motives while doing an act. Is it possible to act motivelessly? Yes. We cannot live in this world without doing some act or other. We cannot live for instance without breathing. Though it is impossible to live here without working, it is quite possible to perform acts motivelessly, to act here as a *nispriha* or a *nishkāma* (one without longing or desires) without the slightest attachment. Almost all our involuntary acts are motiveless now. Do we not breathe without any *kāma* or desire? And we must extend this *nishkāmatva* (freedom from desire) to all other acts. Now we shall see how this *nishkāmatva* gives *mukti* or freedom from *karma-bandhas*. Just as an effect is the result of a cause, similarly *bandha* (bondage) is the result of a *saṅga* (attachment). "No act" gives us "No effect", and similarly "No *saṅga*" produces "No bondage". So there can be an act producing an effect but without bondage, and it is always *nissaṅga* (without attachment).

In the *buddhi-yoga* mentioned in the later part of the second chapter, Śrī Krishna differentiates the *karma* portion from the *jñāna* portion in it, and in the third and fourth chapters, He deals with them respectively and in detail. It should be borne in mind that a righteous act always implies a righteous attitude of mind also in the agent, and though they are inseparable and always conjoint, yet there are these two aspects of it. It is these two aspects of *karma* or duty that are being considered in the present and succeeding chapters. It is only in view

of such a slender division that this third chapter is called as *karma-yoga*, and arguments urging the importance and the obligatory performance of duties are given. The next or the fourth chapter is called *jñāna-yoga*, as it contains only an analysis of *karma* and speaks highly of the *jñāna* thereof.

Arjuna Requests Clarification (Stanzas 1 and 2)

When Śrī Krishna had replied to Arjuna's question about the characteristics of the *sthitaprajña*, Arjuna was puzzled as to whether he should or should not act. He remembered that Śrī Krishna had urged him at first to act by all sorts of reasons, and then he heard Śrī Krishna say, *Dūreṇa hi avaram karma* (i.e., work is far inferior); and he was asked to take refuge in *buddhi*, *karma* being far inferior to it. And finally from what Śrī Krishna said of the *sthitaprajña*, Arjuna understood that *samyama* and *nigraha* of the *indriyas* must be mainly practised. So he was bewildered, and he wondered why Śrī Krishna pressed him to fight and then praised to him the excellence of *buddhi* and the eminence of the *sthitaprajña*. So, to clear his doubts, he asked : (1) "If you think, O Krishna, that *buddhi* (i.e., the attitude of mind) is superior to *karma* (or work), then why do you press me to take part in the *ghora karma* (cruel work) of fighting? (2) I am perplexed by Your contradictory statements. So please explain to me the one certain thing, by which I will attain *śreyas* (or spiritual and other welfare)."

One should not suddenly take up Jnana-yoga (Stanzas 3 to 8)

Śrī Bhagavān said :— Ordinarily, the vast majority of men do *karmas* or various kinds of acts, in order to satisfy their various desires and to attain manifold

results, and never think about themselves as souls or about the ideal of soul-realisation. So, if you wish to attain *ātma-sākshātkāra* or soul realisation, you must pass through the following four stages. (1) You must first understand *Sāṅkhya* or the theories regarding the characteristics of the soul, described in the earlier part of the second chapter of the *Gītā*. (2) Next, you must become a *mumukshu* (i.e., one who seeks salvation) by becoming disgusted with the pleasures and sorrows which are the results of *kāmya-karmas* (desire-impelled acts), and by sincerely developing the strong desire to attain the *śreyas* of soul-realisation. (3) Afterwards, you must practise *buddhi-yoga*, as described in the middle part of the second chapter. (4) Finally, you must pass through the stage of *sthitaprajñatva*, when you have to practise the *samyaṁ* (control) and *nigraha* (restraint) of the *indriyas* and spend most of your time in steady contemplation and meditation on the soul or *ātman*, attaching very little importance to the *karma* aspect (or physical aspect) of your actions.

I have already told you, Arjuna, that among those who are eager to attain *moksha* or *śreyas*, there are two types of persons in this world in regard to the philosophy of conduct, namely, (1) the *Sāṅkhyas* who are in the stage of *jñāna-yoga*, that is, the fourth stage described above, and (2) the *yogins* who are in the stage of *buddhi-yoga* or *karma-yoga*, that is, the third stage. By not performing work, you do not attain the state of being unaffected by *karma* (i.e., *naishkarmya* or *jñāna-yoga*). You cannot reach the stage of *jñāna-yoga* by giving up all the actions, without passing through the stage of *buddhi-yoga*. The *Sāṅkhya* knowledge, explained in the early part of the second chapter, is preparatory to the practice of *buddhi-yoga*, described in

the middle part. And *jñāna-yoga* is the most advanced stage of the *yogin*, who has attained *siddhi* in the *buddhi-yoga* or who has become a *sthitaprajña*.

Can any one at any time remain without doing work even for a brief moment? It is your common experience that every one is forced to perform work by the qualities which are born of *prakṛiti* (material Nature), and you cannot avoid them by your mere volition. Supposing that by a violent effort of mental resolution, you are able to restrain your organs of action for a short period, do you think that you have succeeded in your object of becoming actionless? Surely not; for then you will go on thinking about the various objects of the senses. Such a person, who is always given over to unsatisfied desires in his mind and is worried about them at all times, is considered to be foolish in nature and is spoken of as a person of false conduct. If you decide not to perform righteous *karmas*, then the *gunas* of *prakṛiti* (i.e., the 'qualities' of matter) connected with you will compel you to do unrighteous actions or *karmas*.

So the safest course of action for you is this. Control all your senses by your mind first, O Arjuna, and engage all your organs of action in the path of good works ordained by the *śāstras* (or books, of religious authority), without attachment to their fruits, as a loving service to Me, the Lord. Surely you will then attain much better *siddhi* (or success) than by being indolent or lazy without doing any actions at all, even though you are worried always with all the hundred unsatisfied desires of your heart. You should not falsely assume that you have attained the stage of *jñāna-yoga* or *sthitaprajñatva* and decide to become indifferent about the performance of righteous actions.

Only very few men will attain that state, and you cannot consider yourself as one among them without previously achieving success in *karma-yoga*. If you do so and give up the performance of righteous *karmas*, you will ruin yourself, as you will then be neither a *karma-yogin*, nor a *jñāna-yogin*.

Arjuna, considering your state of mind at present, I strongly advise you to perform the work, which is obligatory on you, according to the dictates of reason, on the basis of the *śāstras*. Having heard about this *Sāṅkhya* knowledge, having known the characteristics of soul, you must do work according to the *buddhi-yoga* attitude, and you should not be indifferent to work or give up work altogether, thinking falsely that you have attained the stage of *sthitaprajñatva*. Realise well that even the maintenance of your body would become impossible to you, if you do not work or if you give up all works.

Sacrificial Acts should be Performed (Stanzas 8 to 16)

Since all *karmas* bind the world, except those done on account of *yajñas* (sacrifices or divine worship), the best method is to act as a *mukta-saṅga* (or one who has given up fruits of actions) towards this purpose of performing the *yajñas*. You must do your work, O son of Kuntī, as a sacrifice, becoming free from attachment. Now what are these *yajñas*? These are Divine worships, combined with sacrifices, mental and material. Prajapati or the Lord of Creatures, at the beginning of a cycle, created mankind along with these *yajñas* and said : "Ye propagate and prosper by means of these *yajñas*, which shall be a *kāma-dhenu* (the cow of plenty) or bestower of all desires on you.

Honour and worship the gods with these, and they in turn will respect your demands, and thus by mutually respecting each other, both you and the *devas* (or gods) will attain prosperity. The man that takes up for himself the benefits showered by the *devas* without worshipping them in return is verily a thief". So, even in the matter of the *sarīra-yātra* or sustenance of the body, where inaction is absolutely impossible, our duty is first to offer to God and then eat the remains of the *yajña*. By thus partaking of our food, we are released from all sins, whereas the sinner who omits the *yajña* or worship and cooks for his own sake verily eats *pāpa* (or sin). *Yajña* or Divine worship is the noblest *karma* on earth, and the proper performance of it with disinterested motives as a *mukta-saṅga* (one free from attachment) is the first achievement towards liberation.

I shall now explain to you how the world is bound by action and how the *yajña*, which implies the performance of *karma*, is necessary for the maintenance thereof, and what Prajāpati meant when he said: "*Anena prasaviśhyadhvam*" (Multiply and prosper by this) etc. In other words, I will tell you how the world is being created and maintained by acts of sacrifice. Beings, i.e., bodies with souls, are produced from food, food comes out of rain, rain is obtained by proper worship to the elemental powers by means of *yajñas*, *yajña* is the result of action, or *karma*, and *karma* proceeds from beings, i.e., bodies begotten by the *akshara* or the imperishable soul. Therefore, this all-pervading *brahman* (i.e., *prakṛiti* or the universe) is ever established in *yajña*, for it is only by its performance that rain, food and creatures are produced one after another, and this world is maintained. This is the wheel of the universe, the

chakra, and the sinner that does not follow this *chakra* and do the proper sacrifice, being an *indriyārāma* or a selfish gratifier of his senses, vainly lives his life.

Even the Jnana-Yogin should perform Righteous Actions to set Examples to others (Stanzas 17 to 26)

You see how important it is to perform *karma* and abide by this universal law, and that is the chief reason why the *ātmārāma* or the person that finds delight only in his soul sometimes acts. To him who rejoices in his own *ātman* and is satisfied and contented within it, there is nothing in this world to perform, as he has no interest in anything done or omitted to be done, and as his object or aim does not depend upon any creature of this universe. Therefore, like unto him always, do your duty, being wholly unattached, and by acting in this way, you will reach the Supreme *Purusha* (God). Great men like Janaka attained perfection (*siddhi*) by acting in this way.

Another reason is that you should act, considering at least the preservation of the world, though not of yourself. The world is like a flock of sheep that follows after the leaders, The great men are the examples that they blindly follow. These direct and influence the masses by their noble conduct, and that is the main purpose why I am acting. There is nothing in all the worlds that I must work to get, which I must yet attain; still, why am I performing action? Because, if I cease to act, the whole universe will follow My example, and try to imitate Me. They will ultimately perish, and I will be the author of their confusion and ruin.

On account of this very valid reason of setting a good example to the world, you should work, completely unattached. Your disinterestedness should

not in any way interfere with the proper execution of the work. You should not perform it in a halfhearted manner, considering non-attachment to its result.

Though indifferent about the result, you must be very earnest about the work. You must do it with all care and dexterity, just as any man with strong attachment would do. Taking into consideration the importance of action, let no man unsettle the mind of (the ignorant) those that are attached to action. This *buddhi-bedha* (unsettling of the mind) will only lead to cessation of activity or indolence on the part of the ignorant. Rather, the wise man should render all actions attractive and pleasing by doing them with cleverness and skill.

Understand well the Part Played by Nature, and Act (Stanzas 27 to 35)

While thus acting, it is only the *ahankārin* and *mūḍha* (i.e., he whose soul is bewildered by egoism) that thinks that he is the author of all acts which in reality belong to the *prakṛiti-guṇas* (or 'qualities of matter'). The wise man that knows the reality or the truth about the characteristics of the *prakṛiti-guṇas*, simply thinks that the *guṇas* are working according to their nature, and so thinking, leaves off the mistaken notion of his being their author and does not get attached. Only the unlearned that do not know the characteristics of the *prakṛiti-guṇas* feel an attachment towards the workings of the *guṇas*. The wise man that knows this perfectly should not unsettle the mind of the person whose knowledge about it is only imperfect.

To sum up, I shall tell you briefly how to act. Dedicating all actions to Me, with your thoughts fixed

upon the *ātman* or soul, and being a *nirāśis* and a *nirmama* (one without desires and the sense of possession), undertake this fight, casting aside all fear. This is My *mata* (decided opinion, doctrine or teaching), and persons who follow it, or have faith in it, or do not cry it down, even they get released from the bonds of action, obtain *karma-vimochana*. But those who do not believe and are against this teaching of Mine will go to destruction by becoming *sarva-jñāna-vimūdhāḥ*, that is, completely ignorant and senseless.

For a beginner and an ignorant person to give up all *karmas* and sit in meditation is very dangerous, for tremendous is the force of *prakṛiti* (physical nature), even though it acts in a *jñānin*. All beings follow after nature, and of what use is coercion? What a man should first attempt is not to come under the sway of *rāga-dvesha* (desire and hate), as you at present have come. They are his eternal enemies. They always concern some sense-objects; and their seat is in the senses. It is only when a person sees, hears or thinks of a certain thing that he desires or hates it. Therefore, the dwelling place of *rāga-dvesha* is the senses. Try to throw off their control by constant practice. It is always safe for a person to strive for subduing his passions of *rāga* and *dvesha*, (like and dislike), while being fully engaged in the performance of all work enjoined by his duties.

Suddenly to relinquish one's own *dharma*s, even though they may seem inferior, in order to take up the superior practices of another, is really very dangerous. It is like struggling for a height without the fitness to reach it, and the result would be vain, fruitless and ruinous. Therefore, even though one's duties or *dharma*s may be of a secondary order, let no one give

them up to take up better or more important ones. For death in doing *svadharma* (one's own duties) is far *śreyaskara* (praiseworthy and conducive to the welfare of the soul), while *paradharma* or the duty of another is always a source of danger and never suitable, even though performed with utmost skill and care.

**The roots of sin—desire and anger
(Stanzas 36 to 43)**

When Śrī Krishna thus answered Arjuna's last question about why He had urged him to undertake this cruel work of war and how to attain *śreyas*, Arjuna perceived the rationale of Śrī Krishna's arguments. But he wondered how, when things were so clear, any man should induce himself to persist in evil ways. So he prayed to the Lord to tell him what prompted even a wise man to commit sins in spite of himself, even against his will, or after deciding, "I will not hereafter indulge madly in sense-pleasures." What was it that compelled him to be satisfying sense-pleasures again and again in his life, as if he were moved by a mechanical force?

Śrī Krishna then enlightened Arjuna in the following words :

O Arjuna! It is true that a sensible man sincerely begins to practise *jñāna-yoga* for the attainment of soul-realisation. But since he is bound by his everchanging body, he is constantly attacked by two powerful enemies, *kāma* and *krodha* (passion and anger). *Kāma* is the result of *rajoguna*. Having become powerful on account of *vāsanās* or impressions existing from immemorial time, it compels him to indulge again and again in sense-pleasures. The more he indulges in them, the greater will be his desire to indulge in them again. But sometimes he cannot indulge in them on account of adverse circumstances; then that very same *kāma* or

passion becomes converted into *krodha* or anger against all those persons, who, he mistakenly thinks, are responsible for preventing the satisfaction of his desires. And this *krodha* compels him to do cruel deeds to injure them.

Now you may get a doubt as to whether this *kāma*, followed by *krodha*, destroys the nature of the soul itself. No, not at all; they only veil the natural *jñāna* or pure knowledge of men and animals, in the same manner as smoke surrounds fire, dirt darkens the brilliance of the mirror and the sac envelops the embryo in the womb. The smoke, the dirt and the sac do not destroy the fire, the mirror and the embryo, but only prevent them for a time from exhibiting their natural qualities. Similarly, *kāma*, followed by *krodha*, superficially checks the natural glow of the essential nature of the soul as knowledge and bliss.

O Arjuna! understand this point clearly. The substance of the soul is *jñāna*, and it also possesses *jñāna* as its quality, just as the sun is essentially light and also spreads light in all directions in vast space. But its enemy, *kāma*, followed by *krodha*, which may be compared to the insatiable flame, induces man to desire the enjoyment of sense-objects which are not available to him, and to desire more and more sense enjoyment from those objects which are available to him even after they are completely used up. These foreign desires only cover the *jñāna* of the soul during these periods of their influence, but they do not destroy the essential nature of the soul.

Do you know how this *kāma*, followed by *krodha*, invisibly and mightily acts upon the pure soul? It takes its firm seat in the senses, the mind and the intellect of

man, and through them completely envelops the pure *jñāna* of the embodied soul. It causes various delusions to the soul of man, does not allow him to realise his own nature and completely diverts his inclinations towards sense-objects. There fore, *kāma* is a real enemy, particularly to a seeker for salvation who has just started on *jñāna-yoga* (the path of wisdom and meditation). It will develop in him sinful desires to enjoy sense-objects and prevent the realisation of his soul-knowledge.

Being an embodied being, you have now to work only through your senses, and the only alternative to slavery to *kāma* is that you should first control your senses, then kill this sinful destroyer of your wisdom and discrimination, and finally discharge your duties in the *buddhi-yoga* path, giving up completely your attachment to the results of your actions. If you do not slay this *kāma* which is now enveloping your mind, you will forget that the essential nature of your soul is made up of knowledge and lose all chances of selfrealisation. While pursuing the *buddhi-yoga* path, you should always be watchful about the manifold ways in which your *kāma* attacks your *antahkarana*¹ visibly and invisibly.

It is true that in the case of the vast majority of human beings their senses hinder them from gaining soul-knowledge, and it is the same with you also. Suppose you conquer your senses, then your *manas* becomes active in desiring various kinds of pleasures and becomes more powerful than the senses in obstructing soul-knowledge. In case you succeed in controlling the *manas* and its desires to enjoy

1. The internal organ of sense which in Indian psychology is the same as the *manas* or the faculty of attention.

varieties of objects, your intellect gets polluted and begins to think about the modes of pleasures of sense-objects as well as the methods to attain them, overpowering the *manas* and the senses at the same time. So the intellect is a more powerful factor than the *manas* and the senses in preventing the *mumukshu* (or seeker after salvation) from attaining soul-knowledge. Finally, when you succeed in purifying your intellect also from the clutches of varied plans to procure and enjoy sense-objects, *kāma*, followed by *krodha*, in the form of *vasanas* or potential mental impressions established in hundreds of past lives, will sprout up and assert themselves again in all your faculties, namely, intellect, *manas* and the senses.

So the *vāsanās* of *kāma* and *krodha* are the most difficult obstacles, which do not allow you to pursue *jñāna-yoga* and attain success in soul-realisation. O valiant Arjuna! having realised well that the *kāma-vāsanās* are more powerful than even your *buddhi*, you must rest your mind upon the strength of your soul, develop your mighty will-power and persist in self-control and *buddhi-yoga* till you become a *sthita-prajña*, from which state you can realise your soul easily. You must conquer at every step your powerful and cruel enemy, *kāma* followed by *krodha*. It will attack you in various stages during the course of your life almost every day in such a manner that you will feel compelled to give up your ideals of *jñāna-yoga*. If you allow your will to get weak and you do not persist in this holy attempt till the end, it will be impossible for you to conquer this powerful *kāma*, and you will not attain the goal at all in this life.



CHAPTER IV

JNANA-YOGA (THE DISCIPLINE OF WISDOM)

Introduction:

Śrī Krishna taught in the third chapter that man, being an embodied soul, has to perform the necessary *karmas* in order that he may live and earn his live lihood. That is, he has to work for the satisfaction of his primary and secondary wants. When he develops the *mumukshu's* attitude, he should not falsely think that he can give up work, because it is not possible for one to jump on to the stage of *jñāna-yoga* or *naish-karmya* (state of actionlessness) without performing one's allotted duties. Even after he chooses the path of *jñāna-yoga* seriously, the *mumukshu* (or seeker after salvation) has to perform all his *kartavya-karmas* (allotted duties) with the *buddhi-yoga* attitude, namely, that he is not the doer and that therefore he should not be attached to the fruits of his actions. Can he give up all *karmas* atleast after he attains success in *jñāna-yoga*, in which stage *karmas* have no value to him? No, he cannot do so ; he must perform righteous actions for the promotion of the welfare of society and to set a good example to the majority of men who follow him.

Now, in the fourth chapter, Arjuna proceeds to learn about the tradition of *karma-yoga*, the secrets of the *avatāras* or incarnations of God, the fact that *karma-yoga* is really different from *jñāna-yoga*, the nature and divisions of *karma-yoga* and finally the excellence of the *jñāna* factor in *karma-yoga*.

The Tradition of Karma—yoga (Stanzas 1 to 3)

Śrī Krishna said to Arjuna: O Arjuna! Do not think that I am now teaching you this *karma-yoga* as a new path in order to induce you to fight in this impending battle at a time, when being perplexed in your mind, you have decided not to fight. This *yoga*, which is now a secret, has an ancient tradition. In order that the men of the world also may attain *śreyas* or soul-realisation, I taught this sacred *yoga* to Vivasvat; Vivasvat taught it to Manu; and Manu gave it to Ikshvāku. Many royal sages of old came to know of this teaching, as it was handed down traditionally from generation to generation. But later, on account of lack of disciples as the years went by, the knowledge of this *yoga* disappeared from our land; and it has now become a closed secret known only to Me.

Now you have surrendered to Me and become a disciple, and you are also My friend. You are now in the grip of sorrow and confused in your mind about your duty as to whether to fight or not. You are perplexed in your mind, overpowered by circumstances. So I have started teaching you this excellent *yoga*, which is now a secret, correctly, clearly and in detail. This is the best *yoga* for you, as it enlightens you about your duty in this critical situation and aids you to attain *śreyas*. As this *yoga* is now a great secret, no one else but Myself, the Lord, can explain it in detail to you and to the men of the world again on this occasion.

'Avatāras' or Incarnations (Stanzas 4 to 12)

Arjuna at this stage put a question to Śrī Krishna in order to clear a doubt that suddenly flashed in his mind: "O Krishna! Vivasvat was born long, long ago, and You

were born recently in a period when I was also born. But You say now that You taught this *yoga* to Vivasvat who did not live after You were born. How can I believe this contradictory statement which is against the laws of Nature? So kindly explain to me clearly the following points. (1) Are You, the great invisible God, full of auspicious qualities, born again and again like us, human beings, though You are free from the bondage of *karma*? (2) Is the body of God (called Śrī Rama or Śrī Krishna) real like our human bodies? (3) Which are the elements that compose Your body? Are they different from those in the ordinary human bodies? (4) At what times do You, O God! take human bodies? (5) Why do You take such bodies, and what are the kinds of duties discharged by You then?"

Śrī Krishna replied in the following words : O Arjuna! Both of us had several births, one after another. They are all over and we have now taken a new birth. But the difference between us is that I know the details of all My previous births; and it is not possible for you now to know about the fact that you have been born several times previously and also about the details of your life in those periods.

My *avatarās* or births in the material world are as real as your birth is now. It is true that My real *svarūpa* (essential nature) is such that I am unborn, imperishable, and unchangeable. It is also true that I am the Lord of all creatures, including animals, men and the gods, and that I am not under the clutches of *karma*. Have I not declared in the *Vedas* that I voluntarily assume various heavenly and divine bodies in order to carry out My wonderful work of creation, preservation and destruction of this universe with manifold varieties?

In the same manner, according to My own eternal will and not by any external force of *karma*, I get into My own *prakṛiti* and am born as a human being through My wonderful power. I do not give up My divine qualities, even when I have assumed this human birth.

You are curious to know when God incarnates generally in the world, even though He may do so at any time according to His own divine will. O Bhārata! I will be born as an *avatāra* in the world, whenever there is decline of righteousness and there is rise of unrighteousness everywhere. There is no limitation as to when I should incarnate Myself in the world, as I will incarnate in this world according to My sweet will and pleasure, with the object of raising humanity to higher moral levels, especially when there is degeneration in the moral standards of all the members of human societies.

How do I promote the welfare of human beings during the periods of My *avatāras* amidst living creatures? I will protect the saints from the oppressions of tyrants, and destroy the sinful men, the evil-doers and the wicked who cause great miseries to the members of society. I do incarnate Myself again and again in every age in order to re-establish *dharma* or righteousness among the different nations of the world.

Now, know from Me the great benefit you or any human being will derive by hearing, reflecting and meditating upon My great auspicious qualities and noble deeds which I exhibit during my *avatāras*. He who knows and believes about the circumstances, the aspects and characteristics of My divine births as well as of My achievements during the special periods of My

avatāras in the history of humanity, does not happen to be born again when he leaves this body. Surely he comes to Me, O Arjuna!

Many sages who know that I, the Lord of all beings, am always working for the welfare of the universe, and who understand My purpose truly, being rid of *rāga*, *bhaya* and *krodha* (desire, dread and anger) and always thinking and relying upon Me—reach My *bhāva* or state, purified by *jñāna-tapas* (the austerity of wisdom) or *Brahma-jñāna*¹ (knowledge of God). Not only by this *jñāna-tapas*, but by whatsoever means men may come to Me, I accordingly welcome them, because all the different paths are Mine and they lead to Me alone. It is only the persons who long for the fruit of their actions, that worship the inferior deities, and in this world of men, the *siddhis* that are born of *karma* (the fruits of work) are speedily realised by them.

Work as God works (Stanzas 13 to 15)

With regard to the work that a person ought to do in order to realise his ends, I have created four *varnas* or castes among men, according to their *guna-karmas* or tendencies for work. And though I am the author of these *varnas*, know Me to be really actionless and imperishable (*akartarām avyayam*). I am *avyaya* or imperishable, because these *karmas* cannot in any way affect Me, and I am *akartā* or non-doer, because I have no desire for the results of the act. And he who understands this, My true nature, will reform himself accordingly and will not be bound by his actions. The ancients, like Vivasvat and Manu, who desired *moksha*,

1. Compare the Vedic statement: *Tasya dhīrah pariṇanti yonim*. (The heroic ones know His source.)

performed their *karmas* after having acquired this knowledge. Therefore it behoves you also to act now, as they did in ancient days.

'Karma' and 'Akarma' (Stanzas 16 to 18)

Now, let us examine the true nature of *karma* and see what *karma* and *akarma* mean exactly. Even intelligent men are puzzled at them and their wisdom gets confounded. But I will clearly tell you what they are, and having known them, you will get free from all sin.

The nature of *karma* is very difficult to understand. There are three factors to know in this connection, namely, *karma*, *akarma* and *vikarma*. Of these, *vikarma* or *vividha-karma* (various kinds of actions) stands for only subsidiary and incidental actions, and comes under *karma* proper. Only it is necessary to know the principal and the subsidiary portions of a work. And what is *akarma*? It does not mean mere inaction or indolence. It means *jñāna*. It signifies the apparent actionlessness of the bodily organs and indicates the attitude of the *buddhi* (intelligence). So *karma* indicates the activity of the body, while *akarma* or *jñāna* pertains to the activity of the *buddhi*. The wise man will unite both these, *karma* and *akarma*, in every one of his functions. He must mingle action with knowledge, and vice versa. He who sees *karma* in *akarma* and *akarma* in *karma*, is the *buddhimān* (the intelligent one), he is the *yukta*, or the fit one for *moksha*, he is one that has performed all duties. The effect of this mixing up is liberation or freedom for the soul.

Now, what is this *akarma* or *jñāna*? It is the renunciation of all *sañkalpas* (or the mouldings of desires) and absolute non-attachment to the fruit in

everyone of one's exertions and efforts. This is *jñāna*. It acts like fire and burns up all sorts of actions; that is, it destroys completely the binding power of the *karmas* and liberates the doer, who is then called a *pandita* (a man of knowledge) by the wise. Therefore, the wise man that is devoid of attachment to the fruits of his actions, is consequently a *nitya-tripta* and *nirās-ṛaya* or ever self-contented and self-reliant, though he may be plunged amidst *karmas*. They have no power over him, as if he never did them at all. Though ostensibly working, he is inwardly cultivating *jñāna*. *Naiva kiñchit kuroti sah*—He does not do anything at all. He does not sin, does not get bound, and the binding effects of his actions are destroyed.

The man that has no desire or expectations (*nirāśis*), whose mind and thoughts are well-controlled (*yata-chittātman*) and who has no sort of attachment, does not commit any sin by acting merely through his bodily organs. (*Kurvan nāpnoti kilbishaṁ*. He does not get stained by sin by acting). He who is satisfied with whatever comes to him spontaneously, who is a *dvandvātita*, that is one who has risen above the pairs of opposites and can endure pleasure and pain, heat and cold etc., equally with a balanced mind, who is a *vimatsara*, that is, one exempt from malice, rancour or envy, who remains the same in success and failure, him the *karmas* cannot bind. (*Kritvāpi na nibhadyate*. He is not bound, even though he works). He whose attachment is dead and who consequently is free, whose thoughts are always guided by *jñāna*, who works only for *yajñas* (divine worship), his *karmas* are all completely destroyed (*saṁagramaṁ pravṛṇyate*). The *karmas* are completely

destroyed only for him who acts in the above-mentioned way, doing everything as a *yajña*, converting work into worship.

'Types of 'yajñas' (Stanzas 24 to 33)

Well, what are the various kinds of *yajñas* that a man can perform? (1) First, there is the *yajña* of *Brahma-karma* (God-rite) where the agent sees *Brahman* or God, and nothing else in his actions. To him, the oblation or the *havis*, the *agni* (fire), the *homa* (the sacrificial rite), himself and everything appear only as *Brahman*. His whole *jñāna* is so intensely merged in *Brahman*, and his *samdāhi*¹ is so deep that in every act of his, he is conscious only of *Brahman* and nothing else. This highest spiritual contemplation makes him see *Brahman* in every place, everything and every act. Such a one, working only for worship, reaches *Brahman*. (2) Some sacrificers perform *yajñas* (or sacrifices) to the gods without desiring any fruit. (3) Others do the *yajñas* first and finally consecrate them to *Brahman*. (4) Some others perform the *yajña* of *samyama* (worship through self-control), by controlling the senses in the presence of the sense-objects. (5) Yet others remove the sense-objects from their senses altogether and practise *samyama*. (6) Some perform the *yajña* of *āmasamyama-yoga* (the discipline of controlling the self) where, after acquiring *jñāna*, they offer as sacrifices all the functions of their senses and their vital activities. That is, they regulate all their actions in such a way as to subdue completely their *manas*. (7) Many perform the *yajña* of charity, *tapas* (penance) meditation, the study of the holy scriptures and the acquisition of *jñāna* with proper control over themselves and with well observed vows. (8) Some do the *yajña* of

1. State of mystical union with God.

prāṇāyāma by resorting to the *hathayoga*¹ practices of *rechaka* (exhalation), *pūraka* (inhalation), and *kumbhaka* (retention of breath) with a properly regulated diet.

These are the various kinds of *yajñas*, by which people strive to wash off their sins and attain freedom. Persons who prepare food for offering in the *yajñas*, and eat the remains thereof, reach the everlasting *Brahman*. To the man who does not exert and sacrifice, there is no welfare in this world; how can he expect happiness in the next world? *yajña* means sacrifice, worship and ceremonies. Unless a man gives up a little part of his selfishness, unless he practises some self-abnegation, he cannot be happy in this world. Even here we need selflessness or self-sacrifice to bring us an amount of joy and consolation. When such is the case with this world, how much more *yajña* is necessary to enjoy bliss in the other world?

Thus, many are the *yajñas* that are mentioned in the *Vedas* as means to attain the soul. All these are born of *karma*. And when you get the knowledge about these *yajñas*, you will soon obtain emancipation. Though all these lead to salvation, the *jñānamaya* ones or those in which knowledge about God prevails, are far superior to those that are *dravyamaya*, that is, those in which wealth plays an important part, for all *karmas*, after all, only lead to *jñāna* and end therein.

The Need for a 'Guru' (Stanzas 34 to 35)

Having known the necessity of *karma* and the importance of *jñāna*, listen now as to how you should

1. A severe course of training for the body and mind to attain the state of mystical union with God. Regulating inhalation and exhalation and practising retention of breath form part of this training.

receive this *jñāna* from your *gurus*. You must go to those who have wisdom and are *tatva-darśins* or the actual seers of truth, fall at their feet with humility, and after worshipping and serving them well, must humbly beg of them to give you instruction. They will teach you their wisdom, after acquiring which, you will not again get any delusions as you have at present about waging this war. And this wisdom will help you to see all beings in yourself and in Me. That is, you will perceive that all souls, when divested of their material clothing, resemble your own self and Myself.

Excellence of Jnana (Stanzas 36 to 42)

I will now speak of the excellence of this *jñāna* and its marvellous power of giving salvation. Even though you may be the worst of sinners, plunged in an ocean of sin, it will serve you as a boat to cross this mighty ocean of *samsāra* (worldly life). Just as a blazing flame burns to ashes a forest, similarly this fire of wisdom reduces to ashes all the effects of our actions. There is nothing in this world so purifying as *jñāna* to cleanse us of all sin; and it will come of itself in course of time to the *yoga-samsiddha* or the *karma-yogin* that has attained perfection.

Three things are necessary, for getting this *jñāna*, namely, (1) *shraddhā* or absolute faith in the instruction given by the *guru*, (2) *taparatā*, complete devotion to the task of getting it, and (3) control over the senses. "When *jñāna* is obtained, it soon leads to *parā sānti* or supreme peace. The man devoid of wisdom, the man without faith and the man full of doubts will never get free. The doubting man will find no happiness either in this world or the next. Whereas the man who performs *karma-yoga*, has his doubts destroyed by his *jñāna*

and gets the *vyavasāyātmikā buddhi* (an intellect which is resolute) and is an *ātmavān*, that is, constantly conscious of his *ātman*, he does not fall a victim to the bondage of *karma*; him it cannot bind; Therefore, having cut asunder this doubt of yours, born of *ajñāna* (ignorance) which still remains in your heart, with the sword of *jñāna*, rise and perform *karma-yoga*, rise!



CHAPTER V

KARMA-SANNYASA-YOGA (RENUNCIATION OF WORKS)

Introduction :

In the third chapter, Śrī Krishna mentioned the importance of and the reasons for doing *karma*. He began by mentioning the impossibility of remaining in this world without doing some *karma* or other; then, He showed how the whole universe rested in *yajña*, which had *karma* for its basis; He stated the reason why perfect *jñānis* like Janaka were doing their *karmas*, namely, for the sake of preservation of the world and to set a good example to the ignorant. He further instructed Arjuna that the best method of action is to perform one's duties, leaving off all *ahaṅkāra*, and simply thinking that *guṇā guṇeshu vartante*, that in all our actions only the 'qualities' of matter act and react with one another. Or one may act, dedicating all actions to God. When Arjuna asked Him why men went astray even against their will, Śrī Krishna pointed out to him the demons that corrupted them, namely, *kāma* and *krodha*.

In the fourth chapter, Śrī Krishna disclosed to Arjuna His Divinity and enlightened him about the secret of His incarnation, as if with a view to make Arjuna pay careful attention to what He was about to say, and then proceeded to analyse *karma* into *karma* or the work portion and *akarma* or the non-work or the *jñāna* portion. Next, He declared the various *yajña-karmas* that seekers after salvation do to reach the eternal *Brahman*. And finally He laid very great stress on the excellence of *jñāna* and the importance of *śraddha* (faith).

Arjuna is Confused Again (Stanza 1)

Arjuna, though greatly enlightened by Śrī Krishna's discourse about the nature of *karma* and *jñāna*, was still not yet clear of his confusion. While Śrī Krishna was explaining to him all this, he must have seen how the maintenance of the world depended on *karma* alone, and he must have made up his mind about it accordingly. But later on, when Śrī Krishna analysed *karma* and showed to him the importance and excellence of the *jñāna* contained therein, his doubts again arose. And so he put the same question that he put at the end of the second chapter once again. He said : "You praise the renunciation of actions and again the performance of *karma-yoga*. Tell me decisively which of these two is better." When putting this question, he must have found that in many of the *yajña-karmas* that were mentioned, the restraint of the senses and meditation on the self were greatly extolled, and he must have remembered that Śrī Krishna had said that the *jñānamaya-yajñas* (sacrifices of 'knowledge') were superior to the

dravyamaya ones (sacrifices of materials). So Arjuna was still at a loss to know whether he was to do the cruel act of fighting in the war or to renounce all action and sit engaged in some *jñānamaya-yajña*, such as contemplation on the Supreme Being, in order to reach the highest bliss. He had not yet seen that for a beginner the renunciation of actions was purely a mental operation, and must not interfere with the performance of his duties.

Karma-Sannyasa and Karma-Yoga (Stanzas 2 to 12)

Śrī Krishna answered his question thus:- Both *sannyasa* (renunciation) and *yoga* (action) lead to supreme bliss, but of the two, *karma-yoga* is surely the better. I will tell you why the *karma-yogin* who acts neither hating nor craving for anything in this world, as a *nirvāṇa* (one free from the pairs of opposites), easily obtains freedom from bondage, and you can deem him to be a *nitya-sannyāsin*. Though the *karma-yogin* is a man who performs his duties and rites, and the *sannyāsin* is a man who has given up action and is always intently meditating upon the *ātman*, yet if the former acts as a *nispriha* (with utter disinterestedness) unaffected by the *dvandvas* or pairs of opposites like pleasure and pain, success and failure etc., he can be considered to be equal to one who is always a *sannyāsin*. It is only the ignorant that will say that *Sāṅkhya* or *sannyāsa* is different from *yoga*. The man who follows either path to the end reaches the same goal. Though in method they differ, in result they are one, and the man who knows this is the proper seer.

Only *sannyāsa* (renunciation) is very difficult to attain without *yoga* (action), and persons who suddenly

give up all *karmas* and begin to practise *jñāna-yoga* will find tremendous obstacles in their way. Whereas he who practises *karma-yoga* and meditation together realises the soul easier and sooner. Such a *yoga-yukta* (one devoted to *yoga*), who gradually controls the senses and the *manas* and has attained to mental purity and equality of vision of the self in all, though he may work, is not tainted. Such a *yukta* or *karma-yogin* who has known the reality of the things, should think that, while performing actions like seeing, hearing, touching and other acts of the human body, that he is not their doer and that merely the senses are responding to the sense-objects. He should dedicate or ascribe all his actions to *brahman* (the universe of matter) and do them, leaving off *saṅga* or attachment.

Then *papa* or bondage will not stick to him like the water on a lotus leaf. *Yogins* act with the mere organs of their body, leaving off all desire for attaining *ātma-suddhi* or self-purification. That is, they will not throw themselves into or feel concerned about any of their acts. For the sake of such purification *yogins* work with their body, *manas*, intellect, and senses devoid of a feeling of possession, leaving off all desires. By acting thus, the *yukta* or the fit one attains everlasting peace. But the *ayukta* or he who works impelled by desire, clings to the fruit of his acts and reaps bondage. So this is the point to remember, namely, that you must practise renunciation in the *manas*, while automatically doing *karmas* with the senses. You must ever think, "I am doing nothing at all."

Stages in Karma-yoga (Stanzas 13 to 17)

He is said to be a *vasin* who by constant practice has brought his senses under his sway, renouncing all their *karmas* by his *manas*, and remains in happiness in the city of nine gates (i.e., body), in no way interfering with its activities. Becoming independent, he remains happy, though he may dwell in the body, by not doing anything, and by not causing the body to act for his sake. He then becomes the lord in the body or the *prabhu*. No longer has any of the organs of the body any power over him. He is above all subserviency to the body. In this stage, he does not do or care for the *karmas* of the world, *karma-phalas* or *kartṛtva*. He is nothing but himself in his own true nature. Here all *pravṛtti* is due to *svabhāva*, and it is Nature that works. From *prabhu*, he becomes a *vibhu* or *sarvajña* (one who knows all things), as his *jñāna* develops. He becomes omniscient. Now he becomes indifferent about the good and the bad, goes beyond virtue and vice, and has the fullest enlightenment.

I have already said that *jñāna* (knowledge) is enveloped by *ajñāna* (ignorance) and that is why beings fall under delusion. For those who, as I have pointed out, begin to renounce their actions at first mentally, then gradually become *vasins* and *prabhus*, attain *jñāna* and end their delusion — for them this *jñāna* shines as the sun and helps in the realisation of the Supreme. That is, with this *jñāna*, they realise *Brahman*. Then, with their *buddhi* and *ātman* intent upon That and wholly devoted to That, they reach the place whence there is no return, all their sins having been consumed by the fire of wisdom.

The Excellence of the Samatva-bhava and Sasvata Sukha of the Brahma-yoga-yukta (Stanzas 18 to 25)

Now hear the effects of this *jñāna* upon a person. *jñāna* is a great leveller, and one having it acquires equality of outlook. He will regard alike the soul in the learned and polished Brahmin, the cow, the elephant, the dog and the *chandāla*. *Brahman* or *ātman* is spotless and alike everywhere, and so the *jñānin*, whose mind constantly dwells on the *Brahman*, regards everything alike, seeing only the *ātman* everywhere. By such a one, even when living in this world, worldly bondage is conquered. The conquest of the world is the reward of the *manas* that is well-settled. This regarding alike is the summit of all wisdom. A man possessed of such a mind will be a *sthira-buddhi* (of firm conviction) and *asammūḍha* (undeluded), and being a *Brahmavit* (a God-knower), ever established in *Brahman*, he will not be shaken when encountering the highest calamity or the greatest rapture. *Brahman* alone is true to him and nothing else. Whatever joy a man finds in his mind, when he is unattached to external objects, that joy the *Brahma-yoga-yukta* (one steady in application to the quest after God) enjoys permanently. The *brahmānanda* (divine bliss) that he gets does not decay.

There are three kinds of pleasure in the world : (1) the pleasure of the senses, that is impermanent and so very inferior; (2) the happiness of the *yogin* in *samādhi*, when his mind is unattached to the external sense-objects—(this pleasure is very great when compared to the pleasure of the senses, but it goes away after the *yogin* returns from his *samādhi*); and (3) the bliss of the *Brahma-yoga-yukta* which is like the above, but always permanent.

The pleasure belonging to the first class, that is, the worldly enjoyments born of the contacts of senses, are truly a source of pain. They are very short lived, and so the wise man should not take delight in them. The really happy person is the man who can bear the *vega* or the impact of desire and anger, while alive in this body. He is the fit one for real happiness. The *yogin* who is a *Brahmabhūta*, that is, he who finds happiness, joy and wisdom in his own *ātman* within, reaches the bliss of the soul. This state is attained by the *rishis* or seers who have destroyed all sins and impurities, who are above the pairs of opposites as pleasure and pain, who are self-controlled and are ever intent upon the welfare of all creatures. For the self-controlled ones who are devoid of passion and anger and who have well controlled their thoughts and have attained to *ātma-jñāna*, this supreme experience of *Brahma-nirvāna* (bliss of the *Brahman*) is very near.

Raja-yoga (Stanzas 26 to 29)

I will now tell you how to control the mind and be free from desire and anger through the practice of concentration and meditation, *rājayoga*. It briefly consists in renouncing all the external contacts, steadily gazing between the eyebrows, equalizing the inhalation and exhalation of breath, properly controlling the senses, *manas* and *buddhi*, renouncing all feelings of desire, dread and anger, and having final emancipation from recurring births and deaths as one's aim. The sage who thus practises is ever free. And he who does this *yoga*, having known Me as the enjoyer of all *yajñas* and *tapas* (austerities), the Supreme Lord of all the universe and as the friend and well wisher of all beings—he attains supreme peace.

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CHAPTER VI

ATMA SAMYAMA YOGA

Introduction :

The fifth chapter deals with topics from the third and the fourth. In the third the importance of and reasons for doing *karmas* were mentioned, in the fourth the analysis of *karma* and the excellence of *jñāna* were set forth, and in the fifth the importance of their combination is clearly set out. It is pointed out how a person should allow his senses to work and what the real meaning of *karma* and *sannyāsa* (renunciation of actions) is to a beginner like Arjuna. Sri Krishna says that *yogins* work for self-realisation, allowing their senses, *manas* and *buddhi*, to function, but without coming under their sway. They renounce their actions only in their *manas*.

That is, they work without selfish motives. This is the proper course for every one to adopt. That is, one must do whatever his duty enjoins him to do and detach himself mentally from his acts. This practice, Sri Krishna says, will gradually lead to the purification of the soul. The renunciation of action at the very beginning is very dangerous and arises from ignorance. So, in the fifth chapter, Sri Krishna sets out the difficulty of *sannyāsa* (renunciation) pure and simple, and the ease with which *karma-yoga* can be practised; He points out that both lead to the same goal. He then shows how the *yogin* should act to become a *vaśin*, *prabhu* and *vibhu* and praises the *samatva* (equality of vision) and *sukham* (bliss) of the *Brahmayoga-yukta*. Lastly, the method of *rājayoga*, whereby the *manas* can be stilled and *samatva* reached, is succinctly taught.

In the sixth chapter, Arjuna is instructed as to how long a person must perform his *karmas* and when he can renounce them, and also the method of practising *dhyāna-yoga* or the *yoga* of contemplation. Śrī Krishna opens this discourse by explaining who is a *sannyāsīn* at the beginning.

Who is a Yogin and a *sannyāsīn* ? (Stanzas 2 to 4)

The man who performs his duties without attachment to the fruits, he is both a *yogin* and a *sannyāsīn*; and not he who has given up all actions and rituals and touches not fire¹. Know that *sannyāsa* does not mean the renunciation of duties, but means *karma-yoga*, and that to be a *karma-yogin*, it is absolutely essential to give up all *sañkalpas* (resolutions impelled by desire). It is impossible to be a *yogin* until all the *sañkalpas* are gone. The performance of duties devoid of desire is necessary for the beginner who wants to rise in *yoga*. But for the man who is risen in *yoga* and it an adept, the cessation of *karmas* greatly helps his progress. *Karmas*, when properly done, greatly help the *sādhaka* (the aspirant who has undertaken a course of discipline), to attain *jñāna*, and when *jñāna* is reached, the *karmas* may be renounced with advantage. This can be done only when one has become *yogārūḍha* (risen in *yoga*). A man is a *yogārūḍha* when he has no inclination for sense-objects or for *karmas*, and when he has renounced all *sañkalpas* or fanciful desires, that is, when he has risen above all desires and *karmas*.

1. Fire here is symbolic of religious rituals in general, as Vedic rites largely consist of making oblations into fire.

A Man is his own Friend or Enemy (Stanzas 5 to 10)

How can a man arrive at this stage? He can do so only by the power of the mighty will. One should raise oneself by the power of one's will and not allow oneself to go down. A man is his own friend or enemy. If he determines with his own will to rise in yoga, no power on earth can defeat him. He becomes his own friend, when with a strong will he conquers his lower nature. But if the will acts as a foe, no power can lift him up. Then he is his own enemy, and allows his lower nature to get the better of him. The whole thing consists in using the will and training the *manas*. The man whose *manas* is subdued and calm and peaceful, enjoys perfect *samatva*, being well-balanced in cold and heat, pleasure and pain and honour and dishonour. The man who is satisfied with knowledge of the soul and its details, whose *manas* is steady and senses are controlled, to whom mud and gold are the same, he is the *yukta* or proper one for yoga. *Samabuddhi* (equality of mind) is very important. Friend, foe, relation, acquaintance, sinner, saint, all must be alike to the *yogin*. This *samatva* is what we should aim at, and our whole exertion should be to get this *samatva* by subduing the mind.

Aids to Success in Yoga (Stanzas 11 to 19)

How to get this *samatva*? This is the process. The *yogin* should incessantly try to subdue his *manas* and constantly exert himself, remaining alone in a retired and solitary place, controlling his thoughts and giving up all attachments and hopes. Choosing a pure spot and placing himself upon a firm seat which is neither too high nor too low, with his cloth, deer skin and *kuśa* grass spread one over the other, and stopping all the

activities of the mind and the senses, and concentrating his attention, he should practise *yoga* for self-purification. He should sit erect, with his body, neck and head in a line; he should be steady, not moving; and he should firmly fix his gaze on the tip of his nose without casting glances in all directions.

While he is practising *yoga*, firmly sitting on his seat, his disposition should be marked by great peacefulness, and he should have no fear in his mind. During this period, he should observe well the vow of celibacy and hold under his control his faculty of attention. While he is engaged in the practice of *yoga*, he should have Me in his mind and look upon Me as his supreme support. If the *yogin* applies himself constantly to the practice of *yoga* in this manner, his mind becomes well-controlled, and he attains that peace, which is the supreme perfection of the bliss of soul-salvation and is enduringly established in Me.

But realise well that this *yoga* is not possible to the person who eats too much, nor to him who does not eat at all. It is not also possible to him who is addicted to too much sleep, nor surely to him who plays too much when he is awake. *Yoga* becomes the pain-destroyer of only him who is moderate and regulated in every one of his affairs. He must eat moderately, play moderately, sleep moderately, keep awake moderately and regulate all his activities properly. And the *yukta* is a man who has his mind controlled and his *manas* steadily fixed on the *ātman*, and who has no desire for any desirable objects. When such a *yogin*, whose mind is controlled, concentrates his *manas*, then its steadiness can be compared to the steadiness of the flame that burns in a place free from wind.

Stages of Perfection in Yoga (Stanzas 20 to 28)

Listen now to the benefits and the excellence of this *yoga*. This *yoga*, when practised, stops the incessant vagaries of the *manas* and gives it that peace which leads to the realisation of the *ātman*, affording supreme satisfaction. This *yoga* gives that *ātyantika sukha* or the infinite delight which is beyond the senses and can be grasped only by the intellect, and realising which delight one never wavers. This *yoga* gives that state, reaching which the *yogin* thinks that there is nothing higher to get for him, and established wherein, no calamities, however great, can stagger him. Understand that separation from all association with pain to be what is denoted by *yoga*. That *yoga* has to be practised with determination and with a mind devoid of despondency.

I will summarise once again what such a *yogin* has to do step by step. He must give up completely all desires which are voluntarily indulged in and can be dispensed with (such as the pleasures of attachment to wife, children and property); he should assert again and again in his mind that in reality there is no permanent connection between himself and them. Next, he must develop the controlling capacity of his *manas*, so that it should not desire pleasures and avoid pains, but control all his senses from moving towards objects on all sides. What is the result? His intelligence, guided by his firm resolution, assumes the form of *viveka* (discrimination), and he will be able easily to stop all the outward workings of his mind. Finally, he develops the strength of mind to fix firmly his *manas* on the *ātman*. But yet he should be cautious. Even when going on with all the practices, he often finds that his wavering and unsteady mind does not fix itself on the *ātman*, but moves

towards objects giving pleasures to his senses. Then, he should again recollect his firm resolution, restrain his mind once more, bring it under control repeatedly, and remembering the blissful nature of the *ātman*, direct it again to fix itself on the *ātman*. By such repeated practices, he conquers his *rajoguna* completely, tranquillises his mind from its vagaries, becomes free from all sins or impurities, assumes the likeness of *Brahman* Himself and attains the supreme bliss of the *ātman*. Certainly, such a *yogin* who in this manner devotedly fixes his mind on the *ātman*, will destroy all his sins, with the result that he without effort experiences the eternal bliss of *Brahman*.

Realisations of Yoga (Stanzas 29 to 32)

O Arjuna! now hear from Me the four stages of realisation of Truth by the *yogin*, who is advancing in his path of *yoga*. In the first stage, the person who has applied himself well to *yoga* will attain equality of vision towards all beings including himself. He sees himself as existing in all beings and all beings as existing within himself. What does this mean? All souls, when they are divested from their bodies made up of *prakṛiti* and its products, are exactly similar to one another in their essential nature as knowledge. What he sees in himself as the soul or the *ātman*, he sees something similar to it, the same type of *ātman*, in all beings. Again, when he sees the *ātman* in other beings, he realises that his soul or *ātman* is also of the same type. The meaning is that, as soon as he realises the true nature of any *ātman* or his own, he simultaneously realises the real nature of the *ātman* in all beings; because in reality they are all essentially of the nature of knowledge.

In the second stage, the *yogin* sees that his own *ātman* and that in every being are similar in their real nature as knowledge to My *jñāna-svarūpa* that is, the essential nature of God Himself as knowledge. So in this stage of *samādhi*, he sees Me in all things and sees also all things in Me. When he realises that his real state is similar to Mine, he sees all *ātman*s to be abiding in Me and sees Me (God) to be the *antaryāmin* (internal controller) of all things. In the case of such a *yogin* I am not lost to him, nor is he lost to Me. What does this mean? I do not appear to him unlike himself, and he does not appear to me unlike Myself. When he realises the nature of his *ātman*, he sees Me also: and as his *ātman* is similar to Myself, I keep on seeing him.

During *samādhi*, the *yogin* realises that his nature and Mine are almost similar, and so in the third stage, having established himself in oneness with Me, he is devoted to Me as existing in all beings. So even after he comes out of *samādhi* and leads his worldly life, he behaves with men and other beings as he will behave with Me alone. His actions towards other living creatures are considered to be the same as his services to God Himself, because he has realised in *samādhi* that all beings in their real nature as souls are similar to God.

The *yogin* then attains the highest or the fourth stage of realisation. O Arjuna! then he looks at the happiness, or it may be, the misery of all beings, with equality of vision and in similarity with himself.

1. Compare the statement in the *Mundaka Upanishad*: "Nirāṇaṇah paramam samyam upaiti." That is, the individual self, free of all stain, attains the highest similarity to God. This is taken to be a description of the soul in the state of salvation.

Developing in himself the feeling of oneness with all beings in his daily life, he looks at the happiness of all beings as his own happiness. He experiences sympathy for the miseries of other beings as if the miseries have happened in his own case, or he is indifferent to his own miseries, as ordinary men are generally indifferent towards others' miseries. (For instance, when children are born to others, he feels the same joy which he used to get when children were born to him. When his son dies, he has the same indifferent attitude which he used to have when the sons of other persons died in the world.) He now knows well that the events connected with his body and the world are foreign to his real nature as *ātman*, as well as to the real nature of other beings. So his attitude towards his own so called happiness and misery will be the same as that which he will have towards the happiness and misery of others, and vice versa.

Control of Mind is Difficult but Possible
(Stanzas 33 to 36)

When Arjuna learnt from Śrī Krishna the four stages of realisation of the advanced *yogin*, he became aware within himself that the condition of his mind was exactly opposite to these visions of equality. He was afraid that it would not be possible for him to attain even the first stage of realisation at any time in his life. So he exclaimed with nervousness to Śrī Krishna as follows: "O Krishna!" Out of mercy, You have graphically described to me this *yoga* of the vision of equality of all beings in four stages, and I can intellectually understand them now. But from the time of my birth till now, I have been experiencing only the differences between men, animals, plants and non-living things as well as the ideas about the gods in my daily life.

Then how will it be possible for me to attain even a glimpse of this *yogic* realisation? O Krishna! my mind is unsteady, restless, fickle, impetuous, strong and obstinate! The human mind always runs after things and pleasures with which it is acquainted already, jumping constantly from one thing or pleasure to another. When such is the condition of my mind, what is the use of Your preaching to me the philosophy that I must fix my mind on the *ātman* and the ethics that I should develop the vision of equality of all beings, while discharging duties in everyday life? Fixing My mind on the *ātman* is as difficult as to stop the strong wind blowing against us by a small fan, and Your message of the benefits of *yoga* has no practical effect on me. Kindly explain to me the way out of this practical difficulty."

With a view to remove from the mind of Arjuna nervousness and weakness, and to encourage him to take up firmly the path of *yoga*, Śrī Krishna spoke the following words : O Arjuna! when it has been possible for you as a mighty warrior to conquer your enemies easily, it will also be possible for you to subdue your primary enemy, namely, the evil passions in your mind. There is no doubt that in the case of the vast majority of men, their mind is fickle, hard to restrain, difficult to curb and restless. But a hero like you can bring it under control by repeated or constant practice of unattachment or disinterested dispassion. I agree that a man, who has not got the knowledge of *Sāṅkhya* and the yearning for liberation and whose mind always dwells on material sensepleasures, will find it very difficult to control his mind. It is very hard for him to practise *yoga* and attain

realisation. But one seeking salvation like you should persist at any cost in the practices of self-control, and adopt various practical and proper methods helpful to them.

First of all, you must believe in the mighty power of your will, which belongs to you in your true nature as *ātman* and develop it till you succeed in your attempt. Constantly reflect on the greatness of your nature as the soul on the one side, and the defects of your physical body on the other, until you become disgusted with the latter and highly attached to the former. You will then be able easily to control your mind step by step, and to rest your mind on the *ātman* more and more. Then you will advance in the path of *karma-yoga* as described above, and ultimately succeed in experiencing the vision of the four stages of realisation of the advanced *yogin*.

The Destiny of one fallen from Yoga (Stanzas 37 to 45)

Hearing these encouraging words of Śrī Krishna, Arjuna once again resolves to persist in the *yoga* path described by the Lord; but suddenly a doubt clouds his mind. Suppose he fails in his efforts. What is the destiny of the man who takes up the *yoga* path, giving up all worldly pleasures, but dies before attaining success in it? He is a *yoga-bhrashta* (one fallen away from *yoga*), who sincerely practises *yoga*, but passes away from the world without achieving the desired fruit. What is his destiny? Arjuna expresses to Śrī Krishna this doubt in the following words : "O Lord! suppose a seeker after liberation like me takes up the path of *yoga* sincerely with faith, but his mind may turn away from *yoga* as he cannot control it, and it may wander away from *yoga*."

Then what is his destiny? By taking up *yoga*, he has lost all the pleasures of this worldly life; and by not achieving success in *yoga* before his death, he has not attained the yogic vision of equality of beings and the realisation of the *ātman*. Will he not perish like a piece of cloud, which is separated from a big one and drifts away in the sky without joining another big cloud? He will lose both worldly enjoyments and the attainment of the bliss of self-realisation. He will be neither a *bhogin* (enjoyer), nor a *yogin*, being wrecked on both sides. Is there no hope for such a person in the future? Kindly solve this doubt of mine; You alone, who are all knowing, can answer this question, and no one else. I am worried about my own future destiny, as I have taken up *yoga*, and I fear that I may not attain success in it in this life ".

Śrī Krishna solved the doubt of Arjuna in the following words:—My dear friend, Partha! Have no anxiety in your heart on account of this doubt. I have already told you that none who does good will ever tread the path of woe or come to a sad state. So a man who takes up the good path of *yoga* will not have destruction both in this life and hereafter. What is the destiny after death of the person who starts *yoga* and leaves it? As he has done meritorious deeds, he attains the world of the righteous, dwells there for many years and is again born in the house of such as are pure and prosperous. What is the destiny of one who has advanced in *yoga* before his death? He will surely be born in a family of *yogins* who are endowed with wisdom. The vast majority of men cannot obtain in this world such a noble and auspicious birth, which one who

has fallen away from *yoga* will have in his future life. When he is reborn in this world, he regains the skill in *yoga* which he had developed in his previous life, in the same manner as one who wakes up from sleep continues from where he has left before he fell asleep. With this as the starting point, he strives again for perfection or success in *yoga*. Even he who has merely known the nature of *yoga* in his previous life transcends the verbal *brahman*¹ or *prakṛiti*. But the *yogin* who has been trained in his former life will be carried on forward irresistibly. Such a *yogin*, who in the next life strives in the *yoga* path, becomes fully free from all sins or impurities. He attains perfection or success gradually in the course of many lives and ultimately attains the supreme goal!

Grades of Greatness Among Yogins (Stanzas 46 & 47)

O Arjuna! I have answered your question and solved your doubt; and I now continue the subject I was explaining to you, namely, the greatness of the *yogins*. You have been taught that men of righteous deeds are greater than the mass of human beings who lead a routine, mechanical life; because they possess great ideals in their heart and struggle hard to achieve them. Such men of righteous deeds are (1) the *ascetic* who practises severe penances, (2) the *jñānin* who studies the scriptures with the help of *gurus* in order to acquire more and more knowledge, and (3) the *karmin* who always performs religious rites or undertakes frequently ritualistic works.

1. The verbal *brahman* is the 'universe which lends itself to description by words'; hence it is identified with *prakṛiti* or matter.

But the *yogin* who has eagerly chosen the greatest of all ideals in life, namely, *moksha* described above, is greater than the ascetic; he is considered to be greater than the man of knowledge, and he is greater than the man of ritualistic works also. It is true that all the *yogins* are great. But of all the *yogins*, the *yogin* who worships Me with great faith is the greatest one. I deem this *yogin* as the best one, because he is devoted to Me and has directed his inner self to Me. Therefore, Arjuna, become a *yogin* first in order to acquire greatness among men of righteous deeds. But do not stop with that. Make your best efforts to attune your mind, heart, thought and soul to Me! Surely then, according to My settled opinion, I shall consider you to be the best among all types of *yogins*.



CHAPTER VII

JNANAVIJNANA YOGA

Introduction :

Śrī Krishna in the first six chapters has explained to Arjuna the nature of the soul, the cause of its bondage and its liberation by means of the *karma* and the *jñāna-yogas*. In the succeeding six chapters, he explains to Arjuna His own nature, that is, the nature of God and the method of attaining Him by means of *bhakti*, which means the constant cherishing in the mind with love.¹

In the last stanza of the sixth chapter Śrī Krishna said that even among the *yogins* who are superior to all other men, he who has his *manas* constantly dwelling upon God and worships Him with faith is considered to be the best, the *yuktatama*. To worship constantly a person with faith and devotion, it is first necessary to know his nature in its entirety, and so in this chapter Śrī Krishna unfolds to Arjuna the totality of the nature of God.

Take up a new Yoga (Stanzas 1 to 3)

Śrī Krishna said: I shall now tell you how, with your *manas* fixed on Me during your practice of *yoga* and taking refuge in Me, you will know Me, completely and devoid of doubt, in My total perfection. I shall now teach you this knowledge (*jñāna*) concerning Myself and also the knowledge of how I am different from everything else (*vijñāna*). After knowing these, there remains nothing more to know in this world¹ But you must be very sincere when you take up this *yoga*. Of the myriads of men on earth, very few strive for perfection in *yoga*, and even among those who succeed, very few know Me in reality.

The nature and form of God (Stanzas 4 to 7)

Hear now about the composition of this universe, the substances of which it is composed. First of all, it is made up of *prakṛiti* (matter) with its eightfold *vikāras* or modifications, namely, earth or solids, water or liquids, fire or light and heat, air or gases, ether or the finest space, *manas* or the faculty of attention, *buddhi* or intellect, and *ahaṅkāra* or egoism. The last three,

1. Compare the statement in one of the *purāṇas*: "Sachapurvam anudhyanam bhaktiriti abhidhiyate." (Contemplation with love is called devotion.)

manas, *buddhi* and *ahañkāra*, are also modifications of *prakṛiti*, but they are much finer than *ākāśa* or ether, and are more capable of reflecting knowledge. This *prakṛiti* with all its eightfold gross and subtle modifications is under My control. It is inferior, when compared to another substance which is of greater importance in the maintenance of the universe and which forms its life-giving element. This is the individual soul, which also is under My control. These two are the womb of all creatures. These are the two substances out of which every being is built up, and I, the Supreme Lord, am the cause of the building up and dissolution of this universe. There is nothing superior to Me, Arjuna, and I run through this whole universe, like a thread in a string of pearls. The whole universe is woven and sustained in Me. Therefore, the totality of things, the universe, is Myself, as I am the Supreme Lord and Director of the compound sum of the intelligent and non-intelligent beings of the universe. I am the supreme essence or the very soul that sustains all things in the worlds.

God in Nature (Stanzas 8 to 12)

From Me spring all their virtues. I am the delicious taste of liquids, the splendour in the sun and moon, the *pranava* (or the syllable om) of the *Vedas*, the sound in the ether, I the virility of men, the fragrance of the earth, the light of fire, the life of all creatures, and the austerity of the ascetics. I am the eternal seed of all beings, the wisdom of the wise and the lustre of the illustrious. I am the strength of the strong, devoid of *kāma* (lust) and *rāga* (passion). I am righteous desire in all beings. All *bhāvas* (mental states) of *saṁtva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are

1. Compare the question in the *Mundaka Upanishad*: *Kasmin nu bhūgavo vijñate sarvaṁ idam vijñato bhavati* etc. (Reverend sir, what is that thing, which being known, all this universe becomes known?)

produced by Me. They have no power over Me, while I have complete control over them. This universe, being deluded by the *bhāvas* of these three *gunas*, does not realise Me, who am above these and imperishable. This divine and wonderful delusion caused by the three *gunas* is very hard to overcome, and only those that surrender to Me can cross this *māyā* or delusion.¹

Types of Devotees of God (Stanzas 13 to 23)

The (*mūḍhas*) perverse ones, the worst of men, those who have lost their wisdom through the influence of *māyā*¹, those who are possessed of a demoniac nature—all these sinners do not resort to Me, but there are four classes of virtuous men who worship Me. These latter are comprised of (1) the *ārta* or he who suffers or whose fortune is wrecked, (2) the *jijñāsu* or the seeker after truth or knowledge of the soul, (3) the *arthārthin* or the fortune seeker, and (4) the *jñānin* or the truly wise God seeker. Of these four, the wise seeker after God is the best, because he is a *nityayukta*, that is, ever united to Me. While others establish a relation with Me only so long as their objects remain unachieved, he has singleness of devotion. So he is very dear to Me, and I am very dear to him. He is My choice. Though all the four types of devotees are virtuous, yet the *jñānin*, I consider as My soul, because he with his steady meditation rests on Me as his supreme and only goal. Such a wise one is very hard to get. It is only after many births that one perfects one's wisdom, realises that the whole universe is nothing but Vāsudeva, and comes to Me.

1. Ancient Indian writers thought that the creation and transmission of sound was the peculiar property of the ether of space.

Such a *mahātman* (great soul) is very rare, because, impelled by *kāma* and thereby losing their *jñāna*, people worship various other deities, observing several vows according to their own natures. These gods form only My various *tanus* or bodies. In those instances where people worship these different forms of Mine with devotion, it is I that give them the unswerving faith with which they worship. And it is I again who grant them their desires, which, they think, are granted to them by their gods. But the enjoyments derived by such worship by these men of poor intelligence are short-lived. Every worshipper goes to the deity of his worship, and My devotee comes to Me.

Only few men really worship Me (Stanzas 24 to 29)

The ignorant think of Me, who am the *avyakta* or unmanifested, as one having the limitations of this world, not knowing My *param-bhāva* or supermundane state, which is superior, infinite and exalted. I am not understood by all beings, being enveloped in My *yogamāyā*. The world, being deluded, knows Me not who am birthless and deathless. Though they are in the dark about Me, I know them all—all the creatures of the past, present and future.

Do you learn how and when this delusion is caused, that envelops their knowledge. It is brought about by the *dvandvas* of pleasure and pain etc., arising from feelings of hatred and love,—contracted in their former births. The impressed tendencies from previous births begin to

1. The word, *māya*, is differently understood by various Indian thinkers. It has been taken to mean the illusion which mistakes the unreal for the real, the wonder-working power of God, matter and so forth. What is said in the *Gita* here may be compared with a statement in *Svetāsvatara Upaniṣat* : *Mayam ān prakṛitān vidhātī māyānān te mahesvaram*. (Know Nature to be *māya* and the Supreme Lord to be the lord of *māya*.)

act upon the embodied soul. They cause delusion even from the very moment of his birth. Only virtuous men whose sins are brought to an end by meritorious acts get above this delusion caused by these pairs of opposites : they worship Me, resting firm in their vows. Those that try for deliverance from old age and death, resting in Me,—they ought to know the *Brahman*, the whole *adhyātma* and *karma*. They also ought to know Me along with the *adhibhūta*, the *adhidaiva* and the *adhiyajña*. They also ought to think of Me with steadfast mind at the time of their death.



CHAPTER VIII

AKSHARA BRAHMA YOGA

Introduction:

In the seventh chapter, Śrī Krishna enlightens Arjuna about (1) the composition of the universe, (2) the reason for delusion, and (3) the means for salvation, knowing which there is nothing more to learn here. He teaches how the world is made up of *prakṛiti* with its eightfold modifications, the soul and Himself as the Supreme Self. He is the creator of all. He sustains all, like the thread running through a number of pearls. And He dissolves all. After showing that He is the essence of everything, He proceeds to give reasons for the delusion. The whole world does not understand Him, the reality being hidden by the three qualities of *prakṛiti*. Ignorance is due to this *prakṛiti* composed of the three *guṇas*. And it is impossible to overcome this ignorance, except by complete selfsurrender to Him.

Śrī Krishna next proceeds to classify His worshippers into four kinds, the *ārta*, the *jijñāsu*, the *adhārthīn* and the *jñānīn*, highly praising the merits of the last. The perverse sinners do not worship Him, being deluded; but they worship other deities, desiring some sorry fruit. Even in those cases, it is He, the Supreme Lord, who gives them their unswerving faith and decrees the bestowal of their fruits. So what a man should strive for at first is the conquest over the delusion caused by the *dvandvas* of desire and hatred which blind the *jñāna* of every being from the very time of its birth, by total self-surrender to the Supreme Lord.

Knowledge of Metaphysics (Stanzas 1 to 4)

When Śrī Krishna said that one who desired to escape the pains of old age and death ought to know the nature of *Brahman*, *adhyātma*, *karma*, *adhibhūta*, *adhidaiva* and *adhiyajña*, and that he must have the steady memory of God at the moment of his death, Arjuna asked naturally to be enlightened thereon.

Śrī Krishna said: The *Brahman* (God) is the indestructible; the *adhyātma* is *svabhāva* or that which resembles My indestructible *bhāva*, that is, the soul; and *karma*, creation that causes the birth of beings¹. The *adhibhūta* or the *ksharo bhāva* is My perishable mode, that is, the changing matter. The *adhidaiva* or the God of gods is the *puruṣa*, and the *adhiyajña* or the person for whom all worship is done in reality is Myself, the *antaryāmin* (internal controller) in the gods and in the bodies here. So you should understand Me, the God of gods (*Adhidaiva*), as the *adhiyajña* or the *antaryāmin*, the person towards whom all sacrifices should be made and who is the *Akshara* or indestructible, along with My *svabhāva* (soul) and *ksharo bhāva* (matter).

1. Śrī Ramanuja takes the *brahman* here to be the individual soul and the *adhyātma* to be *prakṛti*.

Remembering God at the time of death (Stanzas 5 & 6)

The other necessity, as I have said, is that I should be remembered at the moment of death. For whoso at the hour of death escapes from the body, thinking of Me directly, comes to Me and attains My *bhāva* (state). There is no doubt about this. It is a law of nature that every being tends towards its ideal, and so whatsoever form a person thinks at the time of his death, that he attains. His *samskāras* (impressed tendencies) take him thereto, since that was the form he constantly meditated on during his life-time.¹

Abhyasa Yoga (Stanzas 7 to 10)

Therefore, try your best, Arjuna, to be constantly thinking of Me. If your *manas* and *buddhi* are completely given over to Me, I assure you that you will positively reach Me. The last memory of a man is sure to be that thing upon which he brooded most during his life-time. So, unceasingly thinking of Me, undertake this fight. Without doubt, you are sure to reach Me in this way. The recollection of Myself at the last moment of life will happen only, if you are practising constant meditation on Me now, and this practice is called the *abhyāsa-yoga*. The man that is engaged in this practice, not caring in his mind for any other thing, reaches the Divine and Supreme Person. The *yogin* meditates exclusively upon the Omniscient (*kavi*) the Ancient (*purāṇa*), the Lord, the Atom of atoms, the Nourisher of all, One of inconceivable glory, One having the splendour of the sun, and One beyond darkness. Such a *yogin*, thinking on the

1. The sage, Jada Bharata, is said to have been born as a deer in one of his births, as he died thinking of a deer in his previous birth.

glorious, resplendent and Divine Form, being endued with devotion and the power of meditation, will at the time of his death stop the vital air (*prāṇa*) between his eyebrows and reach the Divine and Supreme *Purusha*.

Meditation during the last moments (Stanzas 11 to 16)

I will now describe to you in brief that goal which is imperishable, according to the knowers of the *Vedas*, which ascetics, free from desire, attain, and longing for which men observe celibacy. The way thereto consists in giving up one's body, while (i) controlling all the outlets or the organs of the body, (ii) restraining the *manas* in the heart (i.e., to think of the *ātman*), (iii) drawing the vital breath into the head by concentrated meditation, (iv) remaining in steady meditation, (v) repeating the monosyllable *Om*, the symbol of *Brahman*, and (vi) thinking of Me exclusively. The person, who in the above-mentioned way gives up his body, reaches the highest state.

To him that engages himself unceasingly in the practice of ever thinking of Me with undivided and exclusive mind, to him, I am easily accessible. Therefore the constant thought of Me is very important. It easily takes the *yogin* to Me, reaching whom there is no more return into this transient home of woe. The *mahātmāns* that thus come to Me reach the highest perfection and return no more to this impermanent world. All others, from the dwellers of the world of the Creator¹ downwards, return into this cycle of recurring births and deaths. It is only those that come to Me that are freed from rebirth.

1. *Brahma* of the Hindu Trinity is thought of here, and not the Supreme Godhead.

Day and Night of Brahma (Stanzas 17 to 19)

The souls in the higher worlds like that of Brahma may enjoy happiness for a very long period, but ultimately they must return to birth one day. Experts in the knowledge of periods of time say that a thousand of our *yugas* (or long aeons of time) go to form a single day of Brahma, and a similar duration of time forms a single night of his. At the dawning of Brahma's day, manifestation of the universe takes place from an unevolved *avyakta* state, and at the coming of a Brahma's night all manifested things dissolve again into their prior, unmanifested condition. It is the same multitude of beings that evolve and involve, being helpless and urged by *karma*, appearing at day-time and sinking at night. In this cycle of evolution and involution, what really changes or is modified is *prakriti* or matter. In its finest state, it is *avyakta* or the invisible, and in its grossest it is the world of elements.

The Supreme Abode of God (Stanzas 20 to 22)

But there is another *bhava* (object or principle), which is also unmanifested, but which does not change or modify like this, and which is, therefore, superior to this *avyakta* of matter. This second *avyakta* ever persists while other things are undergoing change, and that should be the supreme goal that every one should strive to attain. For once it is reached, there is no more return. That is My supreme abode. It is ancient, devoid of beginning and end. But I, the Supreme Lord, in whom all these things are established and by whom all these worlds are spread out or pervaded, is superior to these, and can be reached only by exclusive and absolute love.

The Paths of 'LIGHT' and 'SMOKE'

(Stanzas 23 to 29)

Having now told you about the supreme goal, after reaching which there is no more return, I will now describe to you the differences in the time of departure of the souls that no more return and of those that come back again. Again, light, day-time, the bright fortnight, the six months of the northern progress of the sun, this is the time when, if *yogins* die, they return not and reach *Brahman*. This is called the *archirādi-marga* (the path beginning with light) or the path of the gods. Smoke, night-time, the dark fortnight, the six months of the southern progress of the sun—the *yogins* dying under these circumstances reach the light of the moon and return. This is the *dhūtmādi-mārga* (the path beginning with smoke) or the path of the manes. These two bright and dark paths, marked by auspicious and inauspicious times for dying, are held to be eternal. The first leads to non-return, and the second brings one back to birth. The *yogin* that knows these two paths will never get deluded, therefore at all times be devoted to *yoga*. Whatever fruits of merit are ordained for the study of *Veda*'s, the performance of sacrifices, austerities and gifts, the *yogin* passes beyond all these and reaches the supreme, primal abode.



CHAPTER IX

RAJAVIDYA RAJAGUIYA YOGA

Introduction :

In the seventh chapter, Śrī Krishna tells Arjuna about the modifications of *prakṛiti* and declares that He is the Lord of the creation and destruction of everything in this universe. In the eighth chapter He instructs Arjuna about the knowledge of the requisites necessary for deliverance from old age and death, death-bed remembrance of God, *abhyāsa-yoga*, and the manner in which *yogins* give up their bodies at their time of departure from life and reach that supreme condition, whence there is no fear of falling back again. Even the world of Brahma does not afford this security, though the period of enjoyment there may consist of myriads of our years. Śrī Krishna next proceeds to show how at the beginning of a day of Brahma all things attain manifestation, and how during his night, they are reduced to an unmanifested condition called the *avyakta*, again to spring forth at the dawn of the next day. All the while, they are helpless and dragged on by their *karmas*. During these cycles of constant change, the real modifications take place only in *prakṛiti*. There is behind it another substance called the *akshara* or the changeless. It is beyond the grasp of the senses; that is, it is also *avyakta* or unmanifest. Its realisation leads to a permanent and changeless condition of bliss. Finally Śrī Krishna teaches the difference in the paths trodden by souls that are proceeding to salvation and those that are not. These two paths are known as the paths of 'light' and 'smoke'.

In the present chapter, Śrī Krishna shows how God presides over *prukṛiti* (matter) and the *akṣhara* (the soul), and initiates Arjuna into performing *bhakti-yoga* (the discipline of devotion to God). That is, He teaches Arjuna the closest of secrets, the most occult knowledge.

The most secret knowledge (Stanzas 1 to 3)

Śrī Krishna said :—

I will now tell you, who are without any jealousy, and are possessed of good faith, the most secret knowledge, together with the *vijñāna* or its method of practice. Knowing these you will be freed of all evil and impurities. This is the king of all sciences, the king of secrets and the purifier of all sins, and it is conducive to direct realisation. It does not conflict with *dharma*, it is easy to practise and unailing. Persons who have no faith in this *dharma* (of devotion to God) will return to this *samsāra* and fail to reach Me.

The ineffable glory of God (Stanzas 4 to 10)

I shall now tell you about the ineffable glory of Myself, who am God, in order that you may practise absolute devotion to Me. I pervade this whole universe, which is spread out by Me, Myself remaining unmanifest as its *antaryāmin* (internal controller). All things are established in Me, and not I in them. Everything derives its support from Me, and I do not depend upon anything. Still, I do not directly support them. Behold My wonderful power¹ (My supporting

1. The *Vishnu-purana* says : The genesis of the clouds, the collection of the seas, the phases of the moon, the wafting of the winds, the flashings of the lightning, the movements of the sun are all the marvellous miracles of Vishnu.

the universe is not like that of a pot, which supports the water it contains.) I am free of all contacts. I support all beings, but I do not abide in them. My will (*ātman*) is the real cause of all beings.

I am like the sky to the wind, which, moving in the sky for its support, moves freely everywhere without tainting it. Similarly, all things find their support in Me. Not only is the whole cosmos pervaded by Me as its *antaryāmin* and supported and produced by My will. But also learn that it is I that cause the creation of the world at the beginning of a cycle, and its destruction or its return at the end into primordial Nature, which is under My control. By resorting to this *prakṛiti* of Mine, I send forth again and again into the state of creation and manifestation this multitude of beings which are helpless themselves and are subject to the deluding *gunas* of *prakṛiti*. And since I do this work of creation and destruction like a neutral without the slightest attachment, it has no power in any way to bind or fetter Me. *Prakṛiti* gives birth, under My directions, to this universe of moving and fixed things, and that is how the universe revolves in its course.

Mahatmas worship Me as God (Stanzas 11 to 21)

The ignorant take Me to be an ordinary man, since I have taken a human body. They do not know My higher state of existence as the Supreme Lord of all creatures. (For instance, Duryodhana and his brothers suffer from such ignorance.) Such men have vain desires, vain activities, and vain knowledge, and are deprived of their senses. They are attracted by the deceiving, demoniac tendencies of *prakṛiti*. But the *mahātmans* partake of the divine nature and worship

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Me with their *manus* fixed on no other, knowing Me well to be the indestructible source of all beings. These *mahātmas* will always be engaged in praising Me, being strenuous and firm in vows. They will be doing obeisance to Me with steady devotion and be ever thinking of Me.

Some others worship Me by performing *jñāna-yajña* (the homage of intellectual worship), and to meditate on Me as unity, individuality, diversity and infinity. To the wise men who thus worship Me, I am everything in this universe. I am the *kratu* (rituals), I am the *yajña* (sacrifice). I am the *svāha* (offerings to the manes), the herbs and grains, the *mantra* (holy verses). The oblation of ghee, the sacrificial fire, and what is offered into the fire. I am the father of the universe, the mother, the creator, the grandsire, the the object of knowledge and whatever is holy. I am the syllable *om* and I am the *Rigveda*, the *Sāmaveda* and the *Yajurveda*. I am the goal, the support, the master; I am the witness, the abode, the refuge and the friend; I am the seat of evolution and dissolution, the depository whence creation starts and whither dissolution leads. And I am the imperishable seed. It is I that give heat, it is I that withhold and send forth rain. I am the *sat* (manifested) and the *asat* (unmanifested).

This is how great souls worship Me by means of *jñāna-yajña*. These are superior to the performers of Vedic sacrifices. Knowing the three *Vedas*, they drink the *soma* juice and, being purified of their sins, pray to Me for the attainment of *svarga* (the celestial world of the gods). These, after attaining the auspicious world of Indra, share in the celestial enjoyments

of the gods. After enjoying the spacious paradise till their merits last, they enter this world of mortal beings, when their store of merit gets exhausted.

God looks after His devotees (Stanzas 22 to 25)

Thus, by following the Vedic *dharma* of sacrifices, persons that work with desire get only transitory pleasures. But those who, meditating on Me, worship Me with devotion whole-heartedly with no other desire, to those that are thus ever absorbed in Me, I grant yoga (union with Me) and *kshema* (the security of not getting rebirth). The welfare, of such a person is My care and concern. All persons that worship other gods with devotion, even they worship Me alone indirectly or contrary to the ordinances of the scriptures. In reality in every *yajñā* (sacrifice or act of worship), I am the Lord and enjoyer; but these men do not know Me rightfully in truth, and so they fall. Whosoever worships whatsoever gods or powers, to them they go. The worshippers of the gods go to the gods, the worshippers of the manes go to the manes, those who sacrifice to the *bhūtas* or elemental spirits attain the *bhūtas*, and My worshippers come to Me.

The way of devotion (Stanzas 26 to 34)

The worship of Myself is not a very difficult task like the performance of sacrifices to the other gods. I insist only on *bhakti* or devotion. Whatever is offered to Me with love, even though it were a leaf, a flower, a fruit or mere water, that, I gladly receive. The person offering it gets purified, as it is done as a result of devotion. Therefore, dedicate everything to Me. Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you sacrifice, whatever you give and whatever penance

you practise, do everything for My sake and as an offering unto Me. By so doing, you will be liberated from the bonds of *karma*, which come in the form of good and evil fruits. You will be liberated by this constant practice of renunciation, by the dedication of everything to Me, and will finally reach Me.

In the matter of attaining Me, I am equally accessible to all. I make no differences among creatures as friends and foes. I am the same to every one, and those that worship Me with love and devotion are ever attached to Me, and I am attached to them. Even should a man of wicked conduct worship Me with his mind, devoted to no other, he must be regarded as virtuous. For he has rightly determined his mind in the matter of worship. The exclusive devotion to Me will speedily make him a holy soul and lead him to enjoy perpetual peace. You can promise with certitude anywhere, O Arjuna, that never will My devotees perish. Even persons of sinful birth, women, Vaiśyas and Śūdras, if they firmly take their shelter in Me, they too reach the highest God. When such is the case, what need have I to talk of virtuous Brāhmanas and royal sages ?

Therefore, having attained this impermanent and joyless world, worship Me with love, for liberation. I will tell you, in brief, methods of such worship. Ever thinking of Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice unto Me, and make obeisance unto Me. Being in this way absorbed in Me entirely, you will gain Me.



CHAPTER X

VIBHUTI YOGA

Introduction :

In the last three chapters, the nature of *prakṛiti* (matter), *puruṣa* (the soul) and *Īśvara* (God) was taught, and also the method of practising *bhakti* was clearly explained. In this tenth chapter, Śrī Krishna proceeds to declare His *vibhūti* and His *aīśvarya* or sovereign glory, as it would be impossible to be devoted to any one, unless his full greatness is known. In order to evoke such loving devotion and nourish it, this chapter deals at length with the subjects of the supreme, boundless and unsurpassable qualities of the Lord. These have, to be known as a preliminary to the practice of exclusive devotion, as taught in the last chapter.

The greatness and excellence of God (Stanzas 1 to 11)

The Lord said :—

Listen again, O Arjuna! to these important words of Mine, which I speak for your benefit and prompted by the sincere love that you entertain towards Me and by My concern for your welfare. Cultivate devotion towards Me. And to enable you to do so, listen carefully and with attention to these words of Mine that describe My greatness and excellence. Then alone you will worship Me with increasing love and devotion.

I am the beginning of all, and nobody knows My origin or glory. Even the multitudes of gods and

great *rishis*, who are gifted with superhuman knowledge and sight, grope in the dark with regard to My origin or greatness. For I am the first, the *ādi* or the beginning of all. He who considers and knows Me in his heart of hearts to be the Person without a beginning, to be the Unborn and the Supreme Lord of all the worlds, that man is without delusion among the mortals, and gets freed from all sins that may stand in the way of his practising devotion towards Me. I am the Lord of all the rulers of the worlds, and every creature owes its condition to My will alone.

If we analyse the mental disposition of creatures in general, they are endowed with more or less of the following faculties. These are *buddhi* (the power to reason), *jñāna* (knowledge, especially of discrimination between matter and spirit), *asammoha* (absence of illusion), *kṣamā* (equanimity), *satya* (veracity), *dama* (control of the senses), *śama* (control of the *antah-karana*), pleasure, pain, *bhava* (exultation), *abhāva* (depression), fear, fearlessness, *ahimsā* (non-violence), *samatā* (regarding alike the weal and woe of oneself, friends and enemies), *tushṭi* (joy), austerity, charity, fame and infamy. All beings owe their possession of more or less of these various mental states entirely to Me. It is I that apportion these severally to them.

Why talk of ordinary creatures? The very forefathers of the world, namely, the seven great *rishis* and the four great Manus who govern and protect, follow My moods and were created by My will. He who knows my *vibhūti* or universal sovereignty over all creatures and My *yoga* or the assemblage in Me of all glorious attributes, as they are in reality, will doubtless be endowed with the unfaltering *yoga* of

devotion to Me. For he will know that I am the first cause or origin of all things and that everything in the universe flows or evolves from Me. Thus will the wise think of Me and ever worship Me with devotion, being gifted with the proper attitude of mind. With their thoughts and life completely absorbed in Me, enlightening and entertaining one another about Me, and conversing only of Me, they spend their time, ever pleased and delighted. To those who are ever intent upon Me and who accordingly worship Me incessantly, I give with love that *buddhi-yoga* or devotional attitude of mind by means of which they come unto Me. Further, solely out of compassion for them, I dwell in their mental dispositions as the subject of their thoughts and feelings, and destroy the darkness born of ignorance by the resplendent light of wisdom.

Arjuna's praise and prayer (Stanzas 12 to 18)

When Śrī Krishna had finished His brief description of His *vibhūti* and *yoga*, Arjuna could not help requesting an account of His *vibhūti* in greater detail. And he burst forth with the following prayer, greatly moved. He said : "Thou art the Supreme *Brahman*, the Supreme Light, the superbly holy. As the eternal and divine Spirit, as the First God, the Unborn and the All-pervading, all the *rishis* proclaim Thee, including the divine sage Narada, Asita, Devala and Vyāsa. And thou also tellest me the same. All that thou declarest, O Keśava! I believe to be true. Thou art incomprehensible, O Lord, and neither the gods nor the demons know Thy manifestation. Thou alone knowest Thyself, O Supreme Soul! Thou art the source of all beings, the Lord of all beings and the God of gods! O Protector of the universe! deign to

describe to me without reserve, as Thou alone canst, Thine own divine manifestations of power, by means of which Thou abidest, pervading all these worlds. How shall I know Thee, my Lord, by constant meditation while following the path of devotion ? And what are the manifestations or forms in which I can meditate upon Thee ! Pray describe to me again elaborately and in detail Thy *vibhūti* and *yoga*, O Janārdana, who destroyest Thine enemies and grantest the boons of Thy devotees ! For Thy words are like nectar that can never satiate my ears."

The Manifestations of the Glory and Power of the Lord in the universe (Stanzas 19 to 42)

Śrī Krishna complied with Arjuna's request as follows:— Listen, I will speak to you only of those of My divine *vibhūtis* that are very important. I will refer only to the prominent expressions of My glory. There is no end to the extent of My manifestations of power. They are all extensive and endless. So listen to these principal ones, O Arjuna. I am the soul or *ātman* abiding in the heart of every being. I am the beginning, middle and end of all. That is, I cause the creation, sustentation and dissolution of all creatures. Wherever there is any excellence or superiority, there is a portion of My power or glory.

Let Me illustrate. I am Vishṇu among the Ādityas, the sun among all luminaries, Marīchi among the Maruts or the wind-gods and the moon among the stars. I am the Sāman among the *Vedas*, Indra among the gods, the faculty of attention among the senses, the intelligence of living beings. I am Saṅkara among the Rudras, Kubera among the Yakshas and Rākshasas,

the god of fire among the Vasus and Meru among the mountains. I am Bṛihaspati among royal priests, Skanda among generals, the ocean among lakes. I am Bhṛigu among great *rishis*, the monosyllable *Om* among words, the worship through meditation among all kinds of worship and the Himalayas among the immovables. I am the *aśvattha* among trees, Nārada among the divine sages, Chitraratha among the Gandharvas, Kapila among the Siddhas.

Among horses, I am Indra's Uchchaiśravas; I am his elephant, Airāvata, among elephants, and the king among men. I am Vajra among weapons, the Kāmadhuk among cows, the god of love among the progenitors, and Vāsuki among serpents. I am Ananta among the Nāgas, Varuṇa among the inhabitants of water, Aryama among the manes and Yama, the god of death, among chastisers. I am Prahlāda among Daityas, death among destroyers, the lion among beasts and Garuda among birds. Of purifiers I am the wind, of warriors I am Rāma, of fishes the *makara*, of streams the Gangā.

I am the beginning, middle and the end of all creation. Among the sciences, I am the science of the soul. I am the eloquence of orators, the reasoned argument of debaters, the syllables among letters, the copulative compound among compounds of words. I am inexhaustible. Time, I am the four-faced Brahma, the Creator who apportions the fruits of *karma*. I am the all devouring death, the origin of the future. Of females. I am fame, wealth, speech, memory, intelligence, constancy and endurance I am the *Bṛihasāman* of the *Sāmaveda*, the *Gāyatrī* among Vedic metres,

the Margśīrsha of months, and the flowering spring among seasons.

I am the gambling of the wicked, the splendour of the splendid. I am victory, perseverance, the truth of the truthful, the strength of the strong. I am Vāsudeva among the Vrishnis, Arjuna among the Pāṇdavas, Vyāsa among the sages, Śukra among seers. I am the rod of punishment, the policy of the successful, the silence of secrecy and the knowledge of the wise.

But why this prolixity? Know, Arjuna, that I am the seed of whatever things exist. There is nothing in this universe, moving or unmoving, that can exist without Me. My *vibhūti* is endless, and can never be detailed in full. But for your sake, I have told it in brief extent as far as possible. In a word, whatsoever is sovereign, strong, glorious and powerful in this world, know that it proceeds from a portion of My splendour. There is no necessity for you to remember all this in detail. Remember only that I stand supporting this whole universe with a small part of My power.



CHAPTER XI

VISVARUPA DARŚANA YOGA

Arjuna prays for the vision of 'Visvarupa'
(Stanzas 1 to 4)

Having imparted to Arjuna the knowledge about the soul, *prakṛiti* and Himself and the way to realisation, Śrī Krishna in this chapter shows to Arjuna at his request His all-comprehensive manifestation called the *viśvarūpa*. In the last chapter, He told Arjuna about His *vibhūti*, and in this He actually condescends to show His friend and devotee His *viśvarūpa*.

When Śrī Krishna had finished describing the magnificence of His power and glory, Arjuna was greatly struck with awe and wonder. And he said the following prayer, desiring to see the Lord's *aīśvara* (lordly) form: "By these words containing the great secret about the soul that Thou hast uttered, out of Thy supreme mercy and grace, for my benefit, my ignorance has been completely dispelled. I have also heard from Thee the origin and dissolution of beings in detail, and also Thy everlasting magnificence and greatness. But I wish to see, my Lord, Thy form as the *Īśvara* (Supreme Lord), as Thou hast depicted it to me, and if Thou thinkest that it is possible for me to see Thy Supreme Self, then pray show it to me. Lord ever united with infinite auspicious qualities (*Yogeśvara*) in its entirety."

The Visvarupa is shown (Stanzas 5 to 8)

On hearing Arjuna, the Blessed Lord said:— Behold My manifold forms in hundreds and thousands, O Arjuna, various and divine in kind, colour and shape! Behold therein the Ādityas, the Vasus and the Rudras, the two Asvins and the Maruts! Behold therein manifold wonders never seen before! Look here now at the whole of this universe with all its movable and immovable things standing in a part of My body, and behold also whatever marvels you desire to see. But, indeed, you cannot see with these eyes of yours, and so I will grant you the divine vision. Now behold My supreme *āśvara* form, wherein are united all auspicious qualities and powers.

Sanjaya's description of the Visvarupa (Stanzas 9 to 14)

Thus saying, the great Lord of yogas (wonderful powers), the great Hari, presented to the vision of Arjuna His supreme form as the *Āśvara* (the Supreme Lord). And how was it to gaze at? With innumerable mouths, innumerable eyes, with wonderful visions and marvellous aspects, with divine ornaments, with uplifted celestial weapons, wreathed in divine garlands, robed in divine garments, anointed with divine unguents, all wonderful, infinite, resplendent, and gazing everywhere! O! if a thousand suns should rise simultaneously with all their brilliant lustre, then perhaps they could be compared with the splendour of this Magnificent One. There, in the person of the God of gods, Arjuna saw whole systems of cosmos, divided and manifold, occupying only a small area. And unable to contain himself at this vision, and thrilling with delight, awe and wonder, Arjuna bowed down his head before the Lord, and with joined palms thus spoke :—

Arjuna's spiritual emotions and description of his vision (Stanzas 15 to 31)

"I see within Thy body, O Lord, the gods and hosts of other beings, Brahma the creator upon his lotus seat, sages and divine serpents. With many mouths, many eyes, many arms and many stomachs, I see everywhere Thy endless form. I do not see the beginning, middle or end of Thy universal form, Thou Lord of all the worlds! Like the fire and the blazing sun, I find Thee shining everywhere dazzling the gaze with a mass of splendour and with Thy brilliant crown, club and discus. Thou art the imperishable, the Supreme, the object of all knowledge, the asylum of the whole universe. Thou art the perfect, the eternal shield of enduring *dharma*, the primal *purusha* (soul). I see Thee burning this universe with Thy *tejas* (irresistible splendour), O Lord, with Thy mouth blazing like the sacrificial fire, with the sun and moon for Thy eyes, and with myriads of arms of immeasurable might.

"Thou art all pervading, Thou art the heaven, Thou art the earth, Thou art the middle region of the sky. All the quarters are pervaded by Thee alone. All the three worlds, gazing at this marvellous and terrific form of Thine, are trembling, panic-struck, my Lord! Cohorts of gods enter this form of Thine, join their hands in fear and trembling, and pray to Thee. Hosts of great sages and Siddhas lavish hymns of praise on Thee and cry out "*Svasati*" (May welfare or peace be unto all). The Rudras, Vasus, Ādityas, Sādhyas, Visve-devas, Āśvins, Maruts, the manes, Gandharvas, Yakshas, Asuras, Siddhas—all these

superhuman beings, struck with astonishment, have gathered in crowds and are gazing in wonder at Thee.

"Seeing this sublime form of Thine, with its thousands of mouths, thousands of eyes, thousands of arms, thighs, legs, stomachs and fearful fangs, all the worlds are quivering with dread, and so likewise am I. Beholding Thy form, that reaches the skies, with myriads of flashing colours, with wide open jaws and huge, flaming eyes, my inner self is quaking, and neither courage nor peace can I command. O peace, peace! O Thou who art all-pervading, seeing Thy mouth with Thy awful fangs that flash like Time's destroying flames at the dissolution of the universe, I am bewildered, confused and lost. Please have mercy, O God of gods! O Refuge of all the worlds!

"These sons of Dhritarāshtra here, with all their hosts of kings and captains, with Bhīshma, Drona and Karna, and likewise many great chieftains of our army, are hurrying in haste into Thy awful mouth. In the gaps among its terrific and dreadful teeth are seen sticking the heads of some, crushed to pieces. Just as the flooding floods of rivers hurry in haste towards the sea, so these heroes of this world are madly rushing into Thy blazing mouth. As the moths fly towards the flames to get themselves consumed, with all possible speed, in like manner do these worlds madly rush into Thy burning mouth to meet their doom and destruction. O! every-where I see Thy flaming tongues licking up and devouring all the worlds, making morsels of them. Thy *tejas* is all overspread; the whole universe is burning. O Vishnu, with Thy scorching rays. Pray reveal Thyself to me. What awful form art Thou? I fall at Thy feet, O Lord!

Mercy, mercy, O Highest of gods! I wish to understand Thee, who hast been since the beginning, and I comprehend not Thy action and purpose, O Lord!"

Arjuna is only an Instrument in the Hands of Krishna in this War (Stanzas 32 to 34)

Arjuna thus requested the Lord to explain to him what He meant by the destructive activities that He had shown in His terrific universal form. Śrī Krishna now proceeded to inform him that He was the real destroyer, come down for the removal of the wicked from the earth and that Arjuna was merely a pretext. He said:- I am *Kāla* or death surging here for the destruction of the worlds and engaged therein. Even without you, that is, even without any exertion on your part, all these warriors that stand in the opposite ranks will not survive. They will all perish, Arjuna. Therefore, bestir yourself and win glory, vanquish your foes and enjoy this plenteous realm. These have been slain already by Me. You are only the *nimitta*, the pretext, the outward cause or instrument. Fight and kill Drona, Bhishma, Jayadratha, Karna and the other great heroes in battle. These are already killed by Me, so regret not. Fight and you will conquer your foes.

Arjuna Praises the Lord and Surrenders to Him. (Stanzas 35 to 46)

Arjuna heard these words of Śrī Krishna and with clasped and uplifted palms, trembling and reverently bowing again and again, addressed Him timorously in a faltering tone with broken accents :— "It is but fitting that, when such is Thy magnificence and glory, the whole universe should rejoice at and love the chanting of Thy praises. The Rākshasas, trembling with fear,

fly in all directions, and all the multitudes of the Siddhas are making salutations to Thee. And how could they remain without bowing to Thee, who art infinitely superior to every one else and the first creator even of Brahma? O Lord of the gods, Thou art infinite, Thou art the refuge of the worlds! Thou art the changeless and imperishable (individual soul). Thou art the *sat* (cause); Thou art the *asat* (effect), and Thou art also that which is beyond (*prakṛti* seen as) both *sat* and *asat*. Thou art the *Ādideva*, the first God, the *Pūrāṇa Puruṣa* or the Ancient Person, the supreme treasure-house of all the universe, the knower, the known, the supreme abode. The whole cosmos is filled with and pervaded by Thee, Thou God of endless forms. Thou art Vāyu (the god of winds), Yama (the god of death), Agni (the god of fire), Varuna (the god of waters), the moon-god, Brahmā and even Brahmā's sire. A thousand prostrations to Thee. Again and again do I fall before Thee and behind Thee. Salutations to Thee on all sides, O *Sarva* (All)! Thou art the All, because, by Thy infinite valour and immeasurable prowess, Thou fillest and pervadest everything.

"Taking Thee to be my friend and ignorant of this greatness of Thine, whatever I might have spoken rudely when addressing Thee as 'Krishna', 'Yadava', 'comrade', out of either delusion or love, and whatever discourtesy in the way of jesting I might have shown Thee while at play, in bed or at meals, both when alone and in the company of others, pray pardon me those faults, O Achyuta, who never allowest any one to slip from Thy protection and that art of unbounded and infinite mercy. Thou art the father of all this immovable and movable world. Thou art the most

worthy of all veneration, the greatest of *gurus*. There is none equal to Thee, and how can there be any greater in all the three worlds, Lord of matchless glory! Therefore, bowing down my body, I prostrate before Thee. Adorable Lord! pray be pleased with Me. As a father unto his son, like a friend unto a friend and a lover unto his beloved, kindly excuse my wrongs and be gracious to me. I am overjoyed by seeing this vision never beheld by me before, yet my mind is greatly agitated with fear. Be pleased to show Thy former form, O Lord. Be gracious unto me, God of gods and Refuge of the worlds! Fain would I see Thee in Thy former form, with Thy diadem, mace and disc. Appear, therefore, in Thy former shape with four arms, O thousand-armed Lord having the universe for Thine body!"

**The Lord resumes the form of Śrī Krishna
(Stanzas 47 to 51)**

After hearing this prayer of Arjuna, Śrī Krishna said:— "This supreme form has been shown to you, Arjuna, by the power of My will being favourably disposed towards you. No one except you has ever beheld this form, which is all-radiant, universal, endless and primal. It is impossible for any other except you to realise Me in this form, in this world of men, either by the study of the *Vedas* or by the performance of *yajñas*, by gifts, ceremonies or fierce austerities. Don't be alarmed or perplexed at seeing this terrific form of Mine. Rid of dread and glad of heart, behold Me now in My former shape." Thus saying, Śrī Krishna displayed again His own familiar form, and becoming once again pleasing to look at, began to console the frightened Arjuna. Then Arjuna said : "Seeing this

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lovely human shape of Thine, O Lord! I am now possessed of calmness, and my mind is restored to its natural state."

Who can have the vision of viśvarūpa ?

(Stanzas 52 to 55)

Having thus quelled the restlessness and the agitation of Arjuna's mind, Śrī Krishna explains to Arjuna the impossibility of realising Him in His *viśvarūpa* except by exclusive devotion or *bhakti*. He says :— "This *rūpa* of Mine that you have seen is very hard to behold. Even the gods are ever longing in vain to have a vision of this sort. Neither the *Vedas*, nor austerities, nor gifts, nor sacrifices can enable one to behold Me, as you have just now done. By exclusive *bhakti* alone, by absolute and complete devotion alone, it is possible for one to realise, know, see and enter into Me in essence. Such a one, O Arjuna, will work for Me alone, will have Me alone as his supreme goal, will cast off all attachment for every other object and all hatred towards all beings, and thus ever showing devotion to Me, will come to Me at last.



CHAPTER XII

BHAKTI YOGA

Introduction :

Through the infinite mercy and grace of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Krishna, Arjuna has now acquired that knowledge, after getting which there remains nothing more to learn. He has known from the Blessed Lord the composition of this universe and the means of overcoming this *samsāra* by *karmā*, *jñāna* and *bhakti*.

He has heard the glorious attributes of the Lord from His own mouth, and further has actually seen, out of His supreme grace, the *viśvarūpa* form or the vision of His universal manifestation, so rarely seen and that too only by persons with absolute devotion and exclusive love to the Lord. He has compared and contrasted, with the help of the Lord, *karma* and *jñāna*. He has learnt of their merits singly and in combination. He has listened with rapt attention to the discourse of Śrī Krishna on *bhakti*. He has heard of the marvellous attributes and glory of God. He has seen His tremendous *viśvarūpa* form. Now he wants to compare *jñāna* and *bhakti*.

The Bhakta and the Jnanin (Stanza 1)

And so he put the Lord this question:— "Of those that constantly worship Thee devotedly as Thy *bhaktas* and those that meditate upon the *akshara* and *avyakta* or the imperishable and unmanifest *ātman*—of these two classes of persons, which is the more learned in *yoga*? Who will reach the goal sooner and easier?" When Arjuna asked this question in order to ascertain whether the *bhakta* or the *jñānin* would succeed more easily in overcoming *samsāra* and reaching the Supreme, Śrī Krishna began to clear his doubts in the following manner :—

Akshara Upasana and Bhakti (Stanzas 2 to 7)

The immediate reply to your question is that those who, fixing their *manas* on Me, ever absorbed in Me and endowed with supreme faith, worship Me,— they are deemed by Me the best of *yogins*, as they will reach the goal sooner or easier. Others that seek to realise the individual self which is *akshara* or

imperishable, *anirdeśya* or indefinable, *avyakta* or invisible, *sarvatra* or all pervading, *achintya* or inconceivable, *kūṭastha* or stable, *achala* or immovable, *dhruva* or eternal—even these, controlling well all their senses, with equality of vision everywhere and taking delight in the welfare of all beings, reach Me alone. But the difficulty and the trouble of the persons whose thoughts are set upon the *avyakta* or the invisible and the unmanifested, is greater, for the gate of the *avyakta* is very painful by the embodied to pass through. On the other hand, those who dedicate all their actions to Me, have Me as their only aim, practise exclusive devotion to Me and meditate upon and worship Me—they very soon get over this ocean of *samsāra* and death by My aid. I speedily become their saviour and uplift them from this ocean of misery.

The stages of Bhakti (Stanzas 8 to 12)

Therefore set your *manas* on Me, set your *bindhi* on Me, and thereafter, without the least doubt, you will rest in Me alone. If all at once you are not able to set your thoughts on Me in steady contemplation, then by means of *abhyāsa-yoga* (the *yoga* of repeated practice) seek to attain Me. This *abhyāsa-yoga* consists in constantly practising the remembrance of Me with *bhakti* or devotion. If you are not competent even for this constant practice of remembrance, then try to become intent on doing works for My sake; for, by performing actions having Me for their objects you will attain perfection. That is, if you are unable to control your thoughts and make them constantly remember Me, do all your actions in the way of service to Me; for, by this worship of service, you will reach

Me with certainty. If you are unable to do even this, if your mental disposition is such that you cannot persuade yourself to work with devotion for My sake, in other words, if your mind does not allow you to practise *bhakti-yoga*, then act according to your natural disposition, and with your will try to realise the self or the *ātman*, renouncing all the fruits of your acts. *Jñāna* or realisation of the soul is better for a person who is unfit for God-devotion or *abhyāsa-yoga*. If a person is not qualified for this *jñāna* or soul-realisation, then let him practise *dhyāna* or meditation on the nature of the self; and even if this *dhyāna* be impossible, then he must surrender all the fruits of his actions. In his case, the renunciation of the fruits of all actions is better than every other practice, for it is conducive to peace. That is, the renouncing of all fruits gives peace and leads to soul-contemplation; this leads to soul-cognition which ultimately leads to God-love.

The Bhakta's Way of Life (Stanzas 13 to 20)

O Arjuna! Now learn from Me who is My real *bhakta*¹ and how he will conduct himself in this world. He who has no hatred for any creature, who cherishes feelings of friendship and compassion to all, who is free from selfish possessiveness and egoism, who is the same in pleasure and pain, patient and enduring, content with all, always in meditation, self-controlled, firm in conviction, with his *manas* and *buddhi* fixed on Me—he who is thus My loving devotee, he is dear to Me. He from whom the world has nothing to fear.....

1. Sri Ramanuja takes these stanzas to refer to those who seek self-realisation through *karma-yoga*, and the very last stanza of the chapter to refer to those pursuing *bhakti-yoga*.

who has nothing to fear from the world, who is free from joy and anger towards others and from fear and distress from any one—he is dear to Me. He who wants nothing, who is pure, skilful, indifferent and untroubled, who renounces all undertakings (not sanctioned by the *sāstras*) and who is lovingly devoted to Me, he is My beloved. He who neither rejoices nor hates, who neither desires nor feels sorry for anything, who has entirely given up the doing of good deeds (with attachment) as well as of bad deeds, who is devoted to Me, he is My beloved. He who is the same to friend and foe, the same in honour and dishonour, the same in cold and heat, pleasure and pain, who is wholly rid of all attachment, who is alike in censure and praise, silent, content with anything whatsoever, unattached to his home, resolute in his convictions and full of devotion to Me—such a one is dear to Me.

Indeed, those that pursue, in the way described, this *bhakti-yoga*, which is consistent with *dharma* and is productive of the nectar of immortal bliss, full of firm faith and having Me as their supreme object and goal—these loving devotees of Mine are exceedingly dear to Me.



CHAPTER XIII

KSHETRA KSHETRAJNA VIBHAGA YOGA

Introduction:

In the first division or the first six chapters of the *Bhagavadgītā* it was taught that there were two paths, for the realisation of the soul, namely, the *karma* and

jñāna-yogas. It was also shown that this realisation of the soul was a necessary antecedent for the worship of the Supreme Lord, in other words, for the practice of *bhakti-yoga* which leads to the realisation of God, who is the highest goal to be attained. Next, in the middle division or the second six chapters, the path of devotion, or the way for the realisation of the Supreme Lord by love which is exclusive, absolute and intense, was expounded, with a detailed account of the supreme excellence of God and the greatness of His nature.

Lastly, in the third division or the third six chapters, which follow, are investigated the real nature of *prakṛiti* or matter, *puruṣa* or soul, the cosmos which is made up of the union of these two, *Īśvara* or the Supreme Lord, and the methods of attaining Him, namely, the *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti-yogas*. All these are topics already propounded in the first and second divisions, but hereafter discussed more fully.

In this thirteenth chapter are taught (1) the nature of the body (matter) and soul, (2) the characteristics of matter, (3) the means for the attainment of the soul (*chit*) as separated from the body (*uchi*), (4) the nature of the freed *ātman*, (5) the cause for the association of the soul and non-intelligent matter, and (6) *viveka-jñāna* or discriminative knowledge about these.

The Kshetra and Kshetrajna (Stanzas 1 to 4)

Having in the last chapter (that is, the twelfth) finished His discourse upon *bhakti-yoga*, Śrī Krishna now proceeds to give Arjuna further details for elucidating the several points that were mentioned in connection with the various topics taught in the last

twelve chapters. He first analyses every living thing in the universe into its body or *deha* and soul or *ātman*, and to mention their several distinctive characteristics, begins thus :—

This body is called the *kshetra* or the field (of enjoyment and activity), and the principle that is conscious of it is called the *kshetrajña* (knower of the *kshetra*) by the wise. The body contributes to the soul's enjoyment or activity, just as a common field serves the purposes of an ordinary person. So the body is called the *kshetra* and the soul the *kshetrajña*. Besides the body and the soul, there is another principle, namely, Myself the *Īvara* who should be known. Understand Me also, O Arjuna! to be the *kshetrajña* of all the *kshetras*. That is, know that everything has Me for the soul of its soul and that every *kshetra* belongs to Me and is for My enjoyment. The knowledge about these, that is, the knowledge concerning the distinction between the *kshetra* (body), the *kshetrajña* (soul) and Myself (the *Kshetrajña* or the *ātman* of all) constitutes in My opinion true *jñāna*. Let us now consider their characteristics respectively. I will tell you in brief what the *kshetra* or the field is, its character, its mutations, its origin, its characteristics, and also what the *kshetrajña* is, his powers and virtues. Rishis have in several ways sung about this in various metres of *Vedic* chants, and this has also been well determined by the *Brahmasūtra* passages full of reasoning.¹

1. The reference may be to such aphorisms as *Paratta tat sruteh* (II-3-40) and *Jaa 'ta eva* (II-3-19). These aphorisms respectively mean "The activity of the soul proceeds from the Highest (i.e., God), because the Scriptures say so", and "Therefore, he individual soul) is the knower."

Analysis of the Kshetra (Stanzas 5 and 6)

The five great elements, earth, water, fire, wind and the ether of space, *ahankāra* or the principle of egoism, *buddhi*¹ *avyakta*, or the undifferentiated, primordial matter-stuff, the eleven senses (namely, the ear, eye, skin, tongue, nose and mouth, hands, feet, and organs of excretion and generation, and the *manas*), the five sense-objects (that is, sound, touch, form, taste and smell), desire, aversion, pain—all these form the support (*ādhr̥iti*) or vehicle of the intelligent soul. All these in brief constitute the *kshetra* with its mutations. Although desire, aversion, pleasure and pain are the attributes of the soul, yet for the reason that these arise to the *ātman* on account of its connection with the *kshetra* or body, they are mentioned here as the productions and modifications of the *kshetra*.

The means for the attainment of the soul (Stanzas 7 to 10)

Now listen to the qualities of *prakṛiti* or *kshetra* that enable one to obtain the knowledge of the *ātman*. freedom from pride, unostentatiousness, harmlessness, forbearance, straight forwardness, the service of the teacher, purity, steadfastness, self-control, non-attachment to the objects of the senses (*vairāgya*), absence of egoism, perception of the evils of birth, death and old age, disease and suffering, *asaṅgi* (not wanting things other than the soul), absence of attachment to one's own children, wife, home and the like, steady equanimity of mind whether pleasant or unpleasant things occur, unswerving love and exclusive devotion to Me,

1. This may be either the intelligence or *maheś*, which is *prakṛiti* at a particular stage of evolution.

resorting to sequestered spots, distaste for the society of men, constant dwelling on the knowledge of the soul, meditation on the knowledge of Truth—this is declared to be *jñāna*: and all that is contrary thereto is ignorance.

**The characteristics of the freed at man
(Stanzas 11 to 18)**

Hear now from Me the nature of the *kshetrajña*. I will now declare that which is to be known, the *jñeya* by knowing which one enjoys immortality. This is beginningless *brahman* or the *jīvāman*. He has Me for his superior (*matparam*), and cannot be called *sat* or *asat* (existent or nonexistent)¹. This perfect soul has everywhere his hands, everywhere his feet, everywhere his eyes, everywhere heads, everywhere mouths and ears; everywhere he abides, encompassing everything, in this world. The purified *ātman*, by virtue of being devoid of the limitations of the body, has all his faculties in an enhanced degree and pervades all sorts of creatures in the universe. Shining through all the functions of the senses, yet free from all the senses, unattached to bodies, yet supporting all bodies, free from the qualities of Nature (*nirguna*), yet enjoying the *gunas*, he is inside and outside of all beings in the *baddha* (bound) and *mukta* (emancipated) conditions, moving or steady. Similarly, he is incomprehensible on account of his subtlety, near at hand (to the *jñānins*) and far away (to the ignorant), and undivided in his nature yet remaining as it were divided in all beings as man, animal and so on, on account of the difference in their bodies. He is the body's supporter, nourisher.....

1. In the *Śrāvaṇ* state, the soul with its embodiment is called *sat*, and in the *pralaya* state it is referred to as *asat*. But these states do not appertain to its essential nature, and to these descriptions do not apply to it.

and creator. He is the light of all lights: that is, it is on account of his knowledge that the sun and other luminaries shine. He is said to be beyond *tamas*: that is, he transcends even the subtle condition of *prakṛiti* known as *tamas*. He is that which is to be known as knowledge, what is knowable and that which is to be reached through knowledge (*jñānagāmya*), and is established firmly in the hearts of all beings.

Thus, briefly have I told you about the *kṣhetra* (material body), about *jñāna* or knowledge and about the *kṣhetrajña* or the thing to be known through knowledge; understanding this well, My devotees or *bhaktas* become fit to attain the state of My being.

Why 'Chit' is bound in 'Achit' (Stanzas 19 to 21)

This *prakṛiti-sambandha* to the soul is beginningless. Know that *prakṛiti* (matter) and *puruṣa* (soul) are both beginningless and the *vikāras* or the above said bad tendencies, namely, desire, aversion etc., as well as the *guṇas* or the good qualities such as absence of pride, etc., are all the products of *prakṛiti*, that is, all the *vikētras* and *guṇas* spring from matter or *prakṛiti*. So *prakṛiti* is said to be the origin of the *kārya*, *kāraṇa* and *kartriva*; that is, in *prakṛiti* abides the agency, cause and effect of every action. *Prakṛiti* produces the body and the *indriyas* or organs, whilst in the matter of enjoying pleasure and pain, the *puruṣa* or soul is said to be the cause. The *puruṣa* is the *bhoktrī* (enjoyer or experiencer) of pleasure and pain.

The differences in function, appropriate severally to matter and the soul, when in conjunction, have been taught; now I will tell you how the soul, which is inherently full of bliss, comes to experience the pleasures and pains derived from the senses-objects.

This *puruṣha*, seated in *prakṛiti* (or the body), experiences the *guṇas* born of *prakṛiti*, and the consequent attachment to these qualities is the cause of his taking birth in good and evil wombs. *Samsāra* is due to the soul's mistaken identification with the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. It gets attached to the *satva* and other qualities of *prakṛiti* and launches itself into activities for the attainment of like experiences. Acting, it is born, and born, it acts again. This circumvolution never ceases until it practises virtues like freedom from pride etc., which are the means of attaining the *ātman*.

Discriminative knowledge (Stanzas 22 to 34)

In the body, the *puruṣha* (or the soul), who is distinct from the body, is the *upadrashtri* (supervisor), the *anumantṛi* (permitter), the *bhātri* (supporter) and the *bhoktṛi* (enjoyer), and is called the *maheśvara* and the *paramātmān* or the great lord and the supreme *ātman* (in comparison with the organs of the body and the mind). He who knows this *puruṣha* and *prakṛiti* together with the *guṇas*—in whatsoever condition he may live, he is never born again.

There are three ways in which the *puruṣha* is realised. (1) Some through meditation behold the *ātman* in their body by means of their *manas*. (2) Some do so by the *yoga* of *Sāṅkhya* or *jñāna*. (3) And some realise the *ātman* through *karma-yoga*. But there are others, who, not knowing how to realise their soul in the above manner, hear of it from others and worship accordingly : even these, being devoted to what they have heard, pass beyond death.

Understand, O Arjuna, that the whole universe arises from the union between the *kṣhetra* and the

kshetrajña, or *prakṛiti* and *puruṣa*. Whatsoever thing, moving or unmoving, comes into existence, know that it arises from the union of the *kshetra* or the body and the *kshetrajña* or the soul. He sees, indeed, who observes the supreme ruler (*ātman*) abiding alike in all beings—the undecaying amid the decaying. And truly by perceiving that the ruler or the soul is similar everywhere, he harms not any *ātman* by his own, and then he passes to the supreme goal. He sees, indeed, who understands that actions are altogether wrought by *prakṛiti* alone, and that likewise the *ātman* is not the agent of any act. When he sees that the diversity of existence or the *prithagbhāva* as man, animal etc., is centred in unity, that is, is due only to *prakṛiti* and not to the soul, and that from that unity alone comes expansion and differentiation, then he attains to *Brahman*. In other words, he realises the soul. This exalted soul is without beginning, devoid of *gunas* and consequently imperishable; and it neither acts, nor gets affected, though dwelling in the body. Just as the *ākāśa*, though all pervading, is not soiled by anything by reason of its subtleness, similarly the *ātman*, though dwelling in the body of every being, is not defiled by the characteristics of the body. Though very subtle, it yet illumines the whole body, just as the one sun illumines the whole world.

They who, thus, by the eye of wisdom, perceive this difference between *prakṛiti* and *puruṣa* and the means of liberation from *bhūta-prakṛiti* (or the matter manifested in diverse existences), that is, the practice of the virtues like freedom from pride etc. these become freed from all bondage and attain the supreme *ātman*, which abides in itself and is of the nature of infinite knowledge.



CHAPTER XIV

GUNATRAYA VIBHAGA YOGA

Introduction:

In the thirteenth chapter, it was taught that by comprehending the real nature of *prakṛiti* and *puruṣa* which are associated with each other, freedom from the bondage of *prakṛiti* can be attained by the practice of certain virtues. It was also shown that the cause of bondage is attachment to pleasures and such other enjoyments which are the outcome of the *guṇas* of matter. In this chapter will be taught how the *guṇas* become the cause of bondage and how to get rid of them.

The highest knowledge (Stanzas 1 to 4)

Śrī Krishna said :—

I shall describe to you again another kind of knowledge, the highest of all kinds of knowledge, (*jñānanam jñānam uttāmanam*), having known which, all the sages have gone from this world to the highest perfection. Those who, resorting to this knowledge, have attained to a similarity with My nature, (*mama sādharmyam*) are neither born at the creation, nor die at the dissolution of the universe. In order to know the manner in which the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti* become the cause of bondage, you must know that the entire collection of beings is brought about by the union of soul and matter, and that this union is caused by Me, the *Īśvara*. My great *brahman* or *prakṛiti* is the womb in which I place the germ or the soul, and thence proceeds the origin of all beings. Whatever forms

are produced in all wombs, in respect of these the *brahman* or *prakṛiti* is the great womb and I the seed-giving father. The cause of the birth of beings is their association with the non-intelligent *prakṛiti*, brought about by the force of their previous *karma*.

Sattva, Rajas and Tamas (Stanzas 5 to 18)

It is the three *gunas* of *prakṛiti* that bind the embodied soul. *Sattva* (goodness), *rajas* (passion), and *tamas* (darkness) are the *gunas* born of *prakṛiti* that bind fast in the body its indestructible dweller. Now what are their characteristics, and how do they bind the soul? Of these three *gunas*, the *sattva*, by reason of its stainlessness, and by being luminous and harmless, binds the soul to blessedness and wisdom. Know *rajas* to be of the nature of passion. It produces *īrṣhṇā* (desire) and *saṅga* (wordly attachment). It binds the embodied soul by attachment to works. Learn next that *tamas* begets ignorance and deludes all souls dwelling in bodies. It binds by negligence, indolence and sleep. In brief, *sattva* unites one to happiness, *rajas* to activity, and *tamas*, enveloping wisdom, binds one to heedless perversity.

In certain bodies, overpowering *rajas* and *tamas*, *sattva* prevails; in some *rajas* preponderates, overcoming *sattva* and *tamas*; and in others *tamas* overwhelms the other two. The preponderance of any one of these three *gunas* must be inferred from the effects visible in the body. When intelligence is seen to shine through all the avenues of the body, then it may be concluded that *sattva* is prevalent. Greed, restless activity, endeavour, unrest, craving—these are produced when *rajas* preponderates.

Ignorance, inactivity, inadvertence and delusion are the symptoms of increasing *tamas*.

If a person dies when *sattva* preponderates, then he reaches the spotless worlds of those who know the highest truth. If death occurs when *rajas* is dominant, he takes birth amid those that are attached to work. Likewise, if one dies when *tamas* is supreme, he is born in the wombs of creatures incapable of knowledge (*moodhayoniṣṭu*) like dogs, pigs etc. It is said that the fruit of a good action is to get more *sattva* and purity, the fruit of *rajas* is pain and that of *tamas* is ignorance. *Sattva* gives knowledge, *rajas* greed only and *tamas* negligence, delusion and ignorance. Those established in *sattva* go upward, that is, acquire freedom from bondage ; persons of *rājasic* temperament stay in the middle (or this world of *samsāra*), and those steeped in *tamas*, abiding under the influence of the vilest impulses, go downward, that is, acquire the condition of the lowest types of beings like worms, plants, stones etc.

The state of perfection (Stanzas 19 and 20)

So only the *sattvic* course must be adopted. When the seer beholds no agent other than the *gunas* and also knows that which is higher than the *gunas*, that is, the *ātman* who is no agent and is beyond the qualities of *prakṛiti*, then he attains to the state of *My being*. The *ātman* by himself is perfectly pure; he is no actor, and the agency in performing various actions comes to him only as a result of his association with the qualities of *prakṛiti*. Transcending these three *gunas*, which are the products of the body, the soul is freed from birth, old age, death and pain and enjoys

immortality. Or rather, he experiences his essential nature, which is akin to My state.

Transcending the three Guṇas (Stanzas 21 to 25)

When Śrī Krishna finished His discourse on the three *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*, Arjuna desired to know the characteristics of the man who has transcended them. "What are the characteristics, my Lord", he asked, "of the person who has passed beyond the three *guṇas*, what is his conduct, and how does he go beyond the *guṇas*?"

Śrī Krishna replied :—

One who has gone beyond the *guṇas* is free from hate, when illumination, activity or folly prevails, and when these are absent, desires them not. That is, he is indifferent to the operation of the three *guṇas*. Remaining as one unconcerned, he is not ruffled by the *guṇas*. Understanding that it is only the *guṇas* that are acting, he remains calm and undisturbed by them. He is equal in joy and grief, abiding in his own self. He regards mud and gold alike, he is the same in respect of likable things as well as those which are not likable. He is endowed with courage and discrimination, is equally disposed to blame and praise, and is the same in honour and dishonour and towards friends and foes. He gives up all undertakings (to promote selfish pleasures). Such a person is said to be a *triguṇātīta*, one who has transcended the three *guṇas*.

How to overcome the Guṇas (Stanzas 26 and 27)

Now listen how to overcome these *guṇas*. He who serves me exclusively by the *yoga* of devotion, transcends these qualities of *prakṛiti* and acquires

fitness for reaching the state of *brahman*, i.e., for attaining self-realisation. For I am indeed the support of the soul (*brahman*), who is immortal and indestructible, and I am the basis of everlasting *dharma* or virtue and of absolute bliss. That is, through *prapatti* or surrender to God, the *gunas* are transcended and selfrealisation attained: and thence higher states like salvation or those bordering thereon can be attained.



CHAPTER XV

PURUSHOTTAMA YOGA

Introduction:

In the thirteenth chapter, it was shown that the association of the *purusha* or soul with *prakṛiti* or matter is beginningless. In the fourteenth, it was shown that this connection is caused by the Lord Himself (XIV. 3, 4). Further the manner in which this association is formed (XIV. 6 — 25) was described, as well as the method by which to go beyond the 'qualities' (XIV. 26, 27). In this chapter are mentioned the Supreme Lord's *līlā-vibhūti* and *nitya-vibhūti*, that is, the manifestations of His glory by way of sport and eternally. The former is this universe made up of the *kṣara* (perishable or migrating souls) and the latter is His supreme abode, where the freed souls dwell in bliss. Then His superiority to both these kinds of souls—how He is in all, and supports, owns and rules all—is shown.

Śrī Krishna first begins in this chapter with an analogy between an *asvattha* tree and the *samsāra* or the material universe, and instructs Arjuna that he must cut this tree of *samsāra* with the sword of non-attachment in order to win freedom, to become an *akshara puruṣha* and gain the *nitya-vibhūti* of salvation.

Comparison of an *asvattha* tree with *samsara* (Stanzas 1 and 2)

Śrī Krishna said :— An *asvattha* tree is spoken of in the *śrutis* with roots above and branches below. It is said to be indestructible and to have the *Vedas* for its leaves. He that knows this is a *Veda* knower. Its roots are above, because the primal origin of this universe is *Brahmā*, the creator, who is beyond the worlds that we see. Its branches are below, because they are the world of created things that we see around. The universe represented by this tree of *samsāra* is never-ending; it is *avyaya*, eternal, everlasting. The leaves that nourish this tree of *samsāra* are the *Vedas* that enjoin *kāmya-karmas* (rituals for obtaining desired objectives) and tend to prolong *samsāric* life. Down and above, its branches spread forth, nourished by the *guṇas* and having sense-objects for their sprouts. The attachment for the pleasures of the sense-objects causes its roots to spread downward in the world of men through a succession of works. Neither the form of this tree, nor its end, nor its beginning, nor its basis is known to any one here. The people of this world do not grasp the nature of this tree and cannot perceive their way to put an end to it.

How to cut this aswattha tree (Stanzas 3 to 6)

After cutting down this firm-rooted *asvattha* tree with the mighty weapon of non-attachment, that condition is to be sought after, wherefrom there is no return. But first of all how to suppress the rebellious and overpowering activities of the *gunas*? It is by seeking refuge in Him alone who is the Original *Purusha* and from whom has flowed this ancient propensity for mixing with the *gunas*. By so doing men become free from pride and delusion, victorious over the evil of attachment, devoted to the knowledge of the self, rid of worldly desires, and liberated from the pairs of opposites known as pleasure and pain. Thus enlightened, they reach the imperishable goal. That which the sun illumines not, nor the moon, nor fire; that attaining which men return no more—that is My supreme abode.

The play of the soul in this universe (Stanzas 7 to 11)

An eternal portion (*amśa*) of Myself becomes the individual soul in this world of living beings and draws to itself the senses and the *manas* that belong to *prakṛiti* or matter. Being enveloped in ignorance (*avidyā*) in the shape of beginningless *karma*, this individual soul has its knowledge and lordly power much contracted, and remains in the body which is made of *prakṛiti*. Whenever this soul leaves or enters a body, that is, during both the times of its death and birth, it takes these senses and the *manas* along with it, just as the wind carries fragrance from flowers. The senses that it carries with it are the ear, eye, touch, taste and smell and also the *manas*. Taking possession of these, the soul enjoys the objects. The

unenlightened do not perceive it (the *ātman*) when it is going out, staying or experiencing with the help of the *gūḥyas*. It is only the enlightened, those that have the eyes of wisdom, that behold it. The *yogins* who strive and persist in their attempts perceive it dwelling within their body : but those whose minds are uncontrolled and uncultured, though they may strive, behold it not.

The Glories of Purushottama (Stanzas 12 to 20)

I have said that the *ātman* (the individual soul), both in the condition of freedom and in the condition of bondage, is the manifestation of My glory. I am infinite, all-pervading, all-sustaining. The light in the sun which illumines all the world, that which is in the moon and that in fire belong to Me. Interpenetrating the earth, I sustain all creatures by My *ojas* or vital force. Becoming the ambrosial moon, I nourish the growth of plants. Becoming the *vaiśvānara* or the fire of digestion, I dwell in the bodies of all living beings, and uniting with the vital energies of the *prāṇa* and *apāna* (ingoing and outgoing breaths), I digest all sorts of food.

But why this detailed description of My glory? Know, Arjuna, that I am enshrined in the hearts of all. From Me come memory, knowledge and the faculty of reasoning. I am the person to be known by all the *Vedas*. I accomplish the ends of the *Vedas*, that is, bestow the fruits of *Vedic* rituals. I am also the Veda-knower, and I can give the exact meaning of the *Vedas*.

So listen with attention to what I am about to say. Twofold are the *puruṣas* or souls in this world,

namely, the *kshara* and the *akshara*. The *kshara* is all the living beings whose souls migrate from body to body in life after life. The *akshara* is called the *kūṭastha* or the eternally unchanging. *Kshara* therefore denotes all the embodied beings that are associated with *prakṛiti*, in other words, the souls in bondage, and the *akshara* denotes the unchanging freed souls. But the Soul Paramount is another, proclaimed as the *Paramātmān*, who, being the imperishable Lord and Suzerain, pervades and supports the three worlds of *achetana* (inanimate matter), *baddha-chetana* (bound souls) and *mukta-chetana* (freed souls). And because I transcend the *kshara* and also surpass the *akshara*, therefore I am famous in the world and the *Vedas* as the *Purushottama* or the Highest Person.

Whosoever, thus enlightened, understands Me as the *Purushottama*, is a *sarvavit* (knower of all), and he worships Me in all modes of worship. This *Purushottama* aspect of Myself is the greatest of all secrets. Thus this most secret science has been revealed by Me to you. By knowing this, one can become a man of wisdom and of fulfilled duty.



CHAPTER XVI

DAIVASURA SAMPAT VIBHAGA YOGA

Introduction:

In the thirteenth chapter, the real natures of *prakṛiti* and *puruṣa*, taken up separately and in conjunction, were taught. In the fourteenth chapter, it was shown that the attachment to the *guṇas* and its absence are the respective causes of conjunction and

separation between soul and matter, or in other words, of bondage and freedom. In the fifteenth, it was mentioned that *prakṛiti* and *puruṣha* only manifest the glory of the Lord in all conditions and that the Lord is possessed of such attributes as infinity, pervasion, sustenance and Lordship Paramount. In the present chapter, for the purpose of strengthening the faith in the teaching imparted and in order to teach the necessity of obedience to the *śāstras*, the division of creatures into *devas* (the godly) and *asuras* (the demoniac), according as they are obedient or rebellious to the *śāstraic* injunctions, is taught.

Those of a divine nature (Daivi Sampat)
(Stanzas 1, 2 and 3)

Fearlessness, purity of mind, firm devotion to the knowledge of the self, charity, self-restraint, performance of sacrifices, sacred study, austerity, uprightness, harmlessness, veracity, freedom from anger, renunciation, mental peace, abstinence from slandering, compassion for beings, absence of desire for enjoyments, mildness, modesty, absence of fickleness, strength of character, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of malice, freedom from pride—these qualities pertain to him who is born with a divine nature for divine accomplishments.

Those of demoniac nature (Asuri Sampat)
(Stanzas 4 to 20)

Pomp, pride, conceit, anger, harshness, as well as ignorance belong to him who is born of *āsuric* or demoniac nature. The divine tendencies lead to liberation, while the *āsuric* ones lead to bondage.

You need not be anxious about your own case, Arjuna, as you are born of the divine kind.

In this world, twofold is the creation of beings, namely, the divine and the demoniac. The divine has been detailed to you. So hear from Me the *āsuric*. Persons of *āsuric* nature understand not in what cases they must be active and where passive. They have no purity or cleanliness, and no good conduct, and no truth is found in them. They hold that this universe is unreal, that it has no foundation, that it has no Lord or Ruler, that it is Godless. They further hold that the universe is nothing but the product of the mutual union of male and female, having *kāma* or lust for its cause. And adopting this view, they cause ruin to their own selves. They are small witted, cruel in deed and wanting in purity of purpose. They are born for the persecution of the world.

Giving themselves up to insatiable desire, full of ostentation, pride and arrogance, clutching at unlawful things through ignorance, observing unholy vows and impure rites, they begin to act. Wedded to unlimited schemes stretching so far as even to cosmic dissolution, having sensual indulgence as their highest goal and determining that there is nothing higher than this lust and revelry, they are bound by the bonds of a hundred hopes and are entirely given over to lust and wrath. They unjustly yearn for hoarding up wealth for the gratification of their sensual desires.

They would say— "This wealth has been gained by me today, this heart's desire I shall attain, this wealth I have and this will I earn again, this foe has been slain by me, I shall slay these others too. I am

the lord, I am the enjoyer, I am successful, I am powerful. I am happy, I am wealthy and of noble birth. There is none like unto me. I will perform sacrifice, I will give in charity, I will be merry."

Thus do these persons that are blinded by ignorance think. Tossed about to and fro by unsettled and fickle thoughts, enmeshed in the web of delusion, entirely given over to sensual enjoyments, they at last fall into impure hell. Self-conceited, obstinate, filled with the intoxication of wealth and pride, they perform sacrifices only in name, for show and contrary to the ordinance. Full of egoism, confidence in their strength, insolence, lust and wrath, these malicious ones hate Me, the Lord, in their own as well as in others' bodies. Those who hate Me, who are cruel, evil and vile, I always hurl into this *samsāra* or world, and even there fling them to be born only in demoniac wombs. Attaining these demoniac wombs, becoming bewildered in birth after birth, without reaching Me at all, they go to the lowest state. This *āsuric* nature is the chief cause of the ruin of the soul.

The Triple Gates of Hell (Stanzas 21 & 22)

Desire, wrath and greed, these are the triple gates of hell, that are destructive of the *ātman*; therefore these ought to be shunned. Becoming free from these three portals of darkness, one should strive for the salvation of the soul, and then he will reach the supreme goal.

Scripture determines Duty (Stanzas 23 & 24)

He, who discarding the ordinances of the *śāstras*, pursues the course of his own desire, attains neither

perfection, nor, happiness nor the supreme goal. Therefore the scripture is your authority in determining what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. So, knowing the works that the *sāstraic* canons enjoin, it behoves you to perform them here in this world.



CHAPTER XVII

SRADDHA TRAYA VIBHAGA YOGA

Introduction :

It was indicated in the last stanza of the last chapter that the knowledge of truth and the means of attaining it are based solely on the *sāstras*, that is, the *Vedas*. In this chapter, Śrī Krishna teaches (1) that works done in contravention of the *sāstras* are *āsuric* and fruitless, (2) that works enjoined by the *sāstras* fall into a threefold division according to the motives with which they are performed, and (3) what characteristics works enjoined by the *sāstras* have.

Arjuna, not understanding that works done in contravention of the *sāstras* are fruitless, asks how such works as *yajñas*, if performed with faith, differ in their fruits according as they are *sāttvic*, *rājasic* or *tāmasic*. He asks : "What is the exact status, O Lord, of those who, discarding the *sāstraic* injunctions, perform sacrifices endowed with faith? Are their works of the nature of *sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas*?" Śrī Krishna in His answer defers for the time being the consideration of the futility of works done without the authority of the scriptures. He proceeds to expound the threefold nature of works enjoined by the scriptures.

Three Kinds of Sraddha (Stanzas 1 to 7)

The faith of every embodied human being is of three kinds. It arises from his natural tendencies or *svabhāva*, and is characterised as either *sāttvic*, *rājasic*, or *tāmasic*. Now hear it from Me. The faith of every person is in accordance with the constitution of his internal organ or *antahkaraṇa*: that is, the faith of every one accords with his nature. Man consists of nothing but his faith, and whatever faith a person is made of, such a one alone he is. Every one is an embodiment of his faith. A person's faith shows his character, his tendencies, his dispositions etc. Persons of *sāttvic* faith worship the gods, those of *rājasic* kind worship the Yakshas and Rākshasas or the inferior cruel deities, and the *tāmasic* worship the *pretas* and *bhūtas* or the ghosts and goblins.

Those who undertake the performance of fearful penances not ordained by the *śāstras*, full of ostentation and selfishness, and impelled by the force of their desires and passions, those persons of silly thought that torment the aggregate of elements forming their bodies and Me likewise that dwell therein — they are to be known as men of demoniac resolves.

Three Kinds of Food (Stanzas 8 to 10)

The preponderance of *sattva* or any other quality in the body of any being depends upon the nature of the matter that goes to compose it.

The fundamental thing to consider here is the kind of food that is taken in and assimilated in the body; for thereon depends the other activities of the body, such as sacrifice, austerity and charity. These activities are threefold according as they are actuated

by *sāttvic*, *rājasic* or *tāmasic* tendencies. So from the food which is dear to all beings and a necessity, up to *sāstraic* works like *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapas*, all things come under these three *guṇas*. Now listen to their distinction.

The foods that increase vitality, mental, vigour, strength, health, happiness and love, those that are full of juice, rich, substantial and tasteful—these are dear to *sāttvic* men. The *rājasic* desire bitter, sour, saline, very hot, pungent, burning and inflaming foods that are productive of pain, sorrow and disease. The *tāmasic* like the cold, overkept, savourless, stinking and putrid filth and the leavings of others. All these kinds of food taken into the body promote their respective *guṇas*, and so the wise man should always go in for *sāttvic* food.

Three Kinds of Yajnas (Stanzas 11 to 13)

Now as regards the sacrifices. That sacrifice is *sāttvika* which is performed by men, without any desire for fruits as enjoined in the scriptures and with the firm conviction that sacrifices so ordained ought to be performed for their own sake. The sacrifice which is performed verily with the intention of obtaining the fruit thereof and for ostentation, know it to be *rājasic*, as it is done merely for show and for the benefit of oneself. That sacrifice is *tāmasic*, which has no sanction, where no distribution of food is made, where no holy hymns (*mantras*) are recited, where no charity is made and which is destitute of all faith.

Classification of Tapas (Stanzas 14 to 19)

As regards *tapas* or austerity, it is of three kinds, namely, (1) the *tapas* of the body, (2) the *tapas* of

speech, and (3) the *tapas* of the mind. Worshipping the gods, the twice-born sages, the teachers and the wise, purity, uprightness, celibacy and harmlessness—these form the austerity of the body. Speech which causes no pain to others and is truthful, sweet and beneficial, the constant practice of recitation and the study of scriptures—these form the austerity of speech. Calmness of mind, benevolence, silent contemplation, self-control, purity of thought—these are called the austerity of the mind.

This threefold austerity, practised with utmost faith by men without any desire for fruit and devoted to God, is declared to be *sāttvic*. The austerity which is practised for the purpose of gaining respect, honour and reverence and for mere show or display, is said to be *rājasic*. It is unstable and transient as regards its fruit. That austerity which is practised from foolish obstinacy, with self-torture or with a view to ruin another is declared to be *tāmasic*.

Three Kinds of Gifts (Stanzas 20 to 22)

Now as regards the three kinds of gifts or *dāna*. The gift which is given with the idea that its giving is a duty in itself, to one who is unable to or will not make any return for it and is a proper recipient, in a fit time and place, is said to be *sāttvic*. But the gift which is given grudgingly and in expectation of a return obligation or for the fruit thereof, is declared to be *rājasic*. The gift which is given out of place and time to an unworthy person irreverently and contemptuously is considered to be *tāmasic*. Thus I have dealt with distinctions of *Vedic* sacrifice, austerity and gift, arising from *satva* and other *guṇas*.

The Mystic Utterance of "Om Tat Sat" (Stanzas 23 to 28)

Now I will tell you the significance of this *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapas*, when united with the *pranama* (Om) and when qualified by the utterance of the words, *tat* and *sat*. The threefold appellation, *Om tat sat*, is regarded as the designation of *Brahman*. With these three were the Brahmins, the *Vedas* and the *yajñas* ordained of old. Therefore the acts of sacrifice, gift and austerity that are ordained in the scriptural injunctions to the followers of the *Vedas* are always begun, after uttering the syllable *Om*. The works of sacrifice and austerity as well as the various acts of *dāna* which are performed without desiring the fruits thereof by the seekers of salvation, are always begun with the utterance of *tat*. The word *tat* is used to mean *sadbhāva* (existence) and *sādhubhāva* (goodness). It is also used with reference to any commendable act. Devotion to or steadfastness in *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapas* is also called *sat*, as well as the acts done in their performance. The sacrifice offered, the gift given and the austerity practised whichever of these is done without faith is called *asat* and avails neither here nor hereafter.



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

MOKSHA-SANNYASA YOGA

Introduction :

In the last two chapters it was taught that the proper observance of *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapas* prescribed in the *Vedas* leads to spiritual freedom and that all such

observance is commonly characterised by the use of the *pranava* in relation therewith. Further, it was shown that *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapas*, when performed for the sake of salvation, must be performed without attachment to fruit; that this non-attachment is possible only if *sattvaguna* prevails, and that this mainly depends upon the taking of proper *sāttvic* foods.

In this last or eighteenth chapter, the following points are expounded:—(1) *Tyāga* (giving up of fruits) and *sannyāsa* (renunciation of works of worldly desire), indicated as means to *moksha*, are identical in purpose. (2) The essential nature of *tyāga*. (3) The attribution of the agency of all acts to the Lord and Ruler of all beings. (4) A description of the effects produced by the *gunas* of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* in order to show that *sattva* alone is worthy of acceptance. (5) The method of attaining the Highest Person through works which are appropriate to one's own station in life and whose performance constitutes the worship of the Highest Person. (6) And the quintessence of the teaching of the whole of the *Gītā* is the exposition of *bhaktiyoga* or the practical realisation of the Lord through love and devotion.

Sannyasa and Tyaga (Stanzas 1 to 3)

To begin with, Arjuna asks Śrī Krishna to enlighten him as to the true nature of *tyaga* and *sannyāsa*, whether they are identical or distinct. He says: "Of *sannyāsa* and *tyāga*. O Lord, I desire to know distinctly the truth, pray enlighten me."

Śrī Krishna, replies:- Learned men understand by *sannyasa* the abandonment of *kāmya-karmas*, in other words, the giving up of works of worldly desire.

The resigning of the fruits of all works is called by the wise as *tyāga*. Some wise men declare that all works should be abandoned as evil, while others say that works of *yajña*, *dāna* and *tapas* should never be abandoned. In regard to this question of *tyāga*, hear from Me the conclusive truth.

How a Tyagin Works (Stanzas 3 to 12)

Tyāga has indeed been declared by Me to be of three kinds, namely, renunciation with regard to (1) fruit, (2) work and (3) agency, when I asked you to fight dedicating all works to Me (*mayi sannyasya*), with a mind devoted to the *ātman*, free from desire (*nirāśis*), without egoism (*nirmama*) and devoid of mental fever. The works of sacrifice, gift, austerity and the like must not be abandoned, but on the other hand they must be performed, as they purify the wise. That these works must be performed by giving up all attachments and fruits is My settled and best conviction.

Certainly, the abandonment of actions that are prescribed is not proper, and the renunciation of them by reason of misapprehension is declared to be *tāmasic*. He who renounces a prescribed action from fear of bodily fatigue as causing pain, will not get the fruit of his renunciation; this is said to be *rājasic*. Whenever a prescribed work is done as a duty in itself, by giving up all attachment to the work as well as its fruit, that renunciation is regarded as *sāttvika*. Filled with *sattva*, endowed with wisdom, with doubts destroyed, such a *tyāgin* (one who renounces) neither hates a work productive of evil to him, nor loves another productive of good. It is impossible for the bearer of the body to relinquish completely all actions,

to desert work wholesale. So the *tyāgin* is verily the man who gives up only the fruits of works. But some may doubt that the performance of any act is always productive of a binding effect. Now threefold is the the effect of work. It is either pleasant, unpleasant, or mixed. And such effects accrue, in due course or after death, only to those that renounce not, but not to those who renounce.

Who is the Agent? (Stanzas 13 to 17)

Now hear from Me the method of realizing that one is not the agent of any action through ascribing the agency to the Lord who is the Supreme *Ātman* and the internal ruler. Learn from Me, O Arjuna, these five causes which are declared in the Sāṅkhya¹ system to be responsible for the performance of all acts. They are: (1) the *adhiśṭhānam*, the body which is the basis for action, (2) the *kartṛi* or the agent, which is the soul, (3) the *karana* or the various instruments or organs of action, (4) the *cheshṭas* or the manifold and distinct vital activities of *prāṇa* (inspiration), *apāna* (expiration) etc., that vitalise the body and the senses, and (5) *daivam* or God who is the Inner Guide and Ruler. What soever work a person undertakes to do with his body, speech and mind, righteous or unrighteous—these five are its causes. This being the case, whoever sees the *ātman* alone as the sole agent, that man of perverted intelligence does not see properly, being possessed of an undisciplined intellect. He who is free from egoism, whose *buddhi* or understanding is not tainted by attachment, even though he may kill all these people here, he neither slays nor is bound. This

1. 'Sāṅkhya' is here taken as the *Vedānta*.

higher consciousness of one's not being independently the actor arises when the *sattva* predominates.

Effects of the Guṇas (Stanzas 18 to 40)

I will now describe to you the various effects produced by the three *guṇas* in order to show that *sattva* alone is worthy of acceptance. First, before a person undertakes to do an action, he must be aware of three things, namely, (1) himself in the capacity of the knower of the act, (2) the act itself which is to be known by him, and (3) the knowledge of how to perform it. Among these the act itself is comprised of three elements, namely, (1) the actor, (2) the act itself and (3) the *karana*, the means or the instruments through which the act is to be accomplished. Therefore, in the performance of every act, these three things must be considered, (1) knowledge or *jñāna*, (2) the act or *karma*, and (3) the actor or the *kartṛi*. These three are said to be threefold according to the differences of the *guṇas* of *prakṛiti*. Now, hear about their true nature accordingly in due order.

The knowledge by which one perceives the one indestructible reality, namely, the individual soul, in every being, remaining indivisible among the divisible, know that knowledge to be *sāttvika*. That knowledge which sees, by reason of their individuality, diverse entities of distinct natures, know that knowledge to be *rājasic*. That knowledge which is attached to a single (trifling) work as if it formed the whole, without reasoning about it and without understanding the real nature of things, and which is mean and petty, know that as *tāmasic*.

An act is said to be *sāttvic* when it is prescribed by works of religious authority, is free from attachment and is performed by one who does not desire the fruit thereof. An act is *rājasic* when it is done with a purpose, with egoism and with great effort. An act is *tāmasic*, when it is undertaken from delusion, disregarding evil consequences, loss and injury to others and one's own personal ability to do the work.

That *kartṛi* or agent is said to be *sāttvic* who is free from attachment, devoid of egoism, endowed with fortitude and fervour and unaffected by success or failure. That agent is said to be *rājasic*, who is ambitious, desirous of obtaining the fruit of works, greedy, cruel, impure and greatly affected by joy and sorrow. That agent is said to be *tāmasic* who is unqualified, vulgar, inert, malicious, deceitful, indolent, doleful and rancorous.

Such is the threefold division of *jñāna*, *karma* and *kartṛi*. Now listen to Me setting forth fully and severally the threefold division, arising from these three *guṇas*, of *buddhi* or understanding and of *dhṛiti* or fortitude, which are essential for determining all the truths and aims of existence. That *buddhi* is *sāttvic* which knows action and inaction, what ought or ought not to be done, fear and fearlessness and bondage and freedom. That *buddhi* is *rājasic* by which one understands, as different from what they really are, *dharma* and *adharma* and also what ought to be and ought not to be done. That *buddhi* is *tāmasic* which, being enveloped in ignorance (darkness), regards *adharma* as *dharma* and understands every thing to be exactly the opposite of what it really is.

The *dhṛiti* or fortitude is *sāttvika* by which, through an unswerving *yoga* (or devotion to the Lord), one sustains the activities of the mind, the vital energies (*prāṇa*) and the senses. But the fortitude with which one who desires the fruit through intense attachment upholds *dharma* (virtue), *kāma* (desire) and *artha* (wealth), is *rājasic*. That fortitude is *tāmasic* by which one who is ignorant does not give up sleep, fear, grief, langour and passion.

Now hear from Me, Arjuna, the three kinds of happiness. That pleasure is declared to be *sāttvic*, wherein by constant practice of the abovesaid methods, one finds, delight and reaches the end of pain. It is bitter like poison at the beginning and sweet as ambrosia at the end, and is born of a clearness of understanding with regard to the *ātman*. That pleasure is regarded as *rājasic* which, owing to the contact of sense-objects with the senses, is like nectar at first but ends like poison. That pleasure is *tāmasic* which, at the beginning and end, causes bewilderment to oneself and which arises from sleep, indolence and indvertence.

There is not a single being either on earth or yet in heaven among the gods who is free from the *guṇas* born of *prakṛiti*. The whole cosmos is enveloped and bound by these *guṇas*.

Duty Redeems (Stanzas 41 to 48)

Now we have seen that *tyāga*, which is the same as *sannyāsa* is the only means of attaining *moksha* and that it means renunciation in the sense that all works

ought to be performed without the least idea of (1) the fruit, (2) *mamakāra* (sense of possession) and (3) *ahankāra* or *kāritva* or the egoistic feeling that one is the agent. By ascribing all agency to God, this *tyāga* can be achieved. And this ascribing to God the authorship of all acts will arise in the mind, only if the *sattvaguna* is preponderant. Further, in order to impress on your mind the necessity for acquiring *sattva*, the distinctions of the results produced by *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* have been explained in detail. Now the method of attaining the Highest Person through work in the form of worship, appropriate to the different castes, differentiated by the distinctions of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* as Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaiśyas, and Śūdras will be mentioned.

The duties of these four castes are apportioned in accordance with the *gunas* born of their own natures, and so the duties vary according to the qualities of each. Now what are the duties that pertain to the four castes? Restraint of the senses and mind, austerity, purity, forbearance, as also uprightness, knowledge, discernment and faith (in the Vedic teachings), these are the duties native to Brahmins. Valour, heroic fire, fortitude, ability, courage in battle, munificence, the power to lead and control—these are the natural duties of the Kshatriya. Agriculture, cattle-breeding and commerce are the natural office of the Vaiśya, and service constitutes the duty of the Śūdra.

Devoted each to his own natural duty, men attain the supreme state of perfection. This is how he does it. The Supreme Lord, from whom springs the active life of all creatures and by whom all this is

pervaded—worshipping Him by one's own duties man attains to perfection. Better is one's own *dharma* though destitute of merits than the well executed *dharma* of another. By performing the duty fixed by one's own natural disposition, one does not incur sin. Let no one therefore give up his natural duties, determined by his own nature, faulty though they be. Just as fire is covered by smoke, every undertaking has its faults.

The Jnanin who has attained Siddhi (Stanzas 49 to 54)

He whose *buddhi* (understanding) is unattached in everything, self-subdued and free from selfish desire, attains by *samnyāsa* the supreme perfection of meditative devotion (where actions cease to bind and *jñāna-yoga* begins to bear fruit).

Now I shall tell you how he who has reached such perfection attains the *brahman* or the soul—the culminating goal of knowledge in brief. Possessed of pure *buddhi*, restraining the mind by fortitude, for saking sound and other objects of the senses, casting aside love and hatred, living in a retired place, practising moderation in diet, with speech, body and mind controlled, ever devoted to the *yoga* of meditation, free from worldly attachment, giving up egoism, power, pride, desire, wrath and covetousness, without selfishness and being tranquil, one becomes fitted for experiencing the state of the *brahman* (or *ātman* as he is) When he realises the *ātman*, he becomes clear in mind and feels neither grief nor desire; and being the same towards all beings, he attains supreme *bhakti* towards Me. By this *bhakti* he understands Me, who

and what I am in reality; and knowing Me thus, he forthwith enters into Me.

Self-Surrender Evokes God's Grace (Stanzas 55 to 66)

The fruition of prescribed duties, when performed as worship to Me, has now been told. Even ordinary *kāmya* works, which are intended to procure selfish benefits, may be done without desire for fruit and with devotion to Me. If so done, they too lead to the same result. By ever doing all acts (even those prescribed for attaining worldly desires) having recourse to Me, he attains by My grace the everlasting and imperishable goal. Therefore, mentally renouncing all works in Me, hold Me as your supreme goal. With this attitude of mind, always have your thoughts absorbed in Me. And with your thoughts thus dwelling upon Me, you will, by My grace, overcome all obstacles in this *samsāra*. If, on the other hand, you do not listen to Me from egoism, you will be utterly lost. Even should you decide not to fight in this war, by the strength of your egoism this resolve of yours will become futile and false : for Nature will constrain you to fight. Bound by your own act that springs from your innate, natural disposition, you will be compelled to perform involuntarily what you have from ignorance decided not to do.

The Lord dwells in the region of the heart of all beings, causing them all to revolve, as though mounted on a machine (i.e., of *prakṛiti*) by His wonderful power. With all your soul, seek refuge in Him in every way, and by His grace you will obtain supreme peace and the everlasting state, the immortal empyrean.

Thus, this knowledge which is of greater secrecy than any other secret, has been revealed to you. Reflect upon it fully and do as you wish.

Hearken once more to these supreme words of Mine, which will reveal to you the greatest of all secrets. For, as you are exceedingly beloved by Me, I will teach you what is for your benefit. Have your *manas* always on Me, be devoted to Me, do worship unto Me, do obeisance unto Me. Then to Me alone you will come. In truth, I promise this unto you, as you are very dear to Me. Practising well renunciation in respect of all *dharma*s, or in other words, practising all these *dharma*s of *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti* *yogas* as modes of My worship, with great love and entirely renouncing the fruit, the sense of personal ownership and the sense of agency (the *phala*, *karma* and *karṣitva*) with regard to these, seek Me as your sole refuge, and I will deliver you from all sins. Be of good cheer and regret no more. I will lift you from all sins.

Value of the Gita (Stanzas 67 to 72)

This great secret that has been declared to you is not to be revealed to one who is non-austere (i.e., practises no austerities), to one who is loveless (i.e., devoid of *bhakti*), to one who is undutiful (i.e., does not serve his teacher and Me) and to one who is envious (i.e., who cavils at Me). Whosoever expounds this great secret to My living devotees, he will practise supreme *bhakti* and doubtless come unto Me alone. There is none among mankind who does Me dearer service than he, nor shall there be on earth any one more beloved to Me than he. And whoever

will study this sacred colloquy of ours, by him I shall be worshipped by the *yajña* of knowledge. Even should a person hear it, endowed with faith and free from envy or reviling, he also, becoming freed from sins, shall reach the blessed abodes of the righteous. Have you with one pointed attention listened to what I said? O Arjuna? Has your delusion, born of ignorance, been completely destroyed?

Arjuna's Resolve (Stanza 73)

Thus, questioned kindly by the Lord, Arjuna replies: "Delusion is gone, enlightenment has been obtained, Achyuta, though Your grace. With vanished doubts I stand ready to do Your bidding."

Concluding Verses (Stanzas 74 to 78)

(Here ends this wonderful conversation between Śrī Krishna and Arjuna about the truths of philosophy explanatory of the ultimate facts of the universe, of matter and soul and God. A few words by Sañjaya conclude the *Gītā*, even as it begins with the opening question of Dhṛitarāshṭra.)

Sañjaya says in conclusion :

"Thus did I hear, O King Dhṛitarāshṭra, this dialogue between Śrī Krishna and the noble-minded Arjuna, which is wonderful and thrilling. By the blessing of Vyāsa, I heard this supreme secret, this *yoga*, directly from Śrī Krishna, the Lord of all *yogas*, when He was Himself communicating it. Remembering over and over again, O King, this marvellous and holy dialogue between Śrī Krishna and Arjuna, I rejoice again and again. And recollecting again and

again that most marvellous form of Lord Hari, great astonishment seizes Me, O King, and I rejoice again and again. Wherever is Śrī Krishna, the Lord of *yoga*, wherever is Arjuna the archer, there, I am convinced, fortune, victory, lordly power and virtue shall eternally dwell."

Om Tat Sat



Vishwaroopadharshanam





Lord Abhaya Anjaneyaswamy