

Third Chapter

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of Gītā is based on man's experience. While starting this gospel, (from 2/11), Lord Kṛṣṇa first of all clarifies that the body and the soul are totally different from each other. The body is transitory, unreal, limited and perishable, while the soul is eternal, real, omnipresent and imperishable. Therefore, one should neither feel sad at the destruction of the perishable nor should have a desire to maintain the imperishable—this is called discrimination. This discrimination is very essential in all the three disciplines of Action, Knowledge and Devotion. When a man discriminates the self from the body, the desire for salvation is aroused. Not to speak of salvation even the desire for heaven etc., is aroused, when a man regards his own self as different from the body. Therefore, the Lord starts His gospel with discrimination.

This topic of discrimination, begins with the eleventh verse of the second chapter and continues upto the thirtieth verse. The Lord, instead of using philosophical terminology, has used simple terms to enable people to understand the topic easily. It means, that every person deserves God-realization because the human body has been bestowed upon us, only to realize Him. So, every human being can realize God, by giving due importance, to discrimination.

For this topic, even the term 'intellect', has not been used by the Lord. In order to distinguish the real from the unreal, the imperishable from the perishable, the eternal from the transitory and the soul (spirit) from the body, there is, need only for discrimination rather than intellect. Discrimination is beyond intellect. As prakṛti (nature) and Puruṣa (spirit) both are without beginning (Gītā 13/19), so is discrimination, which

distinguishes, the real from the unreal. This discrimination has been bestowed upon all creatures by God, and it is revealed in the intellect. Birds and beasts, also know what should or should not be eaten. Even trees and creepering plants feel hot and cold and experience favourable and unfavourable circumstances. Human beings, are specially endowed with this discrimination, which can release them from the bondage of birth and death and leads them, to eternal quietude and bliss.

When this discrimination is aroused i.e., when a man can distinguish between the spirit and the body, his affinity for the world, including senses, mind and intellect, is renounced and his intellect, becomes purified and equanimous.

In the Discipline of Action the resolute intellect is single (Gītā 2/41).^{*} When a man firmly resolves that he has to attain salvation, favourable or unfavourable circumstances are no obstacle and thus he attains equanimity, without making any effort. When a man resolves to attain God-realization, his attachment and attraction for the world begins to disappear. Attachment to pleasure and prosperity, is the main obstacle to the attainment of a resolute intellect (Gītā 2/44).

Having laid emphasis on resolute intellect, in the Discipline of Action, the Lord asks Arjuna, specially to perform his duty with equanimity. He declares, "You have a right to action alone, but never at all to its fruit" (2/47); "Perform your duty being steadfast in Yoga" (2/48) viz., equanimity. The Lord also declares, "Far inferior to the Yoga of wisdom, is action" (2/49) i.e., action performed for its fruit, is far inferior to the Yoga of wisdom (equanimity). He further declares, "Seek thou refuge

^{*} In the Discipline of Knowledge there is predominance of discrimination, in the Discipline of Devotion there is predominance of reverence and faith while in the Discipline of Action there is predominance of resolute intellect. But it does not mean that in the Discipline of Action there are no discrimination, reverence and faith. What it means is that resolute intellect predominates. Similarly in the Disciplines of Knowledge and Devotion also there is resolute intellect.

in equanimity." Then He declares, "Endowed with wisdom (evenness of mind), one casts off during this life both good and evil deeds; therefore devote thyself to Yoga; Yoga is skill in action" (2/50).

Arjuna had already made up his mind not to fight. So in the thirty-first verse of the first chapter, he said, "I do not foresee any good in slaying my kith and kin." Then in the forty-fifth verse, he says, "What a great sin have we decided to commit, by preparing ourselves to slay our own people!" In the fifth verse of the second chapter, Arjuna says, "It is better to live by begging, than to slay these honoured teachers (elders)." In the third verse of the second chapter, Lord Kṛṣṇa directs Arjuna to arise, shaking off his petty faint-heartedness, while Arjuna declared his determination not to fight in the ninth verse of the second chapter.

Listener cannot understand what a preacher preaches, if he is already full of prejudice. That is why, Arjuna could not have a thorough grasp of the topic explained to him, by Lord Kṛṣṇa.

He could not make out the real meaning of Lord Kṛṣṇa's words. These appeared to him to be ambiguous and confusing. So Arjuna puts questions to Lord Kṛṣṇa in the next two verses, in order to get his doubt cleared.

अर्जुन उवाच

ज्यायसी चेत्कर्मणस्ते मता बुद्धिर्जनार्दन ।
तत्किं कर्मणि घोरे मां नियोजयसि केशव ॥ १ ॥
व्यामिश्रेणेव वाक्येन बुद्धिं मोहयसीव मे ।
तदेकं वद निश्चित्य येन श्रेयोऽहमाप्नुयाम् ॥ २ ॥

arjuna uvāca

jyāyasī cetkarmanaste matā buddhirjanārdana
tatkiṁ karmaṇi ghore mām niyojayasi keśava
vyāmiśreṇeva vākyaena buddhiṁ mohayasīva me
tadekaṁ vada niścitya yena śreyo'hamāpnuyām

Arjuna said:

If you think that knowledge is superior to action, O Janārdana (Kṛṣṇa), why then do You make me do a dreadful deed, O Keśava (Kṛṣṇa)? With your complex words You seem to bewilder my mind; therefore, tell me plainly the one principle, by which I may attain the highest good. 1-2

Comment:—

'Janārdana'—By this term Arjuna means to suggest, that as God fulfils desires of His devotees He will undoubtedly fulfil his desire also.

'Jyāyāśi cetkarmanaste matā buddhirjanārdana tatkiṃ karmaṇi ghore mām niyojayasi keśava'—Its a common human weakness, that one puts queries to others with a view to getting a response, which would support his own views. It is cowardice, because valour consists in carrying out the instructions of the preacher whether these are, favourable or hostile. It is because of this weakness or cowardice, that he experiences difficulty in unfavourable circumstances. When he finds himself unable to face the unfavourable circumstances, he disguises himself as a good man i.e., the evil masquerades itself as a virtue. It is very difficult to renounce this sort of evil. In the case of Arjuna also, the evil of the renunciation of his duty has disguised itself as a virtue of non-violence. So, he regards knowledge as superior to action and asks Lord Kṛṣṇa, why he urges him to do a savage deed, of fighting.

The Lord, in the thirty-ninth verse of the second chapter, referred to equanimity (evenness of mind), but Arjuna took it to be, knowledge. Therefore, he tells the Lord, that He had already told him, "This, which has been taught to thee, is wisdom concerning Sāṅkhyayoga (Discipline of Knowledge); but now listen to wisdom concerning Karmayoga (Discipline of Action); endowed with which, thou shalt cast off the bondage of action." He had also told him, "Action is far inferior to the Discipline of

Wisdom (Knowledge)" (2/49). Thus, if according to the Lord, knowledge is superior to action, He should not urge him to be engaged, even in virtuous actions such as oblation, charity and penance etc., which are sanctioned by scripture. But still, He is urging him to do the savage deed of the slaughter of warriors, in the war. Why?

First, Arjuna, filled with enthusiasm, ordered Lord Kṛṣṇa to place his chariot between the two armies so that he could observe the warriors, eager for battle. But, when Lord Kṛṣṇa, having placed the chariot between the two armies, in front of Bhīṣma and Droṇa and other kings, asked Arjuna to behold those Kurus assembled there, his delusion, because of his attachment to his kinsmen, was aroused. So he thought, knowledge to be superior to action, as in the case of knowledge a man has not to perform such savage deeds as the slaughter of warriors in a war. So Arjuna asks Lord Kṛṣṇa, why he urges him to perform such a savage deed.

Here the term 'Buddhiḥ' has been taken in the sense of knowledge, otherwise he would not have put this question. If Arjuna had understood 'equanimity' by the term 'Buddhiḥ', then the Lord's statement would have not appeared as confusing. The reason is, that the Lord, in the forty-eighth verse of the second chapter, had already asked him to perform action being steadfast in equanimity. Using the term 'confusing words' will be purposeful only, when there might have been two contentions in the mind of Arjuna and only then this question might arise, "If you consider knowledge superior to action, then why do you urge Me to take savage action?" In the third chapter in response to Arjuna's question, Lord Kṛṣṇa declares, that in this world there are two disciplines—the Discipline of Knowledge and the Discipline of Action. It means, that Arjuna took the meaning of the term 'Buddhiḥ', to be knowledge.

A striver can receive the correct answer to his question,

only if he puts it with faith and reverence. Arjuna has full faith in Lord Kṛṣṇa and holds him in great reverence. Therefore, his question shows, that he is even prepared to perform the savage deed of fighting, in order to attain salvation.

'Vyāmiśreṇeva vākyena buddhiṁ mohayasīva me'—Arjuna says, that sometimes he asks him to perform his duty (2/48) while another time He asks him to seek refuge in knowledge (2/49). Thus, with an seemingly mixed words, He seems to bewilder his mind i.e., Arjuna is not able to understand whether he should perform his duty or take refuge in knowledge.

Here, the use of the term 'eva' (as it were) two times, shows Arjuna's reverence for Lord Kṛṣṇa. It is because of this reverence for the Lord, that he regards the utterance of the Lord as true, thinking that He is not confusing him. But because of his own lack of understanding, the Lord's utterance seems to him to be perplexing and it bewilders his mind. Had the Lord in fact bewildered his mind, then who would have removed his delusion?

'Tadekaṁ vada niścītya yena śreyo'hamāpnuyām'—Arjuna requests Lord Kṛṣṇa to tell him decisively, one principle either of action or of knowledge, by which he may attain the highest good or bliss. Arjuna is repeating the same request which he had already mentioned, "Tell me decisively what is good for me (2/7).

Appendix—So long as we accept (assume) the existence of the world, an action seems dreadful or pleasant. The reason is that by cognising the entity of the world, we have our eye on an action rather than on our duty. But when we mind our duty, the action does not seem dreadful or pleasant.



Link:—The Lord, in the next three (third, fourth and fifth) verses, answers the complex words said, in the first two verses.