

CHAPTER IV

Arjuna was still doubt-ridden. “O Lord,” he began, “You said that the bodily changes are like the stages of wakefulness, dream and sleep. But we do not forget our experiences when we awake from deep sleep. The experiences of previous births are destroyed in memory by the incident called ‘death.’” Krishna replied that it was not possible to recall to memory all experiences, but it was possible to recall some. For the Atma persisted, though the vehicle changed.

Arjuna then shifted to another point, a point which pesters many besides Arjuna. That is why Krishna says, “*Dheerasthathra na muhyathi*,” “the Dheera (wise man) is not deluded by this.” He does not say Arjuna should not be deluded by this. He intends to teach *all* wavering minds. Krishna solves every doubt as soon as it arises. He said, “Arjuna, while passing through the three stages, Buddhi

(intellect) somehow manages to keep some points in its hold. But it too is destroyed when death comes to the body. At one stroke, all is forgotten. Memory is the function of the intellect, not the Atma.

“Now consider this: You cannot now tell exactly where you were on a definite day, ten years ago, can you? But you existed that day, ten years ago. About that there is no doubt. You dare not deny your existence then. The same is the case of the life before this which you lived, though you have no recollection how and where. The wise man is not deluded by such doubts nor agitated by them.

“The Atma does not die. The body does not stay. Do you think that your grief at their possible death will make the Atma of your opponents happy? That is an insane thought. The Atma does not derive joy or grief, whatever happens or does not happen. Let the senses keep to their places. There is no reason to fear. It is only when they start contacts with objects, that the twin distractions, joy and grief, get produced. When you hear someone defaming you, you feel anger and grief, but no such agitation can take place if the words do not fall on your ears. The object-ward movement of the senses is the cause of grief and its twin, joy.

“It is like heat and cold. When it is the cold season, you crave for warmth and in the hot season you crave for coolness. The sense-object contact is exactly like this. So long as the world is there, objective contact cannot be

avoided. So long as the burden of previous births is there, the joy-grief complex cannot be avoided. Still, one can master the art, the discipline, the secret of avoiding them or bearing them without bother.

“Of what use is it to wait till the waves are silenced, before you wade into the sea for a bath? They will never cease. The wise man learns the trick of avoiding the blow of the onrushing wave and the drag of the receding wave. But a sea bath is essential. Some people avoid that very thing because they are too idle to learn the art. Arjuna! Wear the armour of fortitude, of *Thithiksha*, and the blows of good and bad fortune can never harm you.

“Thithiksha means equanimity in the face of opposites, putting up boldly with duality. It is the privilege of the strong, the treasure of the brave. The weak will be as agitated as peacock feathers, they are ever restless, with no fixity even for a moment. They sway like the pendulum, this side and that; once towards joy, the next moment towards grief.

“Here, some pause has to be made on one point. Fortitude is different from patience. Thithiksha (equanimity) is not the same as *Sahana*. *Sahana* is putting up with something, tolerating it, bearing it, because you have no other go; having the capacity to overcome it, but yet, disregarding it—that is the spiritual discipline. Patiently putting up with the external world of duality combined with inner equanimity and peace—that is the path to Liberation.

Bearing all, with analytic discrimination—that is the type of *Sahana* that will yield good result.”

(Viveka is the word used for such discrimination. It means the capacity to recognise what is called the “*Aagamaapaayina*” nature of the objective world; that is to say, the world of objects that “come and go” and are not eternal.)

“Generally, man seeks only happiness and joy. Under no stress will he desire misery and grief! He treats happiness and joy as his closest well-wishers and misery and grief as his direct enemies. This is a great mistake. When one is happy, the risk of grief is great. Fear of losing the happiness will haunt the man. Misery prompts inquiry, discrimination, self-examination and fear of worse things that might happen. It awakens you from sloth and conceit. Happiness makes you forget one’s obligations to oneself as a human being. It drags man into egoism and the sins that egoism leads one to commit. Grief renders man alert and watchful.

“So misery is a real friend; happiness spends out the stock of merit and arouses the baser passions. So it is really an enemy. Really, misery is an eye-opener. It promotes thought and the task of self-improvement. It also endows one with new and valuable experiences. Happiness draws a veil over experiences that harden a person and make him tough. So troubles and travails are to be treated as friends, at least; not as enemies. Only, it is best to regard both happiness and misery as gifts of God. That is the easiest path for one’s own liberation.

“Not to know this is the basic ignorance. A person so ignorant is blind. Really, happiness and misery are like the blind man, who must be accompanied ever by one who sees. When the blind man is welcomed, you have inevitably to welcome the man with eyes, for, he is the constant comrade of the blind man. So too, happiness and misery are inseparable. You cannot choose only one. Moreover, misery highlights the value of happiness. You feel happy, by contrast with misery.” Thus said Krishna to Arjuna, to teach him the insignificance of all duality.

Then Arjuna resumed: “*Madhava* (God, Lord of Universe)! What is the profit if your advice is followed and if the necessary Thithiksha (equanimity) is cultivated? Forbearance is perhaps the only result. There is no benefit, isn’t it?” Krishna replied, “O Son of Kunthi! The hero is the steady person who is not agitated to the slightest extent by ups and downs caused by roaring waves on the sea of life; who does not lose the poise which has become part of his nature; who keeps to his schedule of spiritual discipline, whatever the attraction or distraction. The wise man is he, who is unaffected by the ever-present dualism of the objective world. He is the person referred to as ‘Dheera’ (wise man).”

“*Dhee*” means “Buddhi”; it is the quality that makes a person a “Purusha” or perfect Man. It is not the dress or the moustache that marks out the “man.” Manhood comes with the rejection of the dual. To deserve the status, he

ought to earn victory over internal foes, rather than the external. His exploit is to conquer the twin foes of joy and grief.

“Well, you might have another doubt also. Your heart is a nest of doubts! You might still question, what is the gain of victory. The gain is Immortality, let Me assure you. Things of the world cannot confer that state of Bliss. All that they can give is relative, not Absolute Bliss. When you rise above joy and grief, Bliss is absolute, independent, full. Arjuna, You are a Man among men. So you have no need of this paltry victory over worldly enemies. You deserve the Bliss of Immortality.” Thus saying, Krishna began telling him of the science of Atma and Anatma, the discipline by which one can discriminate between the two.

“The *Atma Jnani* is not bound by the results of karma. It is only those who indulge in karma without the awareness of the Atma, (their real Self, unaffected by what they do or feel or think,) that do get bound. Like the person who has learnt swimming, the Jnani can safely wade into the sea of worldly activity. If you do not know swimming, but yet enter the sea, the waters will swallow you up and death is sure.”

This explains why Krishna taught Arjuna the key science of Atma Jnana. The Atma does not kill, nor does it die. Those who believe that it kills or dies are unaware of its nature. The Atma of Arjuna does not kill, the Atma of Bhishma or Drona does not die, the Atma of Krishna does

not prompt! These are just phases of the cause-consequence duality. The Atma cannot be the cause or consequence of any karma. It is *Nir-vikara*, incapable of change.

“There are six forms of modulation or modification: originating, existing, growing, altering, declining, getting destroyed. These are the *Shad-vikaras*. Originating or *Janma* is when it ‘was not’ and later, ‘is.’ When it ‘is’ and becomes ‘is not,’ it is called ‘*maranam*’ or death. *Janma* happens to organic beings, not inorganic things. But the Atma has no organs, it is *Nir-avayava*. The Atma is not born and so how can it die? Whom does it kill? It is unborn, eternal.

“Just as a person discards old clothes and wears new ones, the *dehi* (dweller in the body) discards one body and dons another. The body is to the individual what the clothes are to the body. If you understand the real nature of the Atma, then you would not give way to grief. All the weapons that you wield can harm but the material body. They cannot harm the modificationless Atma. Know this as truth and renounce this despondency.

“The foremost duty of a Kshatriya is to stay on the side of Dharma and destroy Adharma. Consider your good fortune! You have on this battlefield worthy foemen like Bhishma and others. This same Bhishma fought in the past with his own Guru, the Brahmin, who taught him all the arts, the great Parasurama himself, in order, primarily, to carry out his Kshatriya duty. And now you, like a coward, are

afraid to take arms against such stalwarts. A Kshatriya finds his duty fulfilled when he upholds the cause of Dharma, in spite of all odds. That is the path of progress.

“Kshatham means ‘*Dukham*’ (sorrow), and a Kshatriya is he who saves beings from sorrow. A chance like this to wage a war on behalf of Dharma against the forces of Adharma comes but rarely to man. You have been blessed as a Kshatriya to take part in this *Dharmayuddha*. Just imagine how much merit you will acquire by the service to the world, which you are set to do now. The war that is waged to establish *Shanthi* and *Soukhya* (peace and plenty) in the world is referred to as *Dharmayuddha*, and this is just such a struggle, where Justice is bound to win.

“The Kauravas have desisted from no sin, no injustice and no vice. They insulted elders, deserted the virtuous, defamed the chaste, and wounded the self-respect of the good. Countless are their misdeeds. Now, the moment for retribution has come. They are about to answer for all their crimes. Just at this hour, if you behave like a poltroon, you bring dishonour to your parents, your brothers and indeed to the entire Kshatriya caste.

“You imagine that it is a sin to engage in war. That is a great error. The sin, on the other hand, lies in avoiding the chance to destroy the wicked, in prolonging the agony of the virtuous. Give up your Dharma now...and you run the risk of falling into perdition. Hold fast to it, and you are untouched by sin. Be of fixed mind. Do not give way to

either one or the other among all the dualities of the world.” From the 31st Sloka of this chapter, Krishna has spoken of this *Swadharmanishtha*, in eight slokas.

One should engage in activity, with a mind steady in the midst of fortune, good and bad. This was what Krishna advised in the 37th sloka. The 39th is a transitional verse for after speaking of “*Esha thebhihithaa saamkhya*” (I have described to you the Saamkhya arguments), Krishna says that He will go on to teach him the Yoga Buddhi or Buddhi Yoga and asked him to listen with care.

When the desire to attain the fruit of action is renounced with full intellectual awareness, then, it becomes what Krishna calls, “*Buddhiyogam*.” The intellect has to be purified and trained. Otherwise, it is impossible to give up attachment to the fruits of action and to continue doing things, as either duty or dedication. Such a purified intellect is named “Yoga Buddhi.” Cultivate it and then, through it, liberate yourself from the bondage of karma. Really speaking, you, the true *you* are above and beyond karma.

You might say that you will desist from karma rather than practise the difficult discipline of renouncing the fruits thereof. But that is impossible. No, Karma is inevitable. One has to do some karma or other. Not for a single moment can one free oneself from karma “*nahi kaschith kshanamapi*” says Krishna, in the third Chapter of the Geetha.

“Arjuna! Every *karya* (deed) or karma (activity) has a beginning and an end. But *Nishkama Karma* (desireless

karma) has no such. That is the difference between the two. When karma is done with a view to the gain therefrom, one has to suffer the loss, the pain, and even the punishment. But Nishkama Karma frees you from all these.

“Desire the fruits of karma, and you get born again and again, caught up in that desire. Give up that desire, you are liberated from the flux. The practice of this type of renunciation ends the state of bondage. The main point is to stick to the goal. The goal is karma, not *Karmaphala* (Fruit of action). Let me tell you that the desire or the fruit of one’s acts is an indication of Rajo Guna (passion), which does not befit you. Perhaps you will prefer to remain inactive. Well, that is an indication of Thamo Guna (dullness, ignorance)! It is even worse than Rajo Guna.” The Lord has laid down four commands: the first one a “do” and the other three “don’ts.” The first is insisting on the cultivation of strength, the rest requiring the avoidance of weakness.

Of course, it is not Arjuna alone that got such advice. The whole of mankind needs it. Arjuna is only the representative “Man.” Students of the Geetha must learn this lesson first: that the Geetha is primarily for every seeker.

Another point to be noted is this: Geetha is addressed to Man, not to birds and beasts or to the gods or devathas. Man performs acts prompted by the desire for the fruits thereof. If the act does not yield fruit, he will not do the act at all. Profit, gain, reward, result—these man seeks. But this rule does not apply to those who take the Geetha in their

hands to drink the nectar of the Lord's Message. Not all do yearn for the nectar. If you do so, it is evident that you aspire for eternal joy, eternal liberation. Then you must pay the price, the giving up of the desire for the fruit of action, and dedicate everything at the Feet of the Lord.