

CHAPTER XVII

“Whoever is busy with no other thoughts than those about Me, whoever is ever remembering Me, he certainly will release his dying breath through the centre of the head; he will attain Me. I am as near him, as he is near Me. My dear Arjuna! How can I forget him, who never forgets Me? Forgetting is a human frailty, not the characteristic of God, let Me tell you! There is no need for Yoga or Thapas, or even Jnana; whether you give these up since you are too weak or whether, in spite of having the strength, you do not feel like struggling to master these, it does not matter. I do not ask for Yoga or Thapas. I only ask, that your mind be fixed on Me. Devote your mind to Me, dedicate it to Me, that is all I ask for.

“If a Sadhaka cannot do at least this act of dedication to the Lord, I wonder what his sadhana is capable of? If you plead that you have not the strength of mind I ask where

the strength comes from to dedicate yourself as you do now to hollow ideals, the vain fantasies of family, fortune and fame. Can you not direct this strength for that supreme dedication? Man easily offers his all to poisonous objective pleasures. But squirms and protests as if a mountain is tumbling on him when the call is made to dedicate his thoughts, feelings and acts to the Almighty! Salvation in his eyes is as cheap and as easy to attain, as greens in the vegetable market! He seeks to escape from bondage as easily as that. He does not yearn much, but he desires to earn much in the spiritual field! He is sunk more in Thamas than in Thapas. But he wishes for the fruits that Thapas alone can offer.

“Those, who are prompted by genuine desire for the fruit, must overcome all obstacles and temptations, doubts and disappointments and dwell on the thought of the Lord. Then the Lord will not keep apart. He will confer on that Sadhaka the status of Sameness, described as *Aham Brahmasmi*. (‘I am you, You are I, We are one.’) And the Sadhaka will be contemplating this Unity without break. This is referred to as *Ananyabhaava*.”

Arjuna asked, “You say that this Ananya-bhaava, this *Ananya Bhakthi* is quite easy and that there is no need to take any greater trouble. You also declare that for those who have acquired it, You are readily attainable! Well, what exactly is the benefit of attaining you?”

Krishna smiled at this and replied, “Arjuna! What greater benefit is there than that? That holy victory makes

mortal man a Mahatma. You may still pose the question: Of what benefit is it to become a Mahatma? Listen. The Mahatma is far superior to the ordinary man. The latter is established in the body and the Jiva; he identifies himself with the body and with breath, with the particular, ‘the wave.’ So, he is tossed about by joy and grief; he rises or falls with each experience. Between snatches of calm and storm, he reels under many a blow.

“The Mahatma is free from all dual experience. He is above and beyond. He has released himself from identity with the particularised. He is the Universal, the Eternal, the Changeless, the *Brahma-bhaava*, not the *Jivabhaava*. He knows that the Atma is not a limited entity. He feels that it extends beyond all limits. He is free from the blemish of Thamas and Rajas. He is neither dull nor driven about by desire. He has pure consciousness, unaffected by attachment or hate. Many who style themselves as such, nowadays, have no purity in their hearts. Their consciousness is soiled by foulness. But the pure in heart have no further birth and death. They are under no obligation to appear again on earth. Without attaining that purity, you cannot escape the round of birth and death, however many your meritorious deeds, however high your spiritual status, however glorious the heaven you have secured! Only those who are perpetually in that Brahmabhaava can attain this Timeless Me and be freed from the chain, by merging in Me.”

At this, Arjuna gave expression to another doubt that worried him. He asked, “If that is so, why do the Upanishads

declare that those who reach the heaven, *Brahma Loka*, need not be born again? Please make that clear who exactly are those that are freed from this cycle of birth and death?”

“Arjuna! There are two types of liberation mentioned in the Upanishads: *Sadyo Mukthi* (Liberation), and *Krama Mukthi* (Ultimate Liberation), *Sadyo Mukthi* is also referred to as *Kaivalya Mukthi* (Supreme Liberation). For earning this, no one need aspire for any heaven. They get this, on the spot, and not by stages, step by step. Liberation secured thus is a possession forever. The rest are liable to change. When the effect of the merit acquired wears out, heaven has to be given up, and life on earth starts anew. Such souls know no merging. Only those who attain *Kaivalya* (state of retrieval from the bondage of the five elements), merge and become One with the Eternal, the Universal.”

“That is to say,” intercepted Arjuna, “the souls that attain *Kaivalya* are destroyed, is it not? Or is there any difference between merging and destruction, *laya* and *naasam*?”

“No, Partha! *Layam* is not *naasam*, merging is not destruction. *Layam* happens when it becomes invisible.”

“That is what happens when a thing is destroyed. It becomes invisible, we cannot see it any more.”

“But just because a thing is gone out of sight, how can you pronounce it ‘destroyed’? No. A lump of sugar or salt placed in water disappears. You can see it no more, but can

you say it has been destroyed? Or, do you say it has merged? It is there, the taste declares it. It has lost the form, but is present as its characteristic, its Guna. The Jiva also merges like this in Brahman. It is not destroyed at all. When the Jiva is not merged like this, it can at best only wander between heaven and earth, deserving life in heaven for some time and descending again to earth for further efforts towards salvation.”

Arjuna was still afflicted with doubt. He asked, “Krishna, you say that no heaven, even the highest Brahma Loka, can save man from the cycle of birth and death. Then, what is the royal road to Salvation? Do you mean to say, that those who strive for those heavens have to satisfy themselves with just that and no more?”

Krishna answered, “Partha! There is a State that knows no decline, beyond all these heavens. There are many roads by which that State can be won. Unaware of these roads or of the joy of that State, man is taking to others that are either crooked or comfortable. He does not know how to distinguish between the right road and the wrong.

“I may tell you that there are four roads which are now used by mankind: (1) Karma-atheetha, beyond karma, unaffected by karma; (2) Nishkama Karma, Karma without any desire for the fruit thereof, karma unaffected by any craving for the result therefrom; (3) Sakaama Karma, Karma with the ambition to reap and enjoy its fruit, and (4) Karma-bhrashta, karma that knows no restraint or control.

“The Karma-atheethas are the Jivan-mukthas. All their karmas have been burnt up by the Fire of Jnana. Their impulses for action have been scorched by the Wisdom they have gained. They have no further need for injunctions and prohibitions, (*Vidhi* and *Nishedha*). They need no sadhana, like dana, (charity), dharma (virtuous living), thapas (austerity). All that they do or feel or think will be Divine, holy, virtuous, beneficial to mankind. The very earth they tread on is sacrosanct. Every word they utter will be the word of God. Their breath need not take them, on death, to realms that are heavenly; they merge, on the falling away of the bodily raiment, without delay, in Brahman. Such are the Jivis who were described by Me now as having Kaivalya Mukthi, Brahma-praapthi or Sadyo Mukthi.

“Next, the second group: the adepts at Nishkama Karma. These are the *Mumukshus* (aspirants), alert on the path of liberation, who are intent on attaining it. They perform each act as a step in the realisation of the Lord. So they can never do anything bad. They do not look forward to the result. They leave it to the Lord to give it, or withhold it. They are not prompted by worldly motives or even by the desire to gain heavenly pleasure. Their aim is just this: Liberation from the bondage of the objective world. They win the Grace of the Lord in proportion to the steadiness of their faith and practice.

“The third group, which believes in Sakama Karma, performs all acts through the desire for the fruit thereof. Since they have an eye on the successful earning of the

fruit, they will engage themselves only in acts that are approved by the Sastras. They will not do any sinful or prohibited act. They will equate each act with the merit it will confer, the happiness it will ensure, the heaven it will win. Such men, when they depart from this world will enter the Lokas (Supra-mundane worlds) they have sought and worked for, and having stayed there as long as their merit entitles them, they have to return to earth.

“The fourth group is not guided by any rule of conduct. They have no norms, no discrimination between virtue and vice, right and wrong, proper and improper. They have no horror of hell, no conception of heaven, no dread of the devil, no reverence for God, no respect for the Sastras, no vision of Dharma! They are best pictured as beasts in human form. The majority of humans are members of this unfortunate group. They strive for momentary pleasure, short-lived happiness, temporary joy and evanescent comfort. To call them apes with human physique will be a big mistake. For, the ape only jumps from branch to branch or from tree to tree. It releases itself from one branch or one tree before landing on another. Men are more like caterpillars, which move from leaf to leaf, fixing their foreparts on a new leaf, before releasing their hindparts from the leaf on which they were resting till then.

“That is to say, man by his acts in this life decides on his next birth, where and how it will be, even before leaving this world. The new place is ready for him, his foreparts are already there. It is only after settling this that he relieves

himself of the hold on this world! Men of this category move round in the wheel of birth and death. To be born and to die, one must have auspicious moments which will guarantee a wise life and a worthwhile end, Arjuna! Yogis, for example, give up life only when auspicious moments are available, not at other times. That is why people say, ‘Death is the Witness, for the Good.’ An auspicious moment is to be chosen even for the act of death.”

Arjuna asked, “Krishna! Tell me when the body has to be yielded to Death, so that one can escape the cycle of birth and death. Tell me also which period of time one should avoid.” Krishna replied, “Partha! Your question is very timely and urgent. Sometimes, you make Me marvel at your intelligence and you make Me very happy. At other times, you make Me laugh at your ignorance. Your egoism and sense of attachment cause this confusion. Let that pass. Let us come to your question.

“The Yogis who practise Nishkama Karma pass away in *Tejas* (splendour), during day, while there is light, in the bright half of the month, and in the six month period of *Uttarayana* (bright or northward journey). They have as their first state Agni or Fire. Hence, their Path is known as Devayana (six months following the summer equinox, beginning Hindu Month of Makara, January), or since Agni is known also as Archi in the Vedas, *Archiraadi* (offering) *Marga*. Such Yogis emerge from *Prakaasa* (Effulgence) and travelling through *Prakaasa*, they merge in *Prakaasa* itself. They attain Brahman and are not born again.

“The Yogis who practise Sakama Karma pass away in *Dhuma* (Smoke) at night, during the dark half of the month, during the six months of *Dakshinayana*. They pass along *Dhumadi* (dark or southward journey) *Marga* and reach *Swarga* or Heaven and there enjoy the pleasures they have yearned for and worked for. When the stock of merit is exhausted, they get born again.

“Both these categories of men are called Yogis. They will exist so long as aspirants and active progressive individuals exist in the world.

“Here, a doubt may reasonably arise. How is it that the bright half of the month is auspicious, while the dark half is not? What, again, is to happen to those who die, when it is neither bright nor dark, neither day nor night? This is a legitimate doubt and everyone has a right to know the answer.

“Now, you must first understand what is meant by *Sukla Paksha* or the Bright Fortnight. It is the half-month when the light of the moon increases day by day. But what is the relationship of the light of the moon with man and his death? The moon is the symbol of the mind of man. ‘*Chandramaa manaso jaathah*; out of the moon was the *manas* (mind) born.’ The bright half of the moon, therefore, signifies the progress of the mind spiritually, in Divine discipline; the full moon signifies the fullness of that achievement. The bright half is, thus, the period when spiritual progress is attained. For the body, the visible moon; for the

mind, the symbolic moon-deity presiding over the mind! The increasing splendour of the mind due to the increasing realisation of one’s own Divinity is what is meant by the word, ‘*Suklapaksha*.’

“And what of *Uttarayana*? Be free from doubt on that score, too. Worship offered knowing the meaning of every rite, *sadhana* practised knowing the implications of every step, these cleanse the heart more effectively, and loosen the chains of doubt.

“*Uttarayana* is the period when no dot of cloud or whiff of fog contaminates the vast dome and the Sun shines in all His Glory. This is the gross meaning. But there is a subtle one, too. The heart is the inner sky. There, the Sun that shines is *Buddhi* or Intelligence. When the clouds of ignorance, the fog of egoism and the smoke of attachment hover in that inner sky, the Sun of Intelligence is hidden and things look murky and are mistaken. *Uttarayana* of the heart is when the inner sky is clear of all these, and when the Sun shines in full splendour. You must have heard the expression. ‘*Jnanabhaskara*,’ ‘The Sun of Wisdom.’ The Sun is always associated with Wisdom and Intelligence. When a person passes away with this equipment of the effulgent Sun of Wisdom in his clear heart, he can certainly escape rebirth! He takes the path of *Agni*, the *Archiraadi* path, as said already, and merges in *Brahman*.

“Those who pass away in the other half of the year, the *Dakshinayana*, have the opposite destiny. Then the heart

is beset with smoke and fog and cloud. The Sun is hidden and His effulgence has no splendour. And in the dark half of the month the moon wanes, symbolising the waning of Godward thoughts. The new moon night is enveloped in complete darkness, all spiritual impulses suffer defeat. The thick smoke of Ajnana lies heavily on the mind. This is the meaning of the expression, *Krishna-paksha* (dark fortnight). Those who die at such an inauspicious time reap an inauspicious result.”