

CHAPTER XXII

Arjuna questioned further, on the basis of Krishna's answers. "You described the characteristics of the votary of the Saguna aspect of Godhead. You said that persons with such characteristics are yogis. I am indeed happy that I came to know all this. But just as the Saguna votaries have characteristics, the votaries of the attributeless Godhead, the Nirguna aspect, they too must have characteristics by which they can be recognised, is it not? Please tell me about them. I would like to know."

At this, Nandakumara (Krishna the son of Nanda) of lovely form replied, "Arjuna! The votaries of the Nirguna aspect must acquire full control of their senses. Next, they must be unaffected by circumstances. Third, they must be of service to others in distress. Such will be the nature of the Upasakas of Akshara (devotees of the changeless), the Imperishable."

Readers might therefore infer that the characteristics of the votaries of the Saguna and the Nirguna or Akshara aspects of Godhead are all identical. Arjuna was overjoyed at Krishna's reply. He exclaimed, "I have now clearly understood this point. But I want you to tell me how I ought to proceed, how I must act to win the Lord's Grace," and fell at the Feet of Krishna. Narayana lifted Nara (Arjuna) and said this to him, "Arjuna! he said, You have no need now for acquiring the characteristics of either of these. They are not within easy reach. I shall tell you of a path that is easier than these two. That path will surely confer on you My Grace.

"This is that path: Establish your mind and intelligence in Me. If you cannot accomplish this and find it difficult, give up your egoism and carry on activities that are moral and holy. If even this is too difficult, give up attachment to the fruits, the consequences of all your acts, offer them to Me as Krishna-arpanam (offerings to Krishna). Offering your acts to Me should not be a mere vocal exercise. Take care that you do so, by word, by deed and by thought, *mano-vaak-karma*, as they say.

"Do you feel that even this is beyond you? Then you will be made aware of the aftermath." After saying this much, Krishna sat silent for a while.

Take note of this. The aspirant for Grace must have before his mind the act and not its consequence, beneficial or otherwise. That is the reason why Gopala said that Jnana

is superior to Abhyasa (systematic practice), Dhyana is superior to Jnana, and the giving up of attachment to the consequences of your acts is superior to Dhyana. Such non-attachment, Krishna said, will confer Shanthi (peace).

“Bhakthi and *Dweshha* (hate) are as fire and water. Devotion and hate cannot dwell together. I love those who feel no difference between grief and joy, affection and dislike, good and bad. If hate, in whatever form, in howsoever slight a quantity, resides in the heart, that person cannot be a Bhaktha. The Bhaktha must be convinced that all this is Vasudeva, ‘*Vasu-deva-sarvamidam.*’ That is to say, one’s own Atma is everywhere in everything. This truth must be realised, acted upon and experienced. Hating another is hating oneself; scorning another is but scorning oneself. Finding fault with another is finding fault with oneself,” Krishna continued.

Readers might be troubled by a doubt on this point. Can the mere absence of hatred or contempt of another endow one with the full consciousness of the truth of “*Vasu-deva-sarva-midam*”? No, the mere absence of hate, etc. cannot secure the “*Dweller within,*” and the Ananda of recognising Him. That will not win the Grace of the Lord.

The task of the *ryot* (farmer) who cultivates the crop is a good example of this. If you pay attention to this, the truth will be known and doubts will vanish. Before sowing the seed on a plot of land, the ryot removes all the wild growth, the bush, the scrub, the other small growths. But

that is not enough for bringing the harvest home. The plot has to be ploughed and partitioned, watered and made ready for the sowing. And then, the sprouts have to be fostered and guarded into maturity, until the crop ripens and can be collected and garnered, in the granary.

Similarly, the thorny bushes of affection, hate, envy, pride, etc. have to be uprooted from the region of the heart, and the field has to be ploughed by means of “good deeds.” Then the saplings of Ananda have to be planted therein. The growing crop has to be fostered attentively by discipline and Sraddha (faith). At last, as a result of all this effort, the harvest of Ananda (bliss) will fill one’s granary.

The mere removal of hate from the heart will not ensure Ananda. Love too should be cultivated. That is to say, uproot hate and plant love. If the absence of hate ensures Bhakthi, hill and anthill, tree and twig, mud and mountain—what do these hate? They have no dislikes. But for that reason, do we ascribe Bhakthi to them all? We do not, for that would be absurd. The Bhaktha must first be free from hate and full of Love. Besides, his Love must express itself as service of the distressed and the grieving, declared Gopala.

Arjuna was listening to all this with great attention. Then he asked, “Krishna! Are these three enough? Or are there any more to be followed and practised? Please tell me.” Krishna replied, “The mere planting of the saplings is not enough, the field has to be watered and manured. The removal of hate and the planting of love have achieved only

the first stage. As soon as the sprouts have appeared, the two processes of *Nirmamakara* (absence of possessiveness) and *Nirahamkara* (absence of ego) have to be followed. They are like watering and manuring. These two are essential for the successful crop of Ananda.

“That is to say, you will have to rid yourself of the feelings of ‘mine’ and ‘I.’ They are not distinct. The first springs from the second and both arise from *Ajnana*, the ignorance of the fundamental Truth. For, once rid of *Ajnana*, the sense of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ will not give trouble. They have no place in him. Hence, it is laid down that the aspirant for *Bhakthi* must possess *Sathatham Samthushti*, contentment always. What does this mean? It implies contentment under all conditions, wellness or illness, loss or profit, grief or joy. Whether one’s wish is fulfilled or not, the mind should not lose equanimity, and poise.”

The mind loses balance if the slightest obstacle arises in the path it frames for itself. It is so fickle. Why, if the cup of coffee is not forthcoming in time, if you miss seeing two films in one week, if you could not squat before the radio, both in the morning and in the evening for long hours, if many such trifles are denied or disturbed, you feel overshadowed by discontent. *Samthushti* is the state of mind which is unaffected by the achievement or non-achievement of any wish, the happening or non-happening of any event. The mind must be undisturbed, without excitement or disappointment.

Arjuna then asked, “O Lord, you often mention *Prakruthi* and *Purusha*. I am eager to know what exactly is *Prakruthi*. What are its characteristics, what exactly is its nature?” Krishna replied to this question in a simple easily-understandable manner. “Arjuna! *Prakruthi* has another name too. It is called *Kshetra* also. *Prakruthi* means this *Prapancha*, this Composite of the Five Elements. There are two entities in this *Prapancha* or *Prakruthi* or Nature. One is inert and the other active (the *jada* and the *chaithanya*). That is to say, one is the seen, the other is the seer. The knower is the *aham*, the known is the *Idam*, the ‘I’ and the ‘this.’

“*Prakruthi* or nature is the sum of attributes or characteristics. The *Gunas*, *Thamas* (delusion), *Rajas* (grief) and *Sathwa* (joy) are the attributes of *Prakruthi*. Nature is but the permutation and combination of these *Gunas*. So also are the attributes of doer and enjoyer, *Karthrthwa* and *Bhokthrthwa*.”

Arjuna wished to continue his questions. So, Krishna said, “My dear brother-in-law! You are eager to question again?” Seizing the chance, Arjuna put in his query. “Krishna! You have explained the *Prakruthi Thathwa* or Nature Principle. Now, I wish very much to know what is meant by *Purusha*: what are the characteristics, what is Its nature.”

“Arjuna!” Krishna said, “Whether you call It *Purusha* or *Kshetrajna* or *Jneya*, it is the same. *Kshetrajna* is the knower of the *Kshetra* or Field. *Jneya* is that which is known. *Purusha* is the *Jiva* and *Prakruthi* is the *Deha* or the Body.

The embodied is the Purusha, the person who knows the body. The Deha or body has also a number of names, each having a significant meaning. It is sarira, because it wastes away; deha, because it is liable to be burnt. The Jiva is that which activates the body and becomes aware of its limitations.”

Arjuna was pestered by doubt at this answer and so he started another series of questions. “Krishna, how did this wasting and destructible body come to be called Kshetra or Field?” Arjuna was indeed a clever listener. Krishna answered him with a great deal of patience.

Krishna replied, “It is through this body that merit can be acquired by engaging in various beneficent activities. The body is the vehicle for earning Jnana or the Universal Vision. It is the body that leads you on to Liberation itself. It is the repository of such great achievements and so it is called Kshetra. Kshetra means an armour, for it protects and guards the Jivi from harm. Another meaning is ‘Field,’ a meaning that is full of significance. Whatever seeds are sown or saplings planted in the field, the harvest depends on their nature and quality. The body is the field, the Jivi is the Kshetrapalaka, the protector of the field and the crop. Sowing the seeds of meritorious deeds, one reaps joy and happiness. Sowing the seeds of sin, one reaps the harvest of grief and worry. Sowing the seeds of Jnana, one garners the harvest of Moksha or Liberation from the bondage of birth and death.

“Just as the ryot knows the nature and characteristics of the field, the Kshetrajna or the Jivi must know the nature and qualities of his body. The only difference between Kshetra and Kshetrajna is the syllable ‘jna.’ It means jnana, he who knows, the knower. So, he who knows the field or the body, its excellences and deficiencies, he is the Kshetrajna. That which has no such knowledge, the inert material thing, that is the Kshetra.”

“Krishna,” Arjuna asked, “Of what benefit is it to know these two entities: Kshetra and Kshetrajna?” Krishna laughed. He said, “What a foolish question to ask. By inquiring and knowing about the nature of the Kshetra, one’s grief is destroyed. Knowing about the nature of the Kshetrajna, Ananda or Bliss is acquired. This Ananda is also designated as Moksha.”

Krishna then relapsed into silence. But Arjuna who is the representative of all mankind on the battlefield between the higher and the lower impulses, prodded Him further. “Krishna! Who are those who experience both these, the destruction of grief and the attainment of bliss? Is it the Jivi or the Deha? Please elucidate.”

Krishna replied, “Arjuna! The Kshetra or body is associated with the Gunas or attributes, Thamas, Rajas and Sathwa. So, the Jivi when in contact with it and when it identifies itself with the body, imagines that it is experiencing grief and joy which are the consequences of those Gunas. The Purusha or the Kshetrajna has no real relationship with

the Gunas. He is just a witness. When iron is in contact with fire, then it has the power of scalding. But it is not iron that scalds, it is the fire. Through contact with Prakruthi, Purusha appears as the doer and experiencer.

“Therefore, it is not proper to infer that the Jivi is having grief and joy by the very fact of its occupying the body which is the vehicle of the Gunas. The earth sustains and helps the seed to grow into a tree or to decline. It is the Guna of the earth that causes these two. So also, the seed of Jiva Thathwam grows and blossoms into Brahma Thathwam in the body, which is the Earth-principle. Just as manure and water are essential for the tree to bloom and bear fruit, Sathyam (truth), Saantham (peace), Samam (internal self-control) and Damam (external self-control) are essential for the blossoming of the Spirit into Atmic wisdom. The attributes or Gunas of Prakruthi make it assume multifarious forms.

“Think of this one point. Then the whole problem will become clear. Man is happy at one time, miserable at another. He is afraid one moment and courageous at another. Why? Because he is shaped so by the Gunas. Do you say no? Then how can you explain these changes? They alone can transform man from one phase to another like this.

“If the three Gunas, Sathwa, Rajas and Thamas are equally balanced, then there will be no change in him. This never happens. It is always out of balance. When one is dominant and the others are dormant, then Prakruthi makes

him assume many roles. The three Gunas represent the three aspects of human nature. Rajo Guna is the attachment that brings about desires and creates eagerness to enjoy the objective world that is ‘seen.’ It breeds desire for physical and heavenly pleasure. Thamo Guna cannot grasp the reality. So, it misunderstands easily and takes the false to be the true. It lands persons into negligence and error. It binds, instead of releasing. Sathwa Guna controls the cause of grief and sorrow, encourages people to follow the path of real joy and happiness. Therefore, being single-pointed and unaffected by either of these three is the basis for purity and steadfastness.

Have the glass chimney of the lamp clear. Its light will shine bright. Have a glass that is multicoloured. Its light will be dimmed. On the other hand, if the lamp is kept inside a mud pot, the darkness will continue as it was. The lamp is the same but the container affects its expression. Sathwa Guna is the lamp that shines clear through the white glass chimney. Rajo Guna is the many-coloured glass chimney that makes the light dim and poor. And Thamo Guna is the mud pot inside which the lamp is totally ineffective.

Sathwa Guna is Atma Jnana. Rajo Guna is sullied to some extent, as smoke sullies the chimney and dims the light, and it also agitates the flame of the lamp so that it is not straight and steady. Thamo Guna is the suppression of the light or Jnana that is the very nature of Man.