

## Chapter III

For whom the Gita was spoken; the stages “I am Thine, Thou art mine, and Thou art I”; Arjuna surrenders; Arjuna’s objections to fighting are caused by delusion.

It is more useful for students to search for their own faults with a view to remove them than to seek excellences so that they might exult over them. Students who do the former can progress fast; they are not dragged behind by fear or anxiety; they can move on with faith in the Lord, on whom they have placed all their burdens. They reach a state of mental calm, which is the sign of the true aspirant. Arjuna arrived at that stage, and then Krishna gave him (and, through him, all humanity) the teaching that confers immortality.

For whom was the *Gita* spoken? Just think of that for one moment. Milk is not taken from the udder for the sake of the cow, for cows do not drink their own milk. Arjuna, the calf, has had his fill; Krishna is ever-content and needs nothing, not to mention milk! For whose sake was it that the *Upanishads* were milked by Krishna to get this *Gita*? Krishna says it is for the people who have intelligence that is moderated by goodness, intelligence that is controlled by virtue.

And what of the place where the teaching was given? Between two opposing armies! Therein lies the great significance of the *Gita*. On one side, the forces of virtue (*dharma*); on the other, the forces of vice (*a-dharma*). On one side, the good; on the other, the bad. Between these two pulls, the individual, unable to decide which course to adopt, weeps in despair. And the Lord speaks the *Gita* to all such and grants them light and courage. Do not think that the distress of Arjuna was just his affair, his problem and no more. It is a universal human problem.

For Arjuna sought from Krishna not the pleasing, worldly glory (*preyas*) of power and status and wealth but the lasting glory of full joy (*sreyas*). He said, “wealth is available for human effort; it can be won by human activity. Why should I crave from You what I can win by my own endeavour? I am not so foolish as all that. Grant me the lasting glory of joy that is beyond the reach of my effort. That glory is not the fruit of action (*karma*), it is the fruit of grace!”

Thus, Arjuna rose to the height of absolute self-surrender (*saranagathi* –the state called *prapatthi*). Much can be said of absolute self-surrender. People surrender their dignity and status to others for various purposes in life: wealth, fame, possessions, pomp, power, etc. But rarely do they get the chance to surrender to the Lord for the sake of the Lord! How can one get the urge as long as one craves the world and not its basis? One longs for the object, but not for the base on which the object rests. How long can a base-less object satisfy? One wants the gift but not the giver, the created but not the Creator, things from the hand but not the hand! One is running after a non-existent thing. Can there be an object without a pre-existent cause? No; if there is a cause, it can be only the uncaused God. Therefore, it is sheer ignorance to surrender individuality for the sake of the transitory products of action, the “caused” rather than the cause. Surrender rather to the Basis, the Cause of all causes, the Origin of All. That is genuine self-surrender.

There are three types of self-surrender: I am Thine, Thou art mine, and Thou art I. The first affirms, I am Yours; the second asserts, You are mine; the third declares, You and I are One, the same. Each is just a step in the rising series, and the last is the highest step of all.

In the first stage (I am Thine), the Lord is fully free and the devotee is fully bound. It is like the cat and the

kitten; the cat shifts the kitten about as it wills, and the kitten just mews and accepts whatever happens. This attitude is very gentle and is within easy reach of all.

In the second stage (Thou art mine), the devotee binds the Lord, who is to that extent “not free”! Surdas is a good example of this attitude. “Krishna! You may escape from my hold, from the clasp of these arms; but you cannot escape from my heart, where I have bound you,” challenged Surdas. The Lord just smiled and assented; for, “I am bound by My devotees,” He asserts, without any loss of self-respect. The devotee can tie up the Lord with love, by devotion that overwhelms and overpowers egotism. When one is full of this type of devotion, the Lord Himself will bless one with everything one needs; His grace will fulfil all one’s wants. Remind yourself here of the promise made by the Lord in the *Gita*: “I carry the burden of his welfare (*Yogakshemam vahaamyaham*)”.

Next, about the third stage (Thou art I). This is inseparable devotion. The devotee offers all to the Lord, including themselves, for the devotee feels unable to withhold themselves. That completes the surrender.

The “Thou art I” feeling is non-dual surrender, based on the realization that all this (*idam*) is God (Vaasudeva) and nothing less, nothing else. As long as consciousness of the body persists, the devotee is the servant and the Lord is master. As long as the individual feels separate from other individuals, the devotee is a part and the Lord is the whole. When the devotee progresses to the state beyond the limits of the body as well as of “I” and “Mine”, then there is no more distinction; devotee and God are the same. In the *Ramayana*, Hanuman achieved this third stage through devotion.

This same subject is mentioned in the seventh verse of the second chapter of the *Gita*. The term surrendering devotee (*prapanna*) used there indicates that Arjuna has the qualification, the discipline of devotion. Moreover, Arjuna had analyzed his own faults and recognized them as such. Again, he had awakened from dullness (*thamas*). Krishna appreciated this the moment it happened. He said, “You are called the conqueror of the senses but you are enslaved by sleep (*nidra-jith*). Sleep (*nidra*) is the characteristic of dullness; how then can this dullness overwhelm you now? It is just a temporary phase; it can never bind you fast.”

If, by his efforts, Arjuna has won control over his senses and earned the name master-of-the-senses, then Krishna is the presiding deity of all the senses! On the field of battle, both are in the same chariot, one as learner and the other as teacher!

What exactly is the cause of all grief? It is attachment to the body that produces grief as well as its immediate precursors: likes and dislikes. These two are the results of the intellect considering some things and conditions as beneficial and some other things and conditions as not. This is a delusion, this idea of beneficence and maleficence. Still, you get attached to objects that are considered beneficial, and you start hating the others. But from the highest point of view, there is neither; the distinction is just meaningless. There is no two at all, so how can there be good and bad? To see two where there is only one, that is ignorance, delusion (*maya*). The ignorance that plunged Arjuna into grief was of this nature —seeing many, when there is only one.

Absence of the knowledge of the identity of “That (*Thath*)” and you (*thwam*) is the cause of all ignorance — the word *thathwa*, used to mean principle, enshrines this great philosophical doctrine. If this truth is not learned, one has to flounder in the ocean of grief. But, if it is learned and if one lives in that consciousness, then one can be free from grief. Many a prescription is recommended, used, publicized, and repeated parrot-like by all kinds of quacks. But these prescriptions do not go to the root of the matter; they are balms applied to the eye to cure an ache in the stomach. The disease and the drug have no coordination! The ache must be spotted and diagnosed

and the drug must be such as will remove it. Only then can it be cured. The Lord Himself (*Narayana*) is the only medical expert who can do so. And He had diagnosed Arjuna's illness correctly and decided on the treatment.

The wound that will not be healed by external application of balms has to be cured by internal remedies. So, Krishna prodded Arjuna with queries. "Why do you weep like a coward? Is it because Bhishma, Drona, and the rest are about to be killed? No; you weep because you feel they are 'your men'. Egotism makes you weep. People weep not for the dead but because the dead are 'theirs'. Have you not killed until now many who were 'not yours'? You never shed a tear for them. Today, you weep, since you are under the delusion that those whom you see before you are somehow 'yours' in a special way.

"When you sleep, you are unaffected by this feeling of 'I' and 'Mine', so you are unaware of what happens to your body, the bodies of 'your people', or your possessions, items that you carefully remember while awake. 'Mine' is the possessive case of 'I', so it comes in its trail. The fundamental ignorance, my dear fool, is the identification of yourself with something that is not you; viz. the body. The body is not *Atma*, but you believe that it is the *Atma*. What a topsy-turvy bit of knowledge this is! To cure this ignorance, I must administer the medicine of spiritual wisdom itself."

Thus, Krishna started giving him, in the very first instance, the most effective drug, spiritual wisdom. This is detailed from the eleventh verse of the second chapter, a key verse for all students of the *Gita*. Krishna condemns outright two objections that were haunting Arjuna for so long, saying that the destruction of the body does not mean the destruction of the *Atma* and that he is grieving for those for whom he need not grieve. "You talk like a wise man (*prajnaa vaadaamscha bhaashase*). You say this is *dharma* and the other is not, as if you really know how to distinguish them," said Krishna.

Here, attention has to be paid to one fact. Arjuna is suffering from two types of delusion: (1) ordinary and (2) out of the ordinary. To confuse the body with oneself and pine for the body as if something has happened to you is the ordinary delusion. To discard one's own *dharma* (in this case, the duty (*dharma*) of a warrior) as not *dharma* is an out-of-the-ordinary delusion. Krishna destroyed the first and removed the second. He dealt with the first in verses 12–30 of the second chapter; He tackled the second as a special problem and explained to Arjuna in eight verses the idea of his own *dharma*. These are collectively called the eight verses relating to *dharma* (*dharma-ashtakas*). One's own *dharma* does not bind and produce further birth, and it can lead to liberation; it has to be done as a *yoga* of action (*karma*), without attachment to the fruit. Toward the close of the second chapter, there is also a description of the successful aspirant who has steadied himself in a purified intellect, the person of steady integral spiritual wisdom (*sthitha-prajna*).

Krishna continued His discourse: "Arjuna! Think for a while who you are and what you are proposing to do. You declare you know everything, but yet you weep like a helpless woman. Your words proclaim that you are a pundit, but your acts reveal you as a simpleton. Hearing you, one would infer you are a wise man (*jnani*); but seeing you, one would find that you are an ignoramus! Your condition is disgusting, to say the least. If I take you to be a pundit, I cannot reconcile that view with your tears; for pundits do not grieve over life and death. If they grieve, they are not pundits. Pundits have the capacity to discover what is fundamentally true. Those who know the secret of the physical and the mystery of the spiritual, only such can be called pundits. How then can they weep over either the embodied or the disembodied? They will not forego their inner calm, whatever the stress or distress.

"The fully ignorant and the fully wise —both will have no grief for the living or the dead. Do you weep

because the bodies of Bhishma and Drona will fall, or because the *Atma* of those two will be destroyed? For the bodies, do you say? Well. Are tears any good? If they are, certainly people would have kept the corpses of their dead and revived them by their weeping. No, it can never be. Immerse the body in vessels of divine nectar; it cannot come back to life. Why then weep over the inevitable, the unavoidable?

“You might say that you are weeping for the *Atma*, the spiritual core. That reveals greater foolishness. Death can never even approach the *Atma*. It is eternal, self-evident, pure. It is evident that you have no wisdom of the *Atma* at all.

“Again, for a warrior, fighting is *dharmic*. Do your duty, regardless of other considerations. You ask, ‘How can I cause the death of Bhishma in war?’ But they have all come to get killed and to kill; you are not killing them in their homes. Of course, it is unrighteous (non-*dharmic*) to kill them in their homes, but on the battlefield, how can it be against *dharma*? I am sorry that you don’t have this much discrimination.

“It is enough. Get up and get ready for the fray. Why slide to the ground under the weight of all this useless ego? The Lord is the cause of all, not you. There is a Higher Power that moves everything. Know this and bend your will to it.

“Bhishma, Drona, and the rest have come like true soldiers and warriors to engage in battle. They don’t weep like you. Consider, they will never grieve or withdraw.

“Arjuna! This is the testing time for you, remember!

“Let Me tell you this also. There was never a time when I was not. Why? There was never a time when even you and all these kings and princes were not. That (the Godhead, *Thath*) is the highest *Atma* (*Paramatma*); This (the individual, *thwam*) is the soul (*jivatma*); both were the same, are the same, and will be forever. Prior to the pot, in the pot, and after the pot, it was, is, and will be clay.”

Arjuna was shocked into awareness and wakefulness by all this. He said, “Maybe You are God; maybe You are indestructible. I weep not for You but for such as us: we came yesterday, are present today, and are off tomorrow. What happens to us? Please enlighten me.”

One point has to be carefully noticed here. That (*Thath*), that is, the Godhead, is eternal; everyone accepts it. But the individual (*thwam*) is also the Godhead! It too is eternal, although it cannot be grasped as easily or quickly. So Krishna elaborates this and says, “Arjuna! You too are as eternal as the Absolute. Seen apart from the limitations, the individual is the Universal. Prior to the appearance of the jewel, there was just gold; during the existence of the jewel, there is just gold; and after the name-form of the jewel has gone, the gold persists. The *Atma* persists in the same way, body or no body.

“Although it is associated with the body, the *Atma* is unaffected by qualities (*gunas*) and *dharmas*; it has no qualities and characteristics. You are unaffected by the changes that the body undergoes when you grow from an infant to a boy, from a boy to a youth, from a youth to a middle-aged man, and thence to an old man. You persist, in spite of all this. It is the same when the body is destroyed; the *Atma* persists. So the hero will not pine for the change called death.” Krishna said this with such emphasis that the chariot shook!