

## Chapter VI

The importance of action; Krishna has no need to do action; why realized souls do action; wisdom is the final goal of action; the path of wisdom; Surya, the sun.

In the 17 verses 56-72 of Chapter II, Krishna described the characteristics of the person of steady wisdom (*sthitha-prajna*) and the excellence of that stage. Then, saying that He Himself had established the *yoga* of spiritual knowledge (*jnana-yoga*) for the *Sankhyas* and the *yoga* of action (*karma-yoga*) for the *yogis* as a means of attaining liberation, He spoke of the importance of action.

Everyone has to bow to the demands of nature and engage in action (*karma*). It is inevitable. Therefore, Krishna said, “Do the action that is your bounden duty. Being engaged in action is to be preferred to being inactive. If you desist from action, the task of living becomes difficult, nay, impossible.

“Actions that don’t bind by attachment to consequence are referred to as sacrifices or offerings to God (*yajna*). All the rest are bondage-producing. Therefore, Arjuna, give up all attachment and engage in each act as a sacrifice dedicated to the Lord.” Krishna taught Arjuna the origins of action (*karma*), the roots from which the urge to do action sprouts and grows. He taught them so clearly that Arjuna’s heart was really moved and modified. “The *Vedas* emanated from God; actions emanated from the *Vedas*; from action originated sacrifice, from sacrifice, rain; from rain grew food; from food came all living beings. This cycle has to be accepted and honoured. Consider this, Arjuna. I don’t need to do any action; no, not anywhere in the three worlds. I am under no compulsion. Yet, I am ever engaged in action. Think of this. If I desist, the world will be no more. Have steady faith in the *Atma*; then dedicate all your acts to Me. With no desire for the fruit thereof, no egotism, and no sense of possession or pride, engage in battle.

“If the wheel of creation is to move smoothly, each one has to keep on doing action (*karma*). Whoever one is, one cannot get around this obligation. Even one who has achieved the highest wisdom has to observe this rule. Eating and drinking, intake and release of breath —these too are actions. Who can exist without them?

“You derive benefit from the world and from the community, so some activity on your part is their due. This bliss of *Brahman* itself, this whole universe, is really speaking a huge workshop; every human being is a limb in this organization. The limb is allotted a task in accordance with its structure, and it must find its fulfilment in doing that particular work. Whatever work one has been allotted has to be done as an offering to God. There is no single thing in the universe that does not engage itself in this great task. Plant and insect, stone and stump, wind and rain, heat and cold, if each of these does not work as per the plan, the world cannot subsist. The sun and moon carry on their routine tasks; wind and fire perform their duties without demur. If the earth and sun refuse to do their allotted duties, what would happen to the world? So no one is action-less, but yet with body! It is only when each performs their task without fail, and with care, that the wheel will move quick and smooth.

“You may wonder why realized souls (*jnanis*) should still do action (*karma*); not only you, but many others may be worried at that statement. Well, people usually follow the ideal set by those in higher levels. Their acts form the basis of *dharma* for all. If realized souls are inactive, how are ordinary mortals to save themselves? They would have no guide, so they would lose themselves in the easy paths of sensory pleasure. The duty of the wise is to foster the right and to practise it before others, so that they too may be prompted to follow, drawn by the hope of becoming as contented and joyful as the wise are. The wise have to do and get done, see and show, so that the

rest might be persuaded to follow the example set by them.

“Arjuna! Pay attention to just one fact! How warm is your body now? It may be about 98 degrees; how did that happen? Because the sun bears many million times this heat at that distance, right? Now, if the sun feels that it will not put up with all that fire and becomes cool, what will happen to humanity? Again, if I desist from action, imagine what will be the fate of this vast universe of activity! That is why I am engaged in action, remember. Not that I derive any profit thereby, or get any good, or any fruit.

“Almost everyone in the world is bound by the rule of action (*karma*). But people are so immersed in ignorance that they are unaware of their own moral or intellectual status and of the secrets of action. Such can be saved only by being inspired by the example of the great. That is why the wise have to be engaged in activity; they have to remove the sloth and delusion of ordinary people. So, all have to obey the rule of action (*karma*), without deviation.

Does the plane stay above, denouncing the earth below? Those who have earned the right to travel in it can't fly toward it and into it! Therefore, to take them in, the plane has to come down at places where they gather by previous arrangement, and then soar high into the sky with them. So too, although wise people have no desire or urge to do action, they come down into the region of action and help those who would not have otherwise put their talents to proper use. Even great personages like Janaka performed *dharmic* actions with this view; Aswapathi did likewise, to save the rest from sheer idleness or wickedness.

Then, in reply to another question of Arjuna, Krishna said, “Desire (*kama*) is the root cause of all evil”, and He elaborated on its nature, cause, and cure. “Those who are bound by the false idea that they are just this body and nothing more can never hope to conquer action (*karma*); they must acquire the awareness that they are just *Brahman* and nothing less, in order to be sure of victory. All acts must be performed in the spirit of dedication to the Lord. The universe must be identified with the form of Vishnu, the universal Transcendent.”

In this chapter, three important subjects were clarified:

1. Everyone has to do action (*karma*), for otherwise the world will come to nought.
2. The action of the great is the ideal that the rest have to keep in view.
3. Almost all in the world are bound by the obligation of action.

Krishna most graciously made Arjuna imbibe these lessons. Not satisfied with this, Krishna told him that spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) is the final goal and gain of action; wisdom is the treasure that is won by efforts to purify the mind and to earn the grace of God; wisdom not merely grants bliss but is itself the seat of bliss. Thus, He initiated Arjuna into the path of spiritual wisdom.

This subject is carried on until the fifth chapter. The *yoga* of wisdom shines as a precious jewel amid the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Krishna declared “nothing as holy as spiritual wisdom is known here”! Even later, in the seventh chapter, He said, “I consider the realized soul (*jnani*) as Myself (*jnaanithwathmaiva me matham*)”.

The excellence of the *yoga* of wisdom has been similarly extolled in many other contexts in the *Gita*. That is why it is believed to be the most fruitful of all spiritual disciplines. All scriptures find their fulfilment in wisdom alone. Meditation is just contemplation of the embodiment of spiritual wisdom, which is one's real nature. All are in you; you are in all. You have to get this conviction fixed in your consciousness, by means of analysis, discrimi-

nation, and intellectual exploration. You have to isolate and dismiss from consciousness the impressions of the senses, the mind, the intelligence, etc. These have nothing to do with the *Atma*, which you really are. The *Atma* is unaffected by any subject or object. Even if the senses, mind, intelligence, etc. are inactive, that inactivity will not affect the *Atma*! To know the *Atma* as such an entity, unaffected and unattached, is the secret of spiritual wisdom.

Every single act of yours must be carried out with this wisdom as its background. That awareness of the *Atma* will guide you in both the out-moving and in-drawing paths; it will not block action but fill it with purpose and meaning; it will build up faith and moral life; it will take you to the realm of deliverance along the road of renunciation of the fruit of action, and not renunciation of action itself.

For achieving liberation, wisdom is the direct road. Hence, it is declared to be incomparably sacred. Naturally, it follows that ignorance is indubitably the most despicable. “See the universal in the particular; see the particular in the universal; that is the essence of wisdom”, said Krishna. “All bodies know only one single knower of the bodies. And who is that? The *Atma*—you yourself, your own self! Know this and you become a wise person. So realize that the self is the highest *Atma* (*Paramatma*); that is the highest spiritual wisdom.” Krishna, who is All-knowing, began to teach Arjuna this *yoga*, in order to cast off all doubt from Arjuna’s mind.

“Arjuna! I taught this sacred *yoga* of wisdom to Surya. Then it was handed down from one generation to the next until Manu and Ikshvaku, and, from them, saint-kings came to learn it. Then it was lost in the world. That ever-existing *yoga* had to be restored to the world, so I had to come.”

You won’t fail to notice the discrepancy of the *yoga* being described as ever-existing and the statement that it was lost! Of course, the statement was not made without thought. Here, the indestructible is spoken of as having been destroyed! It is called indestructible for two reasons. Its origin is the *Veda*, which is free from decline. Its consequence is liberation (*moksha*), which is also free from decline. This *yoga*, on account of passage of time, neglect and disuse, was forgotten. That is to say, it disappeared, it was lost to view, it declined. The statement means nothing more. Bringing it to life means bringing it once again into use, not creating it *ab initio*! “Lost to view” is the sense in which the word “destroyed” is used in a general way. That is how you have to interpret it, for the Lord will never devise a thing that will suffer “destruction”.

The reference to Surya also merits consideration. The people of India are intimately associated with the Sun god. The heroes of India, the warriors (*kshatriyas*), are from the beginning attached to Surya. Even for ordinary men and women, Surya is so highly sacred that He has been raised to the status of the great Guru. The sacred scriptures and legends of India have not assigned a status of similar glory to anyone else. Surya occupies a unique position. Why, for the whole world, the sun is the visible manifestation of the Lord. And the sun is the source of time. Surya is the father of time (*kala*), as the scriptures declare. The sun limits and regulates the number of years each one lives; the sun diminishes every day a fraction of the allotted span. So the sun is the supreme arbiter, the maker of humanity’s destiny. Whether one wills it or not, every deed of is performed under His auspices and dedicated to Him.

Above all, consider the service the sun does to this world! That is within the daily experience of all; everyone is witness to that. The sun is the source of all life, plant and animal, upon this planet. Without His rays, it would be a desolate waste. He draws up into the sky the waters of seas and lakes, and from the clouds He pours rain on the crops. He is ever the deity of justice, scattering His rays equally on all.

Surya is the great renunciant; unequalled for renunciation. He is the great *yogi*; He performs His duty without

thought of reward, without a second's thought of His own glory or of rest. He is humble and steady in work. The service He does is something no one else can fulfil. The happiness He contributes is something no one else can confer. But He has no pretensions to pride. He moves above unconcerned with the consequences of His energizing mission of service.

Imagine the patience with which the Sun puts up with all that extreme heat for the sake of the world and of humanity. It is He who keeps the human body warm and comfortable. This material body is full of energy and intelligence on account of the solar energy that it imbibes. If the sun were idle for a moment, the world would be consumed in flames. Instead, He is fostering the world. He feels it as His mission, His purpose, and not as His service.

It is only in the duty (*karma*) that is your very nature that you can have fortitude; if it is just an assumed duty, you will find it difficult to put up with troubles and travails. Assumed duty is called unnatural (*a-sahaja*) duty, and duty that is the expression of one's genuine self is innate (*sahaja*) duty. Now, innate duty will sit light, and assumed duty will always be a burden. Assumed duty will induce conceit, or the feeling "I am the doer", so it will result in exhaustion or elation, disgust or pride.

Think of this one point: when a person is well, no one asks about their health, but when stricken with illness or sorrow, everyone asks why and bombards them with anxious queries. Why this anxiety? People are fundamentally happy and healthy. Their innate nature is joy. So, when someone is happy and healthy, no one is surprised or worried. But grief and sorrow are strange to their make-up; they are the result of a delusion that has overwhelmed the nature. So, people get worried and set about finding out how they got so deluded.

The sun is teaching us that when one is oneself, there will be no exhaustion or elation, no disgust or pride. The task of Surya is not something imposed from outside and taken up under compulsion. That is why it is performed systematically and smoothly. Surya is also exhorting mankind to use the time that He creates and allots fully and fruitfully, not merely for living comfortably and safely but for living a moral and elevating life, worthy of human destiny. Now you can realize why the *Gita* was first taught by the Lord to the Sun. He is the great *yogi* who renounces the fruit of action (the *karma-yogi*), the great desireless renouncer of the fruit.

Krishna is now teaching this indestructible *Gita* scripture to Arjuna, the representative of humanity at the crossroad, and He chose him because he has the same excellences, right? Reflect on that for a moment. If Arjuna was not a vessel endowed with such virtues and splendour, Krishna would not have used him as the recipient of the *Gita*. The Lord will not give gifts to the undeserving. Arjuna had the qualities that were needed for receiving the teaching, and he was chosen.