

# Chapter XI

More on gurus-disciples; Krishna-Arjuna as the supreme guru-disciple pair; acquiring spiritual wisdom through faith and the yogas of action, meditation, and wisdom; Krishna as the one and only substance.

**H**ow can such coddled, comfort-loving persons attain liberation? If gurus are not able to secure such disciples, why should the gurus deplore their fate? It is strange that there are gurus who lament when they are not able to attract such disciples! Opium eaters and marijuana smokers are unfit to be gurus. They are cheats. How can those who spend all their energies in securing the wherewithal for their living be gurus? How can those who seek to fulfil their sensual fancies be disciples? These are money gurus, those are pride disciples! To consider such as gurus and disciples is to drag those holy names into the dust of disgrace.

Who, then, is the genuine guru? It is he who teaches the path of destroying delusion (*moha*). And who is the genuine disciple? It is he who seeks to control and conquer the outward fleeing mind. The gurus of today shout every day from platforms what they stuffed into their heads the previous day under the midnight lamp. Their performance is only like regurgitating the food once swallowed, and nothing more. They talk like parrots, reproducing what they have learned by rote. Even children know that greed and anger have to be mastered; but in these people, greed, anger, envy, hatred, lust, and pride pop into their devilish heads through every little word they utter, every little deed they do. If those who claim to be gurus do not themselves master these propensities, how can the unfortunate disciples who resort to them succeed?

If the guru is supremely self-sacrificing, seeking to sustain truth, saturated with selflessness, seeing all people as equal, striving to secure sorrowless lives for all, leading a sweet and simple life, with a soul suffused with strength-giving thoughts, satisfied only by the chance to show others the path of good conduct and good character—then perhaps a few disciples will gather around. They will impose faults upon the guru that sully and cast doubt upon the guru’s integrity and genuineness! But the guru will be as serene as ever, for the guru suffers no loss. The loss is all for the disciples, who let go the great chance.

One thing is certain. As long as the delusion that one is the body is not cast aside, God cannot be realized—however far one may wander, whatever the number of gurus one might select and serve. Stick to that delusion and all the meditation, all repetitions of the name, all the waters of all the holy bathing places that you bathe in cannot win success for you! All your effort is as useless as trying to bail water in a vessel riddled with leaks.

Householders who carry out their duties are any day preferable to such seekers (*sadhus*); they follow the *dharma* of their stage of life (*asrama*), and they tread the correct path in unceasing remembrance of the Lord, so these householders realize the goal. If the nature of the gurus and disciples of today is to be considered, volumes can be written; but that would be using precious time for inessential discussion. So, we shall revert to our main topic.

For, to dwell on the sacred guru-disciple bond of Krishna-Arjuna in the same breath with the relationship of the present day “gurus” and “disciples” would be a sacrilege. They are unique, incomparable, this supreme pair, unapproachable by any other. They have to be taken as the ideal by all teachers and aspirants. Arjuna bowed in humility and carried out sincerely the precepts of the guru. Krishna fostered what was really beneficial to Arjuna; He paid full consideration to what would really promote the reputation, *Atmic* bliss, and *dharma* of Arjuna; He

tended him and fended for him as the very breath of His life. That was the type of guru the Lord was for him.

Krishna is the highest *Atma (Paramatma)*; Arjuna, the *Atmic* soul (*jivatma*). Krishna is the supreme Lord of all (*Purushothama*); Arjuna, the best of people. That is why they are the ideal guru-disciple. Others are guru-disciple in name only. Self-willed disciples and power-drunk gurus are simply wasting their lives in vain pursuits. Krishna is an ocean of love; He watched over Arjuna as one watches over the eye or the heart. He taught holiness and transformed into holiness; He loved and was loved beyond compare. That makes the guru a genuine guru. And Arjuna? He too is no ordinary being. His surrender (*thyaga*) is unapproachable. Whatever the crisis, he stuck to Krishna's command and Krishna's word; he wore comradeship with the Lord as the armor that would save him from all harm, as the very body in which he dwelled, as something that he must foster, strengthen, and guard. Although a mighty force, he was ready to efface it when necessary. This is how guru and disciple should be bound together.

The Lord, who is the embodiment of love, realized the sincerity of the disciple, estimated his attainments, and then detailed to him the benefits and glory of *Atmic* wisdom. "Kauntheya," He said, "By means of wisdom you can see all beings in yourself and in Me. Then, duality and the consequent delusion will disappear, as darkness disperses before the rising sun.

"Arjuna, I know well your past and the background of your birth. Yours is no ordinary birth; you are born with divine accomplishments and heritage. I alone am aware of it, no one else. Since you are unaware of it, you are now condemning yourself as a sinner who kills kith and kin, teachers and elders!

"Even if you have sinned, are not sinners saved? Repentance is enough to transmute sin into sanctity. The Lord graciously accepts contrition and pours His blessings. The thief Rathnakara, who was engaged in acts of sin until the moment when wisdom dawned, became a saint through repentance. Didn't he become the sage Valmiki? His story is proof of the value of contrition. You may ask whether it is enough to be free from the effects of sin. Shouldn't the effects of virtuous deeds also be given up? Why, one has the freedom to give up merits of such deeds, although one may not have equal freedom to give up the demerit of evil deeds. The roaring forest fire reduces to ashes everything in its way; so too, the mighty conflagration of wisdom will consume and destroy all sin and all good consequences.

"To acquire this sacred spiritual wisdom, one thing is essential: Faith (*sraddha*), steady faith in the scriptures, in the teachers, and in the acquisition of wisdom. Without earnestness born of faith, no task, however tiny, can be accomplished. Therefore, you can see how essential it is for earning wisdom. Faith is the incomparable treasure-chest of tranquility (*sama*), control of the outer senses (*dama*), control of the mind by withdrawal of the senses (*uparathi*), fortitude (*thithiksha*), and mind-control by equanimity (*sama-dhana*), each one a coveted possession.

"Faith is only the first step. You must also yearn to imbibe the teachings I am imparting. This is necessary. Along with these, you must also be vigilant; don't yield to sloth. Again, you may fall into company that is not congenial or encouraging. To escape the evil influence of such company and to strengthen your mind to avoid it altogether, mastery over the senses is required.

"Do not admit doubt into you. Want of faith or steadiness is not as destructive as the venom of doubt. In its operation and consequence, doubt is like the tubercular bacilli. It is born in ignorance, and it penetrates into the cavity of the heart of and breeds there. It is the parent of disaster.

"Therefore, destroy this demon with the sword of self-knowledge (*Atma-jnana*). Arise, Arjuna! Engage in

activity as if duty bound, have full faith in My words, do as I bid with no thought of the fruit therefrom. Be a practitioner of renunciation of the fruit of action. By that renunciation, you will get established in wisdom and win liberation from change, from birth and death.

“Give up the idea that you are the doer and the beneficiary. You can do this by dedicating both deed and fruit to the Lord. Then, no sin can affect you, for you are not the doer and the deed must perforce be holy. Like oil on the tongue, collyrium on the eye, the lotus leaf on water, the deed is with you but not by you. Whatever you do or hear or see, remain unaffected, devoid of deeds, innocent of listening or seeing. The joy derived from the external world opens the gateways of grief; it is fleeting; but you are eternal, the very source of bliss, above and beyond all this, the embodiment of *Atma* itself. That is your genuine nature. You are unrelated to these activities that are called deeds and these consequences that you now mistake as real. You are not the doer; you are just the witness, the see-er! All your perplexity has arisen from the delusion that you are the doer, from your ego and the sense of ‘mine’. Know the *Brahman*; take up all tasks but renounce the consequences; giving up the fruit of activity is far superior to giving up activity itself. The *yoga* of action is far superior to renunciation of action (*karma*).

“Well, superior to both these is the *yoga* of meditation. I shall tell you why. The *yoga* of meditation needs the support of the *yoga* of action (*karma-yoga*), so the *yoga* of action was first taught to you. Those who renounce the fruits while actively engaged in action are very dear to Me; they are the true renouncers (*sanyasins*). I have no affection for those who give up the ritual fire and desist from all activity except eating, sleeping, and craving sensory pleasures and behave like Kumbhakarna’s kinsmen, idling and wasting their time. I am unapproachably far from idlers. One who has not renounced the pursuit of wishes can never become a *yogi*, however busy they may be in spiritual disciplines. Only one who is careful not to get entangled in the senses and who is unattached to the consequences of deeds can become a renouncer of all attachments.

“The *yoga* of meditation is possible only on the basis of this renunciation of the fruit of action. If the mind is not under control and amenable to one’s orders, it can become one’s greatest foe. So, live in solitude so that you can master the senses. A horse without reins, a bull unused to the yoke, and a spiritual aspirant whose senses are not mastered are all like a river without water. Such spiritual discipline is a waste.

“So arise, Arjuna! Practise the *yoga* of meditation. Resolve to master the senses through this *yoga* and follow it steadily, systematically, regularly, at a stated time and place, without changing them as the whim takes you. A regular system is essential for this *yoga*. Observe it strictly. Do not alter as fancy dictates; that will bring about dire consequences.

“For those who eat too much and get exhausted with the task of assimilating it, for those who eat less and suffer from exhaustion, for those who sleep too much or too little, for those who indulge in meditation according to ‘convenience’ (that is to say, those who do it for long hours one day because they have no other work and do just token meditation the next day because they have lots of work), for those who give free rein to the six inner enemies (desire, anger, and the rest), for those who do not confer joy on parents, and especially the mother more than all these, for those who entertain doubt and have little faith in the Lord or in the guru whom they have chosen and installed in their hearts—for all these, meditation will yield no fruit at all.

“The mind of the *yoga* adept should be like the steady upright unshaken flame of the lamp, kept in a windless window sill. Whenever the slightest sign of unsteadiness occurs, endeavour to curb the mind and not allow it to wander. Develop the consciousness that you are in all and the feeling of oneness that all is in you. Then, you can

take up and succeed in all the *yogas*. Then, you are free from all distinctions like ‘ I ‘ and ‘others’, or ‘*Atma* and *Paramatma*’. The joy and grief of others will then become equally yours. You can then never harm others; then all can be loved and adored in the awareness that they are the Lord of all (*Sarveswara*).” Lord Krishna declared that those who have attained this vision are really the supremest *yogis*.

Meanwhile, Arjuna is beset by doubt, and he asks for some elucidation and explanation so that he may get convinced. “Krishna! All that you have been telling me is very pleasant to the ear, and I can well imagine that it must be a source of bliss to those who attain success. But it is so difficult, beyond the reach of all. The *yoga* wherein everything has to be realized as equal (*sama-thwam*) is fraught with obstacles even for the fully equipped aspirant. What, then, am I to say of people like me who are common aspirants? Is it ever possible for us? Krishna! Is the mind so easily controllable? Alas! Even an elephant cannot drag as the mind does. The mind is the nursery of waywardness; its mulishness and obstinacy are also very powerful; it is a terrible shrew. It can never be caught; it will never halt at one place. The attempt to catch the mind and tame it is like capturing the wind or bundling up water. How can anyone enter upon *yoga* with such a mind? One seems as hard as the other, these twin tasks of controlling the mind and practising the *yoga*. Krishna, you are advising an impossible task, beyond the capacity of any one.”

The Lord broke into a smile on hearing these words. “Arjuna! You have described the mind and known its nature very well. But it is not an impossible task. The mind can be mastered, however difficult the task might be. By systematic practice, relentless inquiry, and detachment (*vairagya*), the mind can be mastered. There is no task that cannot be accomplished by steady practice. Place faith in the Lord and practise with the certainty that you have the power and the grace, and all tasks become easy.

“Therefore, whoever enters upon this spiritual discipline with determination will attain the supreme Goal, available only for souls transmuted through several births. Remember, the person who has achieved union (*yoga*) is superior to the person who is the master of ritual action (*karma*). So, Arjuna, strive to become a *yogi*, to attain that high and holy status. But this is not all you have to do. There is a status higher than even this. Whoever fixes their entire consciousness in Me, whoever earnestly meditates on Me to the exclusion of everything else —such people are superior to all, they are great (*maha*) *yogis*.

“The *yogas* of meditation and wisdom are both inner disciplines; they are based on faith and devotion. Without these two, both *yogas* are unattainable; the pursuit itself is vain. An aspirant deprived of them is like a wooden doll, lifeless, unaware of the goal. The basic requisite is deep-rooted love toward the Lord. How can you get this? By getting to know the glory, the splendour, the nature and characteristics of the Lord, His essential nature (*swa-bhava*) and reality. That is why I am instructing you about these. I am imparting to you fully the wisdom of the scriptures, supplemented by the wisdom of inner experience. Know that there is nothing further for you to know. Of the thousands of aspirants, few strive to acquire this wisdom. And of these, only some single individual achieves success. All who start do not reach the goal.

“Arjuna! Note that there is nothing higher than Me in the world. All are strung in Me like flowers on a string. The five elements, the mind, the intellect, and the ego —these eight varieties of matter have produced the gross (*sthula*) and the subtle (*sukshma*) in creation. This is called the lower nature. There is another world distinct from this, known as higher nature. It is neither gross nor subtle; it is consciousness (*chaithanya*), in-dwelling in the soul (*jivi*). The world itself is its aspiration.

“The Lord first created the gross world. Then, as the soul, He entered it and rendered it awareness (*chit*) by His consciousness. This is declared clearly in the *Vedas*. You must consider the lower world to be the essential nature (*swa-bhava*) of the supreme Lord and the higher world to be His reality (*swa-rupa*). Dwell on the meaning of these essential qualities and realities and grasp them well. The gross is bound by the dictates of consciousness (*chaithanya*), which is the complete master, ever free.

“*Jivi* (individual, soul) means that which assumes breath (*prana*); the soul holds on to breath through skill and intelligence. The *jivi* is the inner ruler (*antar-yamin*), who has penetrated everything and who sustains everything. So the higher world is just highest *Atma* itself. All that becomes manifest with the same consciousness has to be taken as One.

“Inert matter (*jada*) and consciousness (*chaithanya*) are the two essentials for the entire creation. They are the same as the world (*prakriti*) and the Creator (*purusha*). The energy of the consciousness, when it entertains the idea of catering to the senses (*bhoga*), expresses the world out of its own destiny. Inert matter assumes the form of the body. Both of these are My nature. The Lord, who causes creation, preservation, and dissolution through these, is I myself, remember. There is no substance other than Me; there is no reality other than Me. I am the primal cause, the primal substance. ‘I am One; let Me become Many’. Thus, I Myself resolved upon this expansion into manifoldness, called creation. That resolution affected and motivated the power of illusion (*maya-sakthi*), so the intellectual principle (*maha-thathwa*) got produced. That was the first step in the evolution of creation.

“If a seed is planted in the earth and watered, in a day or two it will drink the moisture and swell in size. The sprouting has not yet taken place, but the first change is there. The intellectual principle is a happening of this type. Next, in accordance with the will of the Lord, a sprout arises. That is called the great ego. From it, five leaves break forth, the subtle principles of the five elements. The entire world is the combined product of these eight: the power of nature (*prakriti-sakthi*), the principle of intellect, ego (*ahamkara*), and the five elements.”