

Chapter XXII

The path of establishing mind and intelligence in Krishna; being free from hate, being full of love, and expressing love as service; discussions of creation, field, and knower of the field; balancing the three qualities inertia, passion, and purity.

Arjuna questioned further, on the basis of Krishna's answers. "You described the characteristics of the votary of the formful (*sa-guna*) aspect of Godhead. You said that people with such characteristics are *yogis*. I am indeed happy to know all this. But just as the votaries of the form have characteristics, the votaries of the attributeless (*nir-guna*) Godhead must also have characteristics by which they can be recognized, right? Please tell me about them; I would like to know."

At this, Nandakumara of lovely form replied, "Arjuna! The votaries of the characteristicless 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 worshippers of the Imperishable (*A-kshara*)."

Readers might therefore infer that the characteristics of the votaries of the formful and formless or imperishable aspects of Godhead are all identical. Arjuna was overjoyed at Krishna's reply and exclaimed, "Now, I have 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* (man, Arjuna) and said this to him, "Arjuna! You don't need now to acquire 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 egotism 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, and offer them as deeds for Krishna. Offering your acts to Me should not be a mere vocal exercise. Take care that you offer them by thought, word, and deed, 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 the mind the act and not its consequence, beneficial or otherwise. That is why Gopala said that wisdom (*jnana*) is superior to steady practice, meditation is superior to wisdom, and the giving up of attachment to the consequences of your acts is superior to meditation. Such non-attachment, Krishna said, will confer peace (*santhi*).

"Devotion and hate are as fire and water; they 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 devotee. The devotee must be convinced that 'all this is God (*Vasudeva sarvam-idam*)'. That is to say, one's own *Atma* is everywhere in everything; this truth must be realized, 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 "all this is God"? No; the mere absence of hate, etc. can not

secure the “Dweller within” and the bliss of recognizing Him. That will not win the grace of the Lord.

The task of the 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 farmer removes all the wild growth, the bush, the scrub, the other small growths. But that is not enough to bring the harvest home. The plot has to be ploughed and partitioned, watered, and made ready for the sowing; 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 bliss (*ananda*) have to be planted therein; the growing crop has to be fostered attentively by discipline and faith; at last, as a result of all this effort, the harvest of bliss will fill one’s granary.

The mere removal of hate from the heart will not ensure bliss. Love too should be cultivated. That is to say, uproot hate and plant love. Hill and anthill, tree and twig, mud and mountain —what do these hate? They have no dislikes. But for that reason, do we ascribe devotion to them all? We do not, for that would be absurd. The devotee must first be free from hate and full of love. Besides, the love must express itself as service to 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 not-mine and egolessness have to be followed. They are like watering and manuring. They are essential for the successful crop of bliss.

“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 ignorance of the fundamental truth. For, once rid of ignorance, the sense of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ will not give trouble; they have no place in you. Hence, it is laid down that the aspirant for devotion (*bhakti*) must always possess contentment. What does this mean? It implies contentment under all conditions, good health 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. Contentment (*sam-thusti*) is the state of mind that is unaffected by the achievement or nonachievement of any wish, the happening or non-happening of any event; the mind must be undisturbed, without excitement or disappointment.”

Arjuna then asked, “Oh Lord, you often mention creation or nature (*prakriti*) and the Creator (*Purusha*). I am eager to know what exactly creation is, what its characteristics are, what exactly its nature is.”

Krishna replied in a simple, easily understandable manner. “Arjuna! Creation (*prakriti*) has another name too: field (*kshetra*). Creation means this created world (*prapancha*), this composite of the five elements. There are two entities in this created world or nature: one is inert matter (*jada*) and the other active, the consciousness

(*chaithanya*). That is to say, one is the seen and the other is the see-er; the knower is ‘ I ‘ (*aham*), the known is ‘this (*idam*)’.

Nature is the sum of attributes or characteristics. The qualities (*gunas*) delusion, grief, and joy (*thamas, rajas, sathwa*) are the attributes of nature. Nature is but the permutation and combination of these qualities. So also are the attributes of the doer and the enjoyer.”

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 nature principle. Now, I wish very much to know what is meant by the Creator (*Purusha*). What are Its characteristics, what is Its nature?”

“Arjuna! Whether you call It the Creator (*Purusha*) or the knower of the truth of life (*kshetra-jna*) or that which is known (*jneya*), it is the same. *Purusha* is the soul (*jiva*) and *prakriti* is the body (*deha*). The embodied is the soul (*purusha*), the person who knows the body. The body has also a number of names, each having a significant meaning. It is the body (*sarira*) because it wastes away; the body (*deha*) because it is liable to be burned. The soul is that which activates the body and becomes aware of its limitations.”

Arjuna was pestered by doubt at this answer, so he started another series of questions. “Krishna, how did this wasting and destructible body come to be called the *kshetra*?” 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 spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) or the Universal Vision; the body leads you on to liberation itself. It is the repository of such great achievements, so it is called *kshetra*. *Kshetra* means an armour, for it protects and guards the soul (*jivi*) from harm.

“Another meaning for *kshetra* 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 soul is 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 wisdom, one garners the harvest of *moksha*, that is, liberation from the bondage of birth and death.

“Just as the farmer knows the nature and characteristics of the field, the protector of the field (*kshetra-jna*), the soul, must know the nature and qualities of the body. The only difference between the words *kshetra* and *kshetra-jna* is the syllable *jna*. It means *jnana*, the one who knows, the knower. So the one who knows the field or the body, its excellences and deficiencies, is the *kshetra-jna*. 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: body (*kshetra*) and knower of the body (*kshetra-jna*)?”

Krishna laughed. “What a foolish question to ask! By inquiring and knowing about the nature of the *kshetra*, one’s grief is destroyed. By knowing about the nature of the knower of the body (*kshetra-jna*), bliss (*ananda*) is acquired. This bliss is also designated as *moksha* or liberation.”

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 experiences both the destruction

of grief and the attainment of bliss? Is it the soul or the body? Please elucidate.”

Krishna replied, “Arjuna! The body (*kshetra*) is associated with the attributes dullness (*thamas*), passion (*rajas*) and purity (*sathwa*). So the soul, when in contact with the body and when it identifies itself with the body, imagines that it is experiencing grief and joy, which are the consequences of those attributes. The soul or knower of the field has no real relationship with the attributes; the soul is just a witness. When iron is in contact with fire, it has the power of scalding; but it is not iron that scalds, it is the fire. Through contact with nature, soul appears as the doer and experiencer.

“Therefore, it is not proper to infer that the soul is having grief and joy simply because it occupies the body, which is the vehicle of the attributes (*gunas*). The earth sustains and helps the seed to grow into a tree or to decline. It is the attribute of the earth that causes these two. So also, the seed of the life principle grows and blossoms into the *Brahman* principle (the Supreme Being, *Brahma-thathwa*) in the body, which is the earth-principle. Just as manure and water are essential for the tree to bloom and bear fruit, truth (*sathya*), equanimity (*santhi*), tranquility (*sama*), and control of the outer senses (*dama*) are essential for the blossoming of the spirit into *Atmic* wisdom. The attributes of creation make it assume multifarious forms.

“Think of this one point, and the whole problem will become clear. People are happy at one time, miserable at another; they are afraid one moment and courageous at another. Why? Because they are shaped so by the attributes. Do you say no? Then how can you explain these changes? Only they can transform people from one phase to another like this.

“If the three attributes dullness, passion, and purity (*thamas, rajas, sathwa*) are equally balanced, then a person won't change. But this never happens; they are always out of balance. When one is dominant and the others are dormant, then creation makes the person assume many roles.

“The three attributes represent the three aspects of human nature. Passion (*rajoguna*) 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. Dullness (*thamoguna*) 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. Purity (*sathwa-guna*) controls the cause of grief and sorrow; it encourages people to follow the path of real joy and happiness. Therefore, being single-pointed and unaffected by any of these three is the basis for purity and steadfastness.

“Have the glass chimney of the lamp clear, and its light will shine bright. Have a glass that is multi-coloured, and 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. Purity is the lamp that shines clear through the white glass chimney. Passion is the many-coloured glass chimney, which makes the light dim and poor. Inertia is the mud pot inside which the lamp is totally ineffective.

“Purity (*sathwa-guna*) is self knowledge. Passion (*rajoguna*) 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. Inertia (*thamoguna*) is the suppression of the light or wisdom that is the very nature of people.”