

CHAPTER 5

|| RENUNCIATION ||

Arjuna said:

1. *You praise renunciation of action, O Krishna, and again of their selfless performance. Tell me decidedly which one is better of the two.*

Then Partha said to Lord Krishna, "Why do you talk like this? If you say something definite, then one can reflect upon it. Earlier you had described the way of renunciation variously; then why are you urging me to take to the way of action? Your ambiguous talk does not make sense to me, who am dull-witted. Listen, if you wish to instruct me in a particular doctrine, you talk about it only. Need one tell you this? I had earlier requested you not to express the highest truth in rhetorics (1-5). Leave alone what happened before, but tell me now which of these two paths is superior. Such a path must be reliable, result-oriented, and one which is well-defined and easy to follow. It should be facile like a palanquin in which one can travel any distance without loss of sleep."

The Lord was pleased with this speech of Arjuna and said with great delight, 'It will be as you say'. If a person is lucky to have a mother like the wish-yielding cow, then he could demand and get even the moon to play with (6-10). See the grace of *Lord Shiva*; did he not bestow on *Upamanyu* the *Milky Sea*, with which to satisfy his desire for rice with milk? If Lord Krishna, who is the store of munificence, is accessible to him (Arjuna), why should he not bask in happiness? When he has the Lord of the Goddess of wealth as his master, is it surprising that he should demand whatever comes to his mind? Therefore, whatever knowledge Arjuna sought, Lord Krishna readily gave it to him. I shall now tell you what Lord Krishna said thereafter.

The blessed Lord said:

2. *Renunciation and Yoga of action both lead to the highest bliss. But between the two, Yoga of action is better than renunciation.*

Lord Krishna said: O Arjuna, if you consider renunciation and Yoga, both are in fact conducive to liberation (11-15). As a boat is an easy means for the women and children to cross the river, the Yoga of action is a straight path for the wise and the ignorant. If you consider what is valuable and what is worthless, you will see that the Yoga of action is an easy path; if you pursue it, you will also obtain the fruit of renunciation. I shall tell you, therefore, the characteristics of renunciation, so that you will realise that these two paths are similar.

3. *He should be known as a perpetual renouncer, who neither hates nor desires. For, O Arjuna, one who transcends the pairs of opposites, is easily freed from bondage.*

When a person does not bemoan a lost thing or long for a thing unprocessed, who is mentally stable like the *Meru* mountain, and whose mind has forgotten the sense of 'Me' and 'Mine', O Arjuna, know him to be a perpetual renouncer (16-20). One having this attitude of mind rids himself of attachment, and thereby attains uninterrupted happiness. Such a person need

not give up his home etc., as he has mentally become detached from them. When the fire is extinguished and reduced to ashes, cotton can safely be placed in it; so when a person's intellect gets rid of all desires, though limited by conditions, he does not get bound by actions. When his desires completely vanish from his mind, he attains renunciation. For this reason, both renunciation and Yoga of action are similar (21-25).

4. *The ignorant affirm that Sankhya and Yoga are different but not the wise. He who practices either will reap the fruit of both.*

Besides, O Partha, how can persons wholly ignorant, know the nature of *Sankhya* and Yoga? Being by nature ignorant, they affirm them to be different. How can there be different lights from the same lamp? But those who have realised the truth by genuine experience treat them both as one and the same.

5. *That state, which the Sankhyas attain, is reached by the yogis as well. He sees truly, who sees that the Sankhya and the Yoga are one.*

The state which is reached by the *Sankhyas*, is also attained by the *yogis*. Hence these two paths are identical. As there is no difference between the sky and the space, the *yogi* recognises that the Yoga of action and renunciation are the same (26-30). If he recognises *Sankhya* and Yoga as not distinct, knowledge dawns upon him in this World and he realises his Self.

6. *But renunciation O Arjuna, is difficult to attain without Yoga. The sage absorbed in Yoga attains to Brahman without delay.*

O Partha, he who, following the path of Yoga, ascends the mountain of liberation, reaches speedily the peak of the highest bliss. But he, who discards Yoga and longs in vain for salvation, never reaches the state of renunciation.

7. *He, who is engaged in selfless work and is pure in mind, who has his body and mind under control, and whose Self is the Self of all beings, is not tainted by actions, although he works.*

He has withdrawn his mind from delusion and after cleaning his mind by the instruction of his teacher, has fixed it on the Self. So long as salt does not fall into the sea, it seems different, but becomes like sea when it is united with it (31-35). In the same way when his mind, rid of desire, becomes one with the Self, then although it is confined to one spot (i.e. the body), it pervades the three worlds. Then all such notions that I am the agent and must perform this particular work naturally cease, and though he performs actions, he is not their doer.

8. *The yogi who knows the truth should think, 'I do nothing at all', when he sees, hears, touches, smells, eats, walks, sleeps or breathes,*

9. *Speaks, releases, grasps, opens and closes his eyes, bearing in mind that the gunas (senses) act on the gunas (their objects).*

O Partha, he who does not remember even that he has a body, how would he possess the egoistic feeling of being the agent? Thus even when the *yogi* has not discarded the body, all the characteristics of the formless God become manifest in him. But like all ordinary people, he seems engaged in all activities (36- 40). He sees with his eyes, hears with his ears, but surprisingly he remains unattached to what he sees and hears. He feels the touch, smells with

his nose and talks on occasions. He eats food, gives up whatever he does not want, and sleeps in comfort at the appropriate time. He seems to walk according to his sweet will and goes on performing all actions as required. Arjuna, why need I tell you each and everything? He breathes in and out and shuts and opens his eyes and so on (41-45). Though he performs these actions, he is not the agent due to self-knowledge. So long as he was asleep on the bed of ignorance, he was deluded by happy dreams; but since then with the dawn of knowledge, he is awakened to his true Self.

10. *He, who acts without attachment, dedicating his actions to Brahman, is not defiled by sin as a lotus petal by water.*

Now all his sense organs function under the sway of the Self in regard to the objects of senses. Even as all the household activities are performed in the lamplight, so all actions ensue from the *yogi*. Just as the leaf of a lotus does not get wet in water, so the *yogi* is not bound by actions, even while performing them (46-50).

11. *With the body, mind and intellect and with the senses alone, yogis perform actions without attachment for the purification of the mind.*

That action which is not based on reasoning or which is devoid of thought is called physical action. I shall explain this in simple words. Like a child the *yogi* performs actions by means of body only. But when the body fashioned from the five elements goes to sleep, then his mind remains alone in the dream world. The most surprising fact, O Partha, is that this sway of desires gives a person pleasure and pain without the knowledge of the body. This action which ensues without the senses being aware of it, is said to be simply mental action (51-55). The *yogis* too perform such actions, but they are not bound by them, as they are free from egoistic feeling. When a person becomes imbecile or is possessed by a spirit, then his sense-activities become disorganised. He sees the figure of a person, hears when he is accosted, speaks with his tongue, but his mind does not register what he does. Whatever is done is without purpose, know that action to be of the senses. And whatever is done with full knowledge, know that it is the action of the intellect, so said *Shri Hari* (56-60). Those who take recourse to intellect and perform actions with wisdom, they become free from the bondage of action. Those who perform actions ranging between the intellectual and the physical without the egoistic feeling, remain pure even while they work. My friend, the action that is done without the notion of agency is non-action. This truth is known from the instruction of the teacher. Now I have told you what transcends speech, so much so, that the serene sentiment is spilling from my overfull mind. He alone is competent to hear this, whose senses have lost the craving for objects (61-65).

Then the hearers said, "Enough of this digression. Please do not interrupt the context, as it will disturb the sequence of the verses. You have fully explained to us that which is difficult for the mind to comprehend and even for the searching intellect to grasp. If, what is by nature beyond speech can be expressed in words, what more do we want? Please proceed with the narration." Appreciating this ardent desire of the hearers, the disciple of *Nivritti* said: "Hear now attentively the conversation between these two." Then Lord Krishna said to Partha, "I shall tell you the characteristics of one who has attained Yoga, listen (66-70)."

12. *The yogi, by renouncing the fruits of actions finds the highest peace. The uncontrolled person becomes attached to the fruit of action through the pull of desire and gets bound.*

Peace visits him in his house and woes him who loathes the fruit of action and has attained to the knowledge of the Self. O Arjuna, another (i.e. worldly person) becomes tied to the peg of enjoyment of the fruit of action by the knot of desire and gets bound.

13. *Mentally renouncing all actions, the self-possessed person rests serenely in the body, the city of nine gates, neither acting himself nor causing others to act.*

He performs actions as others who have the motive of reward, but remains indifferent to it with the notion that he is not its agent. He creates happiness wherever he casts his glance, and wisdom dwells wherever he wants it to dwell. Even though he remains in the body of nine gates, he is not really there, and though he works, he does nothing as he has relinquished desire (71-75).

14. *The Lord creates for the people neither agency nor action, nor the union of action and its fruit. But it is the nature that acts.*

If you reflect upon God, he is seen to be inactive, but he seems to have created this panorama of the universe. If you call him the agent, he is not touched by action; and since he is indifferent to it, his hands and feet remain unaffected, nor is his *yogic* sleep or actionlessness affected. Even then he raises the group of gross elements. He dwells in all creatures, but does not belong to them; and he is not conscious whether the universe has come into being or ceased.

15. *The Lord does not take on himself anybody's sin or merit. Wisdom is obscured by ignorance, whereby creatures get deluded.*

He is not conscious of merit or sin, though they are close to him; he does not witness them, leave alone other things (76-80). The Lord incarnates himself and sports with his body, but his formless nature is not affected thereby. When people say that he creates supports and destroys moving and non-moving things, it is only due to ignorance, O Arjuna.

16. *But to those whose ignorance of the Self is destroyed by wisdom, this wisdom, shining like the sun, reveals the Supreme.*

With the destruction of ignorance the darkness of ignorance clears away, and then the inactive nature of the Lord becomes manifest. If one is convinced that the Lord is inactive, then it is established that I am He, from the beginning. When this discrimination dawns on his mind, how can he then see distinctions in this world? From his own experience he knows that the world too is free from them (81-85), just as when the sun rises in the east it lights that region and makes the other quarters too free from darkness.

17. *With their mind and intellect directed to Him, founded in Him and devoted to Him, they go (to the abode) from which there is no return; for they have cleansed their sins by wisdom.*

When they become convinced about the knowledge of the Self, regarding themselves as of the very nature of *Brahman* and remain dedicated to it day and night, then the all-pervasive wisdom comes seeking them. What more can I say about their equable nature? What is surprising if we say that they see the world like themselves? Just as good fortune does not

even in fun suffer impoverishment, nor does discriminating knowledge recognise delusion (86-90), nor does the sun discern the nature of darkness even in a dream, nor does nectar hear about the story of death, nor does the moon become conscious of heat, so these wise men do not see distinction among beings.

18. *On a Brahmin endowed with learning and humility, on a cow and on an elephant, a dog and an outcaste, the wise look on equally.*

Then how will they have the notion that this is a gnat or an elephant, an outcaste or a *Brahmin*, mine or another's son, a cow or a dog, and great or small? How can one awake see a dream? One would see distinction so long as egoism lasts. When it has already ceased, how can the notion of distinction survive (91-95)?

19. *On this very earth, rebirth is conquered by them whose mind rests on equality. For Brahman is flawless and the same (to all), and so they remain established in Brahman.*

He who sees equality in all things has already become non-dual *Brahman*. Know that this is the secret of equanimity. Without relinquishing the sense objects and tormenting the senses, he experiences non-attachment without desire. With the support of ordinary people, he remains engaged in public affairs, but casting away ignorance of the ordinary men. Just as a ghost remains amongst people without being seen, he is not recognised by the world, although he dwells in the body. Just as when water is kissed by the wind, it dances on water and gets a different name, namely a wave (96-100), so he bears a name and a form, but he has truly become *Brahman*, in as much as his mind has attained equanimity towards all. The Lord said, O Arjuna, I shall tell you in brief the characteristics possessed by a person with equable mind.

20. *He neither exults on getting what is pleasant, nor frets on getting what is unpleasant. Firm of understanding and without delusion, the knower of Brahman abides in Brahman.*

Just as a mountain is not carried away by a flood of mirage, he is not moved by good or bad happenings. He has truly known the essence of equanimity; he has become one with *Brahman*, so said *Shri Hari* to Partha.

21. *He whose mind is not attached to external contacts (of objects) finds joy within himself. With his mind immersed in meditation of Brahman, he enjoys eternal bliss.*

Since he, by neglecting his real Self, does not come under the sway of senses, he does not enjoy the sense-objects. Is there anything surprising in this (101-105)? As his mind is surfeit with the boundless joy of the Self, he does not turn to the external sense organs. Tell me, if the *chakora* bird has feasted on the sweet rays of the moon from the plate of lotus petals, will it deign to chew the desert sand? So if a person who has attained to the bliss of Self, forsakes sense-objects, is there any need to talk about it? Now think very clearly as a matter of curiosity about those who are dazzled by the sensuous pleasures.

22. *For the enjoyments which arise from sense contacts are indeed sources of sorrow. They have, O Arjuna, beginning and end; in them a wise man does not rejoice.*

Just as a hungry person eats even husk, so those who do not know the Self take delight in sense-objects (106-110). Or just as the deer, oppressed by thirst, forgets real water, and

being eluded, runs towards the mirage on gravelly land, mistaking it for water, so those who have not known the Self and are ignorant of bliss, alone think these sense-objects to be delectable. But if you still maintain that one derives happiness from sense-objects, then why cannot worldly affairs be carried on in the flash of lightning? Tell me, if one can ward off the sun, the wind and the rain by taking shelter under a cloud, then why should one build three-storeyed houses? To say that sense-objects can give pleasure is idle chatter. Just as a poisonous root is called *mahur* (meaning sweet) (111-115) or the planet Mars is called auspicious (*mangala*) or the mirage is called water, likewise misleading is the talk of happiness from the sense-objects. Tell me, can the shadow of the cobra's hood give a cooling sensation to the mouse? Just as the bait is good so long as the fish does not swallow it, so is the contact with the sense-objects. Know this to be undoubtedly true.

If you behold, O Arjuna, these sense-objects dispassionately, they look fat like sufferers from jaundice. Know, therefore, that whatever seems like sensual pleasure is pain from beginning to end; but the ignorant man cannot refrain from it (116-120). As they do not know this secret, they cannot but take to them. Tell me, do the insects in pus and mud feel nausea for them? They find pleasure in that pain. They are like frogs in the muck of sense-objects and fish in the (muddy) water of sense enjoyments; how then can they leave it? If all beings were to regard sense-objects with dispassion, will not births fraught with pain be without purpose? Who will then tread without rest on the paths leading to the plight of dwelling in the womb or the travails of births and deaths? Where will the great imperfections dwell, if every one gave up desire of sense-objects? And then will not the very term, worldly existence, become redundant (121-125)? Therefore since they take the pain proceeding from sense enjoyment as pleasure, they make this ignorance, which is wholly false, seem true. Reflection shows that these sense-objects are wholly bad; do not, therefore, make the mistake of running after them. Men of dispassion avoid them like poison, and being desireless they do not like pain in the form of sensuous pleasure.

23. *Whoever can endure here itself, before leaving the body, the rush of desire and anger, is a yogi, a happy man.*

The men of wisdom do not even talk about the sense-objects, since in their very body they have triumphed over body-consciousness. Then they are not even conscious of the external objects, because they have found real happiness within (126-130). They, however, enjoy it differently, not as the birds kiss the fruits; at that time they even forget that they are enjoyers.

The state of mind, which arises at that time, destroys the veil of ego-sense; and they grasp the bliss and hold it in a firm embrace. Then they become one with it, as water mixing with water does not remain separate, or as with the disappearance of the wind in the sky, their separate existence ceases. Then bliss alone remains in its own form at the time of that union. When the talk of dualism ceases and only one remains, then who is there to witness this oneness (131-135)?

24. *He who has happiness, joy and light within, that yogi becomes one with Brahman and finds eternal bliss.*
25. *In Brahman the sages find bliss, with their sins destroyed and doubts cleared, who after controlling*

their minds, devote themselves to the good of all beings.

I should better stop here. For how can you talk about a thing which is beyond speech? He who revels in the Self will easily catch the hint. I regard the *yogis* who, full of bliss, are immersed in the Self, as pure images of beatitude. They are replicas of joy and sprouts of happiness; and they are the playgrounds of supreme knowledge. They are the abode of discrimination, embodiments of supreme *Brahman*, or the decorated parts of Self-knowledge, the essence of the quality of goodness or the stamps of sentience.

Then *Shri Nivritti* said, "Enough of this digression. Why must you describe the same thing in so many ways (136-140)? When you take delight in praising holy men, you forget the context; but you speak so beautifully about these matters. But cut short this embellishment and enlighten us on the meaning of the *Gita*, and let the auspicious message of the *Gita* dawn upon the minds of good men." After receiving this advice of the *Guru*, *Jnanadeva*, the disciple of *Nivritti* says, "Now listen to what Lord Krishna said to Arjuna." (The Lord said): O Arjuna, those who dived deep into the deep waters of eternal bliss, they remained steady there and became one with it. And since they saw within themselves the world in the clear light of wisdom, we have to admit that they became one with the Supreme Self while living (141-145). This bliss of Self is sublime, eternal and limitless. Only those who are free from desire become qualified for it. This happiness is reserved for the great sages, is shared by men of dispassion, and it ever fructifies in those who have no doubt (about the existence of the Self).

26. *Beatitude of God is near to the austere souls, who are subdued in mind, who are free from desire and anger and who have known the Self.*

Those who have withdrawn their minds from the sense-objects and subdued them, they do not wake up again from the state of bliss. Know that they are the persons who have become the *Supreme Brahman* itself, which is the mainspring of the knowers of Self. I shall tell you briefly, if you ask me how they became *Brahman* while remaining in the body (146-150).

27. *Shutting out all external sense contacts, fixing the gaze between the eye-brows, and equalising the outer and inner breaths, moving within the nostrils;*
28. *The sage, who is fully intent on liberation, with his senses, mind, and intellect subdued, and who is free from desire, fear and anger, is indeed ever free.*

He who shuts out the sense-objects by means of dispassion and fixes the mind within his body, and turning his gaze inwards on the *ajnacakra* inside the middle of the eye-brows, where all the three *nadis* - *ida*, *pingala* and *madhyama* meet, they turn the mind on the *cidakasha* after equalising the *prana* and *apana*. As when the river Ganges, after collecting the drain waters, meets the sea, it is not possible to separate each of them from the rest, so when the mind is merged in the *akasha* by the restraint of the *prana*, all thoughts of diverse desires cease by themselves, O Arjuna (151-155). Then is torn the cloth of mind, which displays the picture of world's existence, even as there is no reflection when the lake dries up. When the mind itself ceases, how can the ego-sense and the rest survive? Thus he experiences *Brahman* and becomes one with it, even while living.

29. *One attains to peace, having known me as the enjoyer of the sacrifices and austerities, as the great*

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Lord of all the world and as the friend of all beings.

As I said before, some became *Brahman* in their very bodies; and they did this by following the path of Yoga. After climbing the difficult cliff of spiritual discipline and crossing the sea of *yogic* practice, they transcended the worldly existence. After becoming sinless, they took the measure of the world and became truly of the nature of *Brahman* (156-160).

When Lord Krishna explained the purport of *yogic* practice, Arjuna, with his penetrating mind was surprised. Anticipating what was in his mind, Lord Krishna asked Partha with a smile, "Are you satisfied with what I have told you?" Then Arjuna replied, "Lord you are foremost among those who discern the thoughts of others and have divined my intention. You already know what I was going to ask you; so kindly explain whatever you have said. This path of Yoga is easy to follow, like crossing the river by a ford instead of swimming (161-165). Though this Yoga is attainable after a long time, it is easier than *Sankhyayoga* for weaklings like me. Therefore, recount it to me once more so that I can grasp it; even if it leads to repetition, explain it to me thoroughly." Then Lord Krishna said, "Has this path appealed to you so much? What does it matter? I shall be glad to repeat it, since you are so eager to hear it. O Arjuna, you listen well and practice what you hear. Then why should I hesitate to explain it to you?"

Already the Lord had the heart of a mother talking to her dear son. How can one fathom that strange affection (166-170)? One can call it the rain of tender sentiment or the unfoldment of wonderful love; how can I praise enough that compassionate gaze of *Shri Hari*? It was, as it were, filled with nectar or infatuated by the wine of love; and because of this it could not free itself from the affection of Arjuna. If I were to expatiate upon this affection, it will only end up with a lengthy discourse without fully describing that affection. Then of what use is this empty talk? Who can measure the Lord, who has not been able to take a measure of himself? From the trend of his talk it appeared to me that he was clearly infatuated. Under that influence he said, "Listen, my friend (171-175) O Arjuna, by whatever means I can enlighten your mind, I shall use those means to explain to you about this Yoga i.e., what is its use and who are qualified to practice it. Whatever is proper in this regard, I shall tell you all. Listen with attention." With this statement what Lord Krishna said forms the subject matter of next chapter. *Jnanadeva*, disciple of *Nivrutti*, will describe, in clear terms, Lord Krishna's instruction, how to attain this Yoga without giving up contact with the world (176-180).

