

BHAGAVADGITA

English translation of Sri Ramanuja's Sanskrit Commentary - Swami Adidevananda

Chapter 2

RO

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2.4 - 2.5 Arjuna said -- Again Arjuna, being moved by love, compassion and fear, mistaking unrighteousness for righteousness, and not understanding, i.e., not knowing the beneficial words of Sri Krsna, said as follows: 'How can I slay Bhishma, Drona and others worthy or reverence? After slaying those elders, though they are intensely attached to enjoyments, how can I enjoy those very pleasures which are now being enjoyed by them? For, it will be mixed with their blood.'

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2.6 - 2.8 If you say, 'After beginning the war, if we withdraw from the battle, the sons of Dhrtarastra will slay us all forcibly', be it so. I think that even to be killed by them, who do not know the difference between righteousness and unrighteousness, is better for us than gaining unrighteous victory by killing them. After saying so, Arjuna surrendered himself at the feet of the Lord, overcome with dejection, saying. 'Teach me, your disciple, who has taken refuge in you, what is good for me.'

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2.9 - 2.10 Sanjaya said -- Thus, the Lord, the Supreme Person, introduced the Sastra regarding the self for the sake of Arjuna --- whose natural courage was lost due to love and compassion in a misplaced situation, who thought war to be unrighteous even though it was the highest duty for warriors (Ksatriyas), and who took refuge in Sri Krsna to know what his right duty was ---, thinking that Arjuna's delusion would not come to an end except by the knowledge of the real nature of the self, and that war was an ordained duty here which, when freed from attachment to fruits, is a means for self-knowledge. Thus, has it been

said by Sri Yamunacarya: 'The introduction to the Sastra was begun for the sake of Arjuna, whose mind was agitated by misplaced love and compassion and by the delusion that righteousness was unrighteousness, and who took refuge in Sri Krsna.' The Supreme Person spoke these words as if smiling, and looking at Arjuna, who was thus overcome by grief resulting from ignorance about the real nature of the body and the self, but was nevertheless speaking about duty as if he had an understanding that the self is distinct from the body, and while he (Arjuna), torn between contradictory ideas, had suddenly become inactive standing between the two armies that were getting ready to fight. Sri Krsna said, as if in ridicule, to Arjuna the words beginning with, 'There never was a time when I did not exist' (II. 12), and ending with 'I will release you from all sins; grieve not!' (XVIII. 66) --- which have for their contents the real nature of the self, of the Supreme Self, and of the paths of work (Karma), knowledge (Jnana) and devotion (Bhakti) which constitute the means for attaining the highest spiritual fulfilment.

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2.11 The Lord said -- You are grieving for those who do not deserve to be grieved for. You also speak words of wisdom about the nature of the body and the self as follows: 'The ancestors fall degraded, deprived of the ritual oblations of food and water' (I. 42). There is no reason for such grief for those who possess the knowledge of the nature of the body and the self. Those who know the exact truth will not grieve for those bodies from which life has departed and for those from whome the principle of

life has not departed. They do not grieve for bodies or souls. Hence, in you this contradiction is visible --- your grief at the thought 'I shall slay them?' and at the same time your talk about righteousness and unrighteousness, as if it were the result of knowledge of the self as distinct from the body. Therefore you do not know the nature of the body nor of the self which is distinct from the body and is eternal. Nor do you know of duties like war etc., which (as duty) constitute the means for the attainment of the self, nor of the fact that this war (which forms a duty in the present context), if fought without any selfish desire for results, is a means for the attainment of the knowledge of the true nature of the self. The implied meaning is this: This self, verily, is not dependent on the body for its existence, nor is it subjected to destruction on the death of the body, as there is no birth or death for it. Therefore there is no cause for grief. But the body is insentient by nature, is subject to change, and its birth and death are natural; thus it (body) too is not to be grieved for. First listen about the nature of the self.

2.12 Indeed, I, the Lord of all, who is eternal, was never non-existent, but existed always. It is not that these selves like you, who are subject to My Lordship, did not exist; you have always existed. It is not that 'all of us', I and you, shall cease to be 'in the future', i.e., beyond the present time; we shall always exist. Even as no doubt can be entertained that I, the Supreme Self and Lord of all, am eternal, likewise, you (Arjuna and all others) who are embodied selves, also should be considered eternal.

The foregoing implies that the difference between the Lord, the sovereign over all, and the individual selves, as also the differences among the individual selves themselves, are real. This has been declared by the Lord Himself. For, different terms like 'I', 'you', 'these', 'all' and 'we' have been used by the Lord while explaining the truth of eternality in order to remove the misunderstanding of Arjuna who is deluded by ignorance. [Now follows a refutation of the Upadhi theory of Bhaskara and the Ignorance theory of the Advaitins which deny any ultimate difference between the Lord and the Jivas.] If we examine (Bhaskara's) theory of Upadhis (adjuncts), which states that the apparent differences among Jivas are due to adjuncts, it will have to be admitted that mention about differences is out of place when explaining the ultimate truth, because the theory holds that there are no such differences in reality. But that the differences mentioned by the Lord are natural, is taught by the Sruti also: 'Eternal among eternal, sentient among sentients, the one, who fulfils the desires of the many' (Sve. U. VI. 13, Ka. U. V. 13). The meaning of the text is: Among the eternal sentient beings who are countless, He, who is the Supreme Spirit, fulfils the desires of all.' As regards the theory of the Advaitins that the perception of difference is brought about by ignorance only and is not really real, the Supreme Being --- whose vision must be true and who, therefore must have an immediate cognition of the differenceless and immutable and eternal consciousness as constituting the nature of the Atman in all authenticity, and who must thereby be always free from all ignorance and its effects -- cannot possibly perceive the so-called difference arising from

ignorance. It is, therefore, unimaginable that He engages himself in activities such as teaching, which can proceed only from such a perception of differences arising from ignorance. The argument that the Supreme Being, though possessed of the understanding of non-duality, can still have the awareness of such difference persisting even after sublation, just as a piece of cloth may have been burnt up and yet continues to have the appearance of cloth, and that such a continuance of the sublated does not cause bondage --- such an argument is invalid in the light of another analogy of a similar kind, namely, the perception of the mirage, which, when understood to be what it is, does not make one endeavour to fetch water therefrom. In the same way even if the impression of difference negated by the non-dualistic illumination persists, it cannot impel one to activities such as teaching; for the object to whom the instruction is to be imparted is discovered to be unreal. The idea is that just as the discovery of the non-existence of water in a mirage stops all effort to get water from it, so also when all duality is sublated by illumination, no activity like teaching disciples etc., can take place. Nor can the Lord be conceived as having been previously ignorant and as attaining knowledge of unity through the scriptures, and as still being subject to the continuation of the stultified experiences. Such a position would stand in contradiction to the Sruti and the Smriti: 'He, who is all-comprehender' (Mun. U., 1. 1. 9); all knower and supreme and natural power of varied types are spoken of in Srutis, such as knowledge, strength and action' (Sve. U. 6. 8); 'I know, Arjuna, all beings of the past, present and future but no one knows Me,' etc. (Gita 7. 26).

And again, if the perception of difference and distinction are said to persist even after the unitary Self has been decisively understood, the question will arise --- to whom will the Lord and the succession of teachers of the tradition impart the knowledge in accordance with their understanding? The question needs an answer. The idea is that knowledge of non-duality and perception of differences cannot co-exist. If it be replied by Advaitins holding the Bimba-Pratibimba (the original and reflections) theory that teachers give instructions to their own reflections in the form of disciples such as Arjuna, it would amount to an absurdity. For, no one who is not out of his senses would undertake to give any instruction to his own reflections in mediums such as a precious stone, the blade of a sword or a mirror, knowing, as he does, that they are non-different from himself. The theory of the persistence of the sublated is thus impossible to maintain, as the knowledge of the unitary self destroys the beginningless ignorance in which differences falling outside the self are supposed to be rooted. 'The persistence of the sublated' does occur in cases such as the vision of the two moons, where the cause of the vision is the result of some real defect in eyesight, nor removable by the right understanding of the singleness of the moon. Even though the perception of the two moons may continue, the sublated cognition is rendered inconsequential on the strength of strong contrary evidence. For, it will not lead to any activity appropriate for a real experience. But in the present context (i.e. the Advaitic), the conception of difference, whose object and cause are admittedly unreal, is cancelled by the knowledge of reality. So the 'persistence of the

sublated' can in no way happen. Thus, if the Supreme Lord and the present succession of preceptors have attained the understanding of (Non-dual) reality, their perception of difference and work such as teaching proceeding from that perception, are impossible. If, on the other hand, the perception of difference persists because of the continuance of ignorance and its cause, then these teachers are themselves ignorant of the truth, and they will be incapable of teaching the truth. Further, as the preceptor has attained the knowledge of the unitary self and thereby the ignorance concerning Brahman and all the effects of such ignorance are thus annihilated, there is no purpose in instructing the disciple. If it is held that the preceptor and his knowledge are just in the imagination of the disciple, the disciple and his knowledge are similarly the product of the imagination of the preceptor, and as such can not put an end to the ignorance in question. If it is maintained that the disciple's knowledge destroys ignorance etc., because it contradicts the antecedent state of non-enlightenment, the same can be asserted of the preceptor's knowledge. The futility of such teachings is obvious. Enough of these unsound doctrines which have all been refuted.

2.13 As the self is eternal, one does not grieve, thinking that the self is lost, when an embodied self living in a body gives up the state of childhood and attains youth and other states. Similarly, the wise men, knowing that the self is eternal, do not grieve, when the self attains a body different from the present body. Hence the selves, being eternal, are not fit objects for grief. This much has to be done here; the eternal

selves because of Their being subject to beginningless Karma become endowed with bodies suited to Their Karmas. To get rid of this bondage (of bodies), embodied beings perform duties like war appropriate to their stations in life with the help of the same bodies in an attitude of detachment from the fruits as prescribed by the scripture. Even to such aspirants, contacts with sense-objects give pleasure and pain, arising from cold, heat and such other things. But these experiences are to be endured till the acts enjoined in the scriptures come to an end. The Lord explains the significance immediately afterwards:

2.14 As sound, touch, form, taste and smell with their bases, are the effects of subtle elements (Tanmatras), they are called Matras. The contact with these through the ear and other senses gives rise to feelings of pleasure and pain, in the form of heat and cold, softness and hardness. The words 'cold and heat' illustrate other sensations too. Endure these with courage till you have discharged your duties as prescribed by the scriptures. The brave must endure them patiently, as they 'come and go'. They are transient. When the Karmas, which cause bondage, are destroyed, this 'coming and going' will end. The Lord now explains the purpose of this endurance:

2.15 That person endowed with courage, who considers pain as inevitable as pleasure, and who performs war and such other acts suited to his station in life without attachment to the results and only as a means of attaining immortality --- one whom the impact of weapons in

war etc., which involve soft or harsh contacts, do not trouble, that person only attains immortality, not a person like you, who cannot bear grief. As the selves are immortal, what is to be done here, is this much only. This is the meaning. Because of the immortality of the selves and the natural destructibility of the bodies, there is no cause for grief. It was told (previously): 'The wise grieve neither for the dead nor for the living' (2. 11). Now the Lord elucidates the same view.

2.16 'The unreal,' that is, the body, can never come into being. 'The real,' that is, the self, can never cease to be. The finale about these, the body and the self, which can be experienced, has been realised correctly by the seers of the Truth. As analysis ends in conclusion, the term 'finale' is here used. The meaning is this: Non-existence (i.e., perishableness) is the real nature of the body which is in itself insentient. Existence (i.e., imperishableness) is the real nature of the self, which is sentient. [What follows is the justification of describing the body as 'unreal' and as having 'never come into being.'] Non-existence has, indeed, the nature of perishableness, and existence has the nature of imperishableness, as Bhagavan Parasara has said: 'O Brahmana, apart from conscious entity there does not exist any group of things anywhere and at any time. Thus have I taught you what is real existence --- how conscious entity is real, and all else is unreal' (V. P., 2.12.43 - 45). 'The Supreme Reality is considered as imperishable by the wise. There is no doubt that what can be obtained from a perishable substance is also perishable' (Ibid., 2.14.24). 'That entity which even by a change in time cannot come to

possess a difference through modification etc., is real. What is that entity, O King? (It is the self who retains Its knowledge)' (Ibid., 2.13.100). It is said here also: 'These bodies ... are said to have an end' (2.18) and 'Know That (the Atman) to be indestructible' (2.17). It is seen from this that this (i.e., perishableness of the body and imperishableness of the self) is the reason for the designating the Atman as 'existence' (Sattva) and body as 'non-existence' (Asvattva). This verse has no reference to the doctrine of Satkaryavada (i.e., the theory that effects are present in the cause), as such a theory has no relevance here. Arjuna is deluded about the true nature of the body and the self; so what ought to be taught to him in order to remove his delusion, is discrimination between these two --- what is qualified by perishableness and what, by imperishableness. This (declaration) is introduced in the following way: 'For the dead, or for the living' (2.11). Again this point is made clear immediately (by the words), 'Know that to be indestructible ...' (2.17) and 'These bodies ... are said to have an end' (2.18). How the imperishableness of the self is to be understood, Sri Kṛṣṇa now teaches:

2.17 Know that the self in its essential nature is imperishable. The whole of insentient matter, which is different (from the self), is pervaded by the self. Because of pervasiveness and extreme subtlety, the self cannot be destroyed; for every entity other than the self is capable of being pervaded by the self, and hence they are grosser than It. Destructive agents like weapons, water, wind, fire etc., pervade the substances to

be destroyed and disintegrate them. Even hammers and such other instruments rouse wind through violent contact with the objects and thereby destroy their objects. So, the essential nature of the self being subtler than anything else, It is imperishable. (The Lord) now says that the bodies are perishable:

2.18 The root 'dih' means 'to grow.' Hence these bodies (Dehas) are characterised by complexity. They have an end --- their nature is perishability. For, jugs and such other things which are characterised by complexity are seen to have an end. The bodies of the embodied self, which are made of conglomerated elements, serve the purpose of experiencing the effects of Karmas, as stated in Brh. U. IV. 4.5, 'Auspicious embodiments are got through good actions.' Such bodies perish when Karmas are exhausted. Further the self is imperishable. Why? Because it is not measurable. Neither can It be conceived as the object of knowledge, but only as the subject (knower). It will be taught later on: 'He who knows It is called the knower of the Field by those who know this (13.1). Besides, the self is not seen to be made up of many (elements). Because in the perception 'I am the knower' throughout the body, only something other than the body is understood as possessing an invariable form as the knower. Further, this knower cannot be dismembered and seen in different places as is the case with the body. Therefore the self is eternal, for (1) It is not a complex being of a single form; (2) It is the knowing subject; and (3) It pervades all. On the contrary, the body is perishable, because (1) it is complex; (2) it serves

the purpose of experiencing the fruits of Karma by the embodied self; (3) it has a plurality of parts and (4) it can be pervaded. Therefore, as the body is by nature perishable and the self by nature is eternal, both are not objects fit for grief. Hence, bearing with courage the inevitable strike of weapons, sharp or hard, liable to be received by you and others, begin the action called war without being attached to the fruits but for the sake of attaining immortality.

2.19 With regard to This viz., the self, whose nature has been described above, he who thinks of It as the slayer, i.e., as the cause of slaying, and he who thinks 'This' (self) as slain by some cause or other --- both of them do not know. As this self is eternal for the reasons mentioned above, no possible cause of destruction can slay It and for the same reason, It cannot be slain. Though the root 'han' (to slay) has the self for its object, it signifies causing the separation of the body from the self and not destruction of the self. Scriptural texts like 'You shall not cause injury to beings' and 'The Brahmana shall not be killed'? (K. Sm. 8.2) indicate unsanctioned actions, causing separation of the body from the self. [In the above quotes, slaughter in an ethical sense is referred to, while the text refers to killing or separating the self from the body in a metaphysical sense. This is made explicit in the following verse].

2.20 As the self is eternal for the reasons mentioned (above), and hence free from modifications, it is said that all the attributes of the insentient (body) like birth, death etc., never touch the self. In this connection, as

the statement, 'It is never born, It never dies' is in the present tense, it should be understood that the birth and death which are experienced by all in all bodies, do not touch the self. The statement 'Having come into being once, It never ceases to be' means that this self, having emerged at the beginning of a Kalpa (one aeon of manifestation) will not cease to be at the end of the Kalpa (i.e., will emerge again at the beginning of the next Kalpa unless It is liberated). This is the meaning --- that birth at the beginning of a Kalpa in bodies such as those of Brahman and others, and death at the end of a Kalpa as stated in the scriptures, do not touch the self. Hence, the selves in all bodies, are unborn, and therefore eternal. It is abiding, not connected, like matter, with invisible modifications taking place. It is primeval; the meaning is that It existed from time immemorial; It is even new i.e., It is capable of being experienced always as fresh. Therefore, when the body is slain the self is not slain.

2.21 He who knows the self to be eternal, as It is indestructible, unborn and changeless --- how can that person be said to cause the death of the self, be it of the self existing in the bodies of gods or animals or immovables? Whom does he kill? The meaning is --- how can he destroy any one or cause anyone to slay? How does he become an instrument for slaying? The meaning is this: the feeling of sorrow: 'I cause the slaying of these selves, I slay these,' has its basis solely in ignorance about the true nature of the self. Let it be granted that what is done is only separation of the bodies from the eternal selves. Even

then, when the bodies, which are instruments for the experience of agreeable pleasures, perish, there still exists reason for sorrow in their separation from the bodies. To this (Sri Krsna) replies:

2.22 That those who give up their bodies in a righteous war get more beautiful bodies than before, is known through the scriptures. Casting off worn-out garments and taking new and beautiful ones, can be only a cause of joy, as seen here in the world in the case of new garments. Once again Sri Krsna emphasises for easy understanding the indestructibility of the self, taught before: 'Know that to be indestructible by which all this is pervaded' (II.17) and confirms it thus:

2.23 - 2.24 Weapons, fire, water and air are incapable of cleaving, burning, wetting and drying the self; for, the nature of the self is to pervade all elements; It is present everywhere; for, It is subtler than all the elements; It is not capable of being pervaded by them; and cleaving, burning, wetting and drying are actions which can take place only by pervading a substance. Therefore the self is eternal. It is stable, immovable and primeval. The meaning is that It is unchanging, unshakable and ancient.

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2.25 The self is not made manifest by those Pramanas (means of knowledge) by which objects susceptible of being cleft etc., are made manifest; hence It is unmanifest, being different in kind from objects susceptible to cleaving etc., It is inconceivable, being different in kind from all objects. As It does not possess the essential nature of any of them. It cannot even be conceived. Therefore, It is unchanging, incapable of modifications. So knowing this self to be possessed of the above mentioned qualities, it does not become you to feel grief for Its sake.

2.26 Besides, if you consider this self as identical with the body, which is constantly born and constantly dies --- which is nothing other than these characteristics of the body mentioned above ---, even then it does not become you to feel grief; because, birth and death are inevitable for the body, whose nature is modification.

2.27 For what has originated, destruction is certain --- it is seen to be inevitable. Similarly what has perished will inevitably originate. How should this be understood --- that there is origination for that (entity) which has perished? It is seen that an existing entity only can

originate and not a non-existent one. Origination, annihilation etc., are merely particular states of an existent entity. Now thread etc., do really exist. When arranged in a particular way, they are called clothes etc. It is seen that even those who uphold the doctrine that the effect is a new entity (Asatkarya-vadins) will admit this much that no new entity over and above the particular arrangement of threads is seen. It is not tenable to hold that this is the coming into being of a new entity, since, by the process of manufacture there is only attainment of a new name and special functions. No new entity emerges. Origination, annihilation etc., are thus particular stages of an existent entity. With regard to an entity which has entered into a stage known as origination, its entry into the opposite condition is called annihilation. Of an evolving entity, a sequence of evolutionary stages is inevitable. For instance, clay becomes a lump, jug, a potsherd, and (finally) powder. Here, what is called annihilation is the attainment of a succeeding stage by an entity which existed previously in a preceding stage. And this annihilation itself is called birth in that stage. Thus, the sequence called birth and annihilation being inevitable for an evolving entity, it is not worthy of you to grieve. Now Sri Krsna says that not even the slightest grief arising from seeing an entity passing from a previous existing stage to an opposite stage, is justifiable in regard to human beings etc.

2.28 Human beings etc., (i.e., bodies) exist as entities; their previous stages are unknown, their middle stages in the form of man etc., are known, and their (final) and future stages are unknown. As they thus

exist in their own natural stages, there is no cause for grief. After thus saying that there is no cause for grief even according to the view which identifies the body with the self, Sri Kṛṣṇa proceeds to say that it is hard to find one who can be said to have truly perceived the Atman or spoken about It or heard about It or gained a true conception of It by hearing. For the Atman, which is actually different from the body, is of a wonderful nature.

2.29 Among innumerable beings, someone, who by great austerity has got rid of sins and has increased his merits, realises this self possessing the above mentioned nature, which is wonderful and distinct in kind from all things other than Itself. Such a one speaks of It to another. Thus, someone hears of It. And even after hearing of It, no one knows It exactly that It really exists. The term 'ca' (and) implies that even amongst the seers, the speakers and hearers, one with authentic perception, authentic speech and authentic hearing, is a rarity.

2.30 The self within the body of everyone such as gods etc., must be considered to be eternally imperishable, though the body can be killed. Therefore, all beings from gods to immovable beings, even though they possess different forms, are all uniform and eternal in their nature as described above. The inequality and the perishableness pertain only to the bodies. Therefore, it is not fit for you to feel grief for any of the beings beginning from gods etc., and not merely for Bhisma and such others.

2.31 Further, even though there is killing of life in this war which has begun, it is not fit for you to waver, considering your own duty, as in the Agnisomiya and other sacrifices involving slaughter. To a Ksatriya, there is no greater good than a righteous war, begun for a just cause. It will be declared in the Gita: 'Valour, non-defeat (by the enemies), fortitude, adroitness and also not fleeing from battle, generosity, lordliness --- these are the duties of the Ksatriya born of his very nature.' (18.43). In Agnisomiya etc., no injury is caused to the animal to be immolated; for, according to the Vedic Text, the victim, a he-goat, after abandoning an inferior body, will attain heaven etc., with a beautiful body. The Text pertaining to immolation declares: 'O animal, by this (immolation) you will never die, you are not destroyed. You will pass through happy paths to the realm of the gods, where the virtuous only reach and not the sinful. May the god Savitr give you a proper place.' (Yaj. 4.6.9.46). Likewise the attainment of more beautiful bodies by those who die here in this war has been declared in the Gita, 'As a man casts off worn-out garments and takes others that are new ...' (2.22). Hence, just as lancing and such other operations of a surgeon are for curing a patient, the immolation of the sacrificial animal in the Agnisomiya etc., is only for its good.

2.32 Only the fortunate Ksatriyas, i.e., the meritorious ones, gain such a war as this, which has come unsought, which is the means for the attainment of immeasurable bliss, and which gives an unobstructed pathway to heaven.

2.33 If in delusion, you do not wage this war, which has started and which is the duty of a Ksatriya, then, owing to the non-performance of your immediate and incumbent duty, you will lose the immeasurable bliss which is the fruit of discharging your duty and the immeasurable fame which is the fruit of victory. In addition, you will incur extreme sin.

error

2.35 Great warriors like Karna, Duryodhana, etc., hitherto held you in high esteem as a heroic enemy. Now by refraining from battle when it has begun, you will appear to them as despicable and easily defeatable. These great warriors will think of you as withdrawing from battle out of fear. Because turning away from battle does not happen in the case of brave enemies through affection etc., for relatives. It can happen only through fear of enemies. Moreover

2.36 Moreover, your enemies, the sons of Dhrtarastra, will make many remarks unutterably slanderous and disparaging to heroes, saying, 'How can this Partha stand in the presence of us, who are heroes, even for a moment? His prowess is elsewhere than in our presence.' Can there be anything more painful to you than this? You yourself will understand that death is preferable to subjection to disparagement of this kind. Sri Krsna now says that for a hero, enemies being slain by oneself and oneself being slain by enemies are both conducive to supreme bliss.

2.37 If you are slain in a righteous war by enemies, you shall thereby attain supreme bliss. Or, slaying the enemies, you shall enjoy this kingdom without obstacles. As the duty called war, when done without attachment to the fruits, becomes the means for winning supreme bliss, you will attain that supreme bliss. Therefore, arise, assured that engagement in war (here the duty) is the means for attaining release, which is known as man's supreme goal. This alone is suitable for you, the son of Kunti. This is the purport. Sri Krsna then explains to the aspirant for liberation how to conduct oneself in war.

2.38 Thus, knowing the self to be eternal, different from the body and untouched by all corporeal qualities, remaining unaffected by pleasure and pain resulting from the weapon-strokes etc., inevitable in a war, as also by gain and loss of wealth, victory and defeat, and keeping yourself free from attachment to heaven and such other fruits, begin the battle considering it merely as your own duty. Thus, you will incur no sin. Here sin means transmigratory existence which is misery. The purport is that you will be liberated from the bondage of transmigratory existence. Thus, after teaching the knowledge of the real nature of the self, Sri Krsna begins to expound the Yoga of work, which, when preceded by it (i.e., knowledge of the self), constitutes the means for liberation.

2.39 'Sankhya' means 'intellect,' and the truth about the Atman, which is determinable by the intellect, is 'Sankhyam'. Concerning the nature of

the self which has to be known, whatever Buddhi has to be taught, has been taught to you in the passage beginning with, 'It is not that I did not exist' (II.12) and ending with the words, 'Therefore, you shall not grieve for any being' (II.30). The disposition of mind (Buddhi) which is required for the performance of works preceded by knowledge of the self and which thus constitutes the means of attaining release, that is here called by the term Yoga. It will be clearly told later on, 'Work done with desire for fruits is far inferior to work done with evenness of mind' (II. 49). What Buddhi or attitude of mind is required for making your act deserve the name of Yoga, listen to it now. Endowed with that knowledge, you will be able to cast away the bondage of Karma. 'Karma-bandha' means the bondage due to Karma i.e., the bondage of Samsara. Now Sri Krsna explains the glory of works associated with the Buddhi to be described hereafter:

2.40 Here, in Karma Yoga, there is no loss of 'Abhikrama' or of effort that has been put in; 'loss' means the loss of efficacy to bring about the fruits. In Karma Yoga if work is begun and left unfinished, and the continuity is broken in the middle, it does not remain fruitless, as in the case of works undertaken for their fruits. No evil result is acquired if the continuity of work is broken. Even a little of this Dharma known as Karma Yoga or Niskama Karma (unselfish action without desire for any reward) gives protection from the great fear, i.e., the fear of transmigratory existence. The same purport is explained later thus: 'Neither in this world nor the next, O Arjuna, there is annihilation for him' (6.40). But in

works, Vedic and secular, when there is interruption in the middle, not only do they not yield fruits, but also there is accrual of evil. Now, Sri Krsna distinguishes the Buddhi or mental disposition concerned with those acts which constitute a means for attaining release from those which are concerned with the acts meant for gaining the desired objects:

2.41 Here, i.e., in every ritual sanctioned by the scriptures, the Buddhi or disposition of mind marked by resolution, is single. The Buddhi marked by resolution is the Buddhi concerned with acts which must be performed by one desirous of release (and not any kind of work). The term 'Vyavasaya' means unshakable conviction: this Buddhi (disposition of mind) comes out of prior determination about the true nature of the self. But the Buddhi concerning the performance of rituals of fulfill certain desires, is marked by irresolution; because here only this much knowledge of the self is sufficient --- 'the self (as an entity) exists differently from the body.' Such a general understanding is sufficient to qualify for performing acts giving fulfilment of certain desires. It does not require any definite knowledge about the true nature of the self. For, even if there is no such knowledge, desires for heaven etc., can arise, the means for their attainment can be adopted, and the experience of those fruits can take place. For this reason there is no contradiction in the teaching of the scriptures. [The contradiction negated here is how can the same scriptural acts produce different results --- fulfilment of desires and liberation. The difference in the disposition of the mind

accouts of it.] The Buddhi (mental disposition) marked by resolution has a single aim, because it relates to the attainment of a single fruit. For, as far as one desiring release is concerned, all acts are enjoined only for the accomplishment of that single fruit. Therefore, since the purpose of the scriptures here is one only (i.e., liberation), the Buddhi regarding all rituals taught in the scriptures too is only one, as far as liberation-seekers are concerned. For example, the set of six sacrifices, beginning with Agneya with all their subsidiary processes (though enjoined in different passages) forms the subject of a single injunction, as they are all for the attainment of a single fruit. Consequently the Buddhi concerning these is one only. The meaning of the verse under discussion must be construed in the same manner. But the Buddhi of the irresolute ones who are engaged in rituals for winning such fruits as heaven, sons, cattle, food etc., are endless, fruits being endless. In rituals like Darsapurnamasa (new moon and full moon sacrifice), even though attainment of a single fruit (heaven) is enjoined, there accrues to these the character of having many branches on account of the mention of many secondary fruits as evidenced by such passages as, 'He desires a long life.' Therefore the Buddhi of irresolute ones has many branches and are endless. The purport is: In performing obligatory and occasional rituals, all fruits, primary and secondary, promised in the scriptures, should be abandoned, with the idea that release or salvation is the only purpose of all scripture-ordained rituals. These rituals should be performed without any thought of selfish gains. In addition, acts motivated by desires (Kamyakarmas) also should be performed

according to one's own capacity, after abandoning all desire for fruits and with the conviction that they also, when performed in that way, form the means for attainment of release. They should be looked upon as equal to obligatory and occasional rites suited to one's own station and stage in life. Sri Krsna condemns those who perform acts for the attainment of objects of desire:

2.42 - 2.44 The ignorant, whose knowledge is little, and who have as their sole aim the attainment of enjoyment and power, speak the flowery language i.e., having its flowers (show) only as fruits, which look apparently beautiful at first sight. They rejoice in the letter of the Vedas i.e., they are attached to heaven and such other results (promised in the Karma-kanda of the Vedas). They say that there is nothing else, owing to their intense attachment to these results. They say that there is no fruit superior to heaven etc. They are full of worldly desires and their minds are highly attached to secular desires. They hanker for heaven, i.e. think of the enjoyment of the felicities of heaven, after which one can again have rebirth which offers again the opportunity to perform varied rites devoid of true knowledge and leads towards the attainment of enjoyments and power once again. With regard to those who cling to pleasure and power and whose understanding is contaminated by that flowery speech relating to pleasure and lordly powers, the aforesaid mental disposition characterised by resolution, will not arise in their Samadhi. Samadhi here means the mind. The knowledge of the self will not arise in such minds. In the minds of these persons, there cannot

arise the mental disposition that looks on all Vedic rituals as means for liberation based on the determined conviction about the real form of the self. Hence, in an aspirant for liberation, there should be no attachment to rituals out of the conviction that they are meant for the acquisition of objects of desire only. It may be questioned why the Vedas, which have more of love for Jivas than thousands of parents, and which are endeavouring to save the Jivas, should prescribe in this way rites whose fruits are infinitesimal and which produce only new births. It can also be asked if it is proper to abandon what is given in the Vedas. Sri Krsna replies to these questions.

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2.45 The word Traigunya means the three Gunas --- Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Here the term Traigunya denotes persons in whom Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are in abundance. The Vedas in prescribing desire-oriented rituals (Kamyakarmas) have such persons in view. Because of their great love, the Vedas teach what is good to those in whom Tamas, Rajas and Sattva preponderate. If the Vedas had not explained to these

persons the means for the attainment of heaven etc., according to the Gunas, then those persons who are not interested in liberation owing to absence of Sattva and preponderance of Rajas and Tamas in them, would get completely lost amidst what should not be resorted to, without knowing the means for attaining the results they desire. Hence the Vedas are concerned with the Gunas. Be you free from the three Gunas. Try to acquire Sattva in abundance; increase that alone. The purport is: do not nurse the preponderance of the three Gunas in their state of inter-mixture; do not cultivate such preponderance. Be free from the pairs of opposites; be free from all the characteristics of worldly life. Abide in pure Sattva; be established in Sattva, in its state of purity without the admixture of the other two Gunas. If it is questioned how that is possible, the reply is as follows. Never care to acquire things nor protect what has been acquired. While abandoning the acquisition of what is not required for self-realisation, abandon also the conservation of such things already acquired. You can thus be established in self-control and thereby become an aspirant after the essential nature of the self. 'Yoga' is acquisition of what has not been acquired; 'Ksema' is preservation of things already acquired. Abandoning these is a must for an aspirant after the essential nature of the self. If you conduct yourself in this way, the preponderance of Rajas and Tamas will be annihilated, and pure Sattva will develop. Besides, all that is taught in the Vedas is not fit to be utilised by all.

2.46 Whatever use, a thirsty person has for a reservoir, which is flooded with water on all sides and which has been constructed for all kinds of purposes like irrigation, only to that extent of it, i.e., enough to drink will be of use to the thirsty person and not all the water. Likewise, whatever in all the Vedas from the means for release to a knowing Brahmana, i.e., one who is established in the study of the Vedas and who aspires for release only to that extent is it to be accepted by him and not anything else. Sri Krsna now says that this much alone is to be accepted by an aspirant, established in Sattva:

2.47 As for obligatory, occasional and desiderative acts taught in the Vedas and associated with some result or other, you, an aspirant established in Sattva, have the right only to perform them: You have no right to the fruits known to be derived from such acts. Acts done with a desire for fruit bring about bondage. But acts done without an eye on fruits form My worship and become a means for release. Do not become an agent of acts with the idea of being the reaper of their fruits. Even when you, who are established in pure Sattva and are desirous of release, perform acts, you should not look upon yourself as the agent. Likewise, it is necessary to contemplate yourself as not being the cause of even appeasing hunger and such other bodily necessities. Later on it will be said that both of these, agency of action and desire for fruits, should be considered as belonging to Gunas, or in the alternative to Me who am the Lord of all. Thinking thus, do work. With regard to inaction, i.e., abstaining from performance of duties, as when you said, 'I will not

fight,' let there be no attachment to such inaction in you. The meaning is let your interest be only in the discharge of such obligatory duties like this war in the manner described above. Sri Krsna makes this clear in the following verse:

2.48 Abandoning the attachment to kingdom, relatives etc., and established in Yoga, engage in war and such other activities. Perform these with equanimity as regards success and failure resulting from victory etc., which are inherent in them. This equanimity with regard to success and failure is called here by the term Yoga, in the expression 'established in Yoga.' Yoga is equanimity of mind which takes the form of evenness in success and failure. Sri Krsna explains why this is repeatedly said:

2.49 All other kinds of action are far inferior to those done with evenness of mind, which consists in the renunciation of the main result and with equanimity towards success or failure in respect of the secondary results. Between the two kinds of actions, the one with equanimity and the other with attachment, the former associated with equanimity removes all the sufferings of Samsara and leads to release which is the highest object of human existence. The latter type of actions, which is pursued with an eye on results, leads one to Samsara whose character is endless suffering. Thus when an act is being done, take refuge in Buddhi (evenness of mind). Refuge means abode. Live in that Buddhi, is the meaning. 'Miserable are they who act with a motive

for results': it means, 'Those who act with attachment to the results, etc., are miserable, as they will continue in Samsara.'

2.50 He, who is established in evenness of mind in the performance of actions, relinquishes good and evil Karmas which have accumulated from time immemorial causing bondage endlessly. Therefore acquire this aforesaid evenness of mind (Buddhi Yoga). Yoga is skill in action. That is, this evenness of mind when one is engaged in action, is possible through great skill, i.e., ability.

2.51 Those who possess this evenness of mind while performing actions and relinquish their fruits, are freed from the bondage of rebirth, and go to the region beyond all ills. 'Hi' means that this dictum or teaching is well known in all the Upanisads.

2.52 If you act in this manner and get freed from impurities, your intellect will pass beyond the tangle of delusion. The dense impurity of sin is the nature of that delusion which generates attachment to infinitesimal results, of which you have already heard much from us and will hear more later on. You will then immediately feel, of your own accord, renunciation or feeling of disgust for them all. Sri Krsna now teaches the goal called self-realisation (Yoga) which results from the performance of duty as taught in the passage beginning with 'Now, listen to this with regard to Karma Yoga' (2.39) which is based on the knowledge of the real nature of the self gained through the refinement of

the mind.

2.53 Here 'Sruti' means hearing (and not the Veda). When your intellect, which, by hearing from us, has become specially enlightened, having for its object the eternal, unsurpassed and subtle self --- which belongs to a class different from all other entities ---, then the intellect is firmly fixed, i.e., in a single psychosis and stands unshaken. In such a concentrated mind, purified by the performance of duties without attachment, will be generated true Yoga, which consists in the vision of the self. What is said is this: Karma Yoga, which presupposes the knowledge of the real nature of the self obtained from the scriptures, leads to a firm devotion to knowledge known as the state of firm wisdom; and the state of 'firm wisdom;' which is in the form of devotion to knowledge, generates the vision of the self; this vision is here called Yoga. Arjuna, thus taught, questions about the nature of 'firm wisdom' which constitutes the means for the attainment of Yoga and which itself is attainable through Karma Yoga which consists in work with detachment, and also about the mode of behaviour of a man of 'firm wisdom.'

2.54 Arjuna said -- What is the speech of a man of firm wisdom who is abiding with the mind controlled? What words can describe his state? What is his nature? This is the meaning of 'How does a man of firm wisdom speak etc.?' His specific conduct is now described as his nature can be inferred therefrom.

2.55 The Lord said -- When a person is satisfied in himself with himself, i.e. when his mind depends on the self within himself; and being content with that, expels all the desires of the mind which are different from that state of mind --- then he is said to be a man of firm wisdom. This is the highest form of devotion of knowledge. Then, the lower state, not far below it, of one established in firm wisdom, is described:

2.56 Even when there are reasons for grief like separation from beloved ones, his mind is not perturbed, i.e., he is not aggrieved. He has no longing to enjoy pleasures, i.e., even though the things which he likes are near him, he has no longing for them. He is free from desire and anger; desire is longing for objects not yet obtained; he is free from this. Fear is affliction produced from the knowledge of the factors which cause separation from the beloved or from meeting with that which is not desirable; he is free from this. Anger is a disturbed state of one's own mind which produces affliction and which is aimed at another sentient being who is the cause of separation from the beloved or of confrontation with what is not desirable. He is free from this. A sage of this sort, who constantly meditates on the self, is said to be of firm wisdom. Then, the next state below this is described:

2.57 He, who, has no love for all pleasing objects, i.e., who is indifferent to them, and who does not feel attraction or repulsion when he is united with or separated from attractive or repulsive objects respectively, who neither rejoices at the former, nor hates the latter --- he also is of firm

wisdom. Sri Krsna now mentions the next lower state.

2.58 When one is able to draw the senses away from the sense-objects on every side when the senses try to contact the sense-objects, just as a tortoise draws in its limbs, and is capable of fixing his mind on the self -- he too is of firm wisdom. Thus there are four stages of devotion to knowledge, each stage being perfected through the succeeding stage. Now Sri Krsna speaks of the difficulty of the attainment of firm devotion to knowledge and the means of that attainment.

2.59 The sense objects are the food of the senses. From the abstinent embodied being, i.e., from one who has withdrawn his senses from objects, these sense-objects, being rejected by him, turn away, but not the relish for them. Relish means hankering. The meaning is that the hankering for the sense-objects does not go away by abstinence alone. But even this hankering will go away, when one sees that the essential nature of the self is superior to the sense-objects and that the realisation of this self gives greater happiness than the enjoyment of sense-objects.

2.60 Except by the experience of the self, the hankering for objects will not go away. When the hankering for the sense-objects does not go away, the senses of even a wise man, though he is ever striving to subdue them, become refractory, i.e., become violent and carry away perforce the mind. Thus, the subduing of the senses depends on the

vision of the self, and the vision of the self depends on the subduing of the senses. Consequently, i.e., because of this mutual dependence, firm devotion to knowledge is difficult to achieve.

2.61 With a desire to overcome this mutual dependence between the subduing of the senses and vision of the self, one has to conquer the senses which are difficult to subdue on account of their attachment to sense-objects. So, focussing the mind on Me who am the only auspicious object for meditation, let him remain steadfast. When the mind is focussed on Me as its object, then such a mind, purified by the burning away of all impurities and devoid of attachment to the senses, is able to control the senses. Then the mind with the senses under control will be able to experience the self. As said in Visnu Purana, 'As the leaping fire fanned by the wind burns away a forest of dry trees, so Visnu, who is in the hearts of all the Yogins, destroys all the sins.' Sri Krsna teaches the same here: 'He whose senses are under control, his knowledge is firmly set.' Sri Krsna says: 'One who endeavours to subdue the senses, depending on one's own exertions, and does not focus the mind on Me in this way, becomes lost.'

2.62 Indeed, in respect of a person, whose attachment to sense-objects is expelled but whose mind is not focussed on Me, even though he controls the senses, contemplation on sense-objects is unavoidable on account of the impressions of sins from time immemorial. Again attachment increases fully in 'a man who thinks about sense-objects'.

From attachment arises desire.' What is called 'desire' is the further stage of attachment. After reaching that stage, it is not possible for a man to stay without experiencing the sense-objects. 'From such desire arises anger.' When a desire exists without its object being nearby, anger arises against persons nearby under the following. 'Our desire is thwarted by these persons.' 'From anger there comes delusion'. Delusion is want of discrimination between what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Not possessing that discrimination one does anything and everything. Then there follows the failure of memory, i.e., of the impressions of the earlier efforts of sense control, when one strives again to control the senses.

2.63 'From the loss of memory there comes the destruction of discrimination.' The meaning is that there will be destruction of the effect of efforts made earlier to attain the knowledge of the self. From the destruction of discrimination, one becomes lost, i.e., is sunk in Samsara or worldliness.

2.64 Having focussed, in the way already described, the mind on Me --- the Lord of all and the auspicious object of meditation, he who goes through, i.e., considers with contempt the sense-objects, with senses under control and free from hate and attraction by reason of all impurities of mind being burnt out --- such a person has a disciplined self, i.e., disciplined mind. He attains serenity. The meaning is that his mind will be free of impurities.

2.65 When the mind of this person gets serene, he gets rid of all sorrows originating from contact with matter. For, in respect of the person whose mind is serene, i.e., is free from the evil which is antagonistic to the vision of the self, the Buddhi, having the pure self for its object, becomes established immediately. Thus, when the mind is serene, the loss of all sorrow surely arises.

2.66 In him who does not focus his mind on Me but is engaged only in the control of senses by his own exertion, the Buddhi or the right disposition that is concerned with the pure self never arises. Therefore he fails in the practice of meditation on the self. In one who cannot think of the pure self, there arises the desire for sense objects; in him serenity does not arise. How can eternal and unsurpassed bliss be generated in him who is not serene but is attached to sense-objects? [The idea is that without the aid of devotion to God, the effort to control the senses by one's will power alone will end in failure.] Sri Krsna speaks again of the calamity that befalls one who does not practise the control of the senses in the way prescribed above:

2.67 That mind, which is allowed by a person to be submissive to, i.e., allowed to go after the senses which go on operating, i.e., experiencing sense-objects, such a mind loses its inclination towards the pure self. The meaning is that it gets inclined towards sense-objects. Just as a contrary wind forcibly carries away a ship moving on the waters, in the

name manner wisdom also is carried away from such a mind. [The idea is that the pursuit of sense pleasures dulls one's spiritual inclination, and the mind ultimately succumbs to them unresisting.]

2.68 Therefore, in the way described above, he whose mind is focussed on Me the auspicious object for meditation, and whose senses are thereby restrained from sense-objects in everyway, in his mind alone wisdom is firmly set. Sri Krsna now speaks of the state of attainment by one whose senses are subdued and whose mind is serene.

2.69 That Buddhi (understanding) which has the self for its object, is night to all beings, i.e., is obscure like night to all. But he, who has subdued the senses and is serene, is awake in respect of the self. The meaning is that he has the vision of the self. All beings are awake, i.e., are actively cognisant in respect of objects of the senses like sound. But such sense objects are like things enshrouded by night to the sage who is awake to the self.

2.70 The river waters enter into the sea which is full by itself and is thus the same, i.e., unchanging in shape. The sea exhibits no special increase or decrease, whether the waters or rivers enter it or not. Even so do all objects of desire, i.e., objects of sense perception like sound etc., enter into a self-controlled one, i.e., they produce only sensorial impressions but no reaction from him. Such a person will attain peace. The meaning is that he alone attains to peace, who by reason of the contentment

coming from the vision of the self, feels no disturbance when objects of sense like sound, etc., come within the ken of the senses or when they do not come. This is not the case with one who runs after desires. Whoever is agitated by sound and other objects, never attains to peace.

2.71 What are desired, they are called the objects of desire. These are sound and other sense-objects. The person, who wants peace must abandon all sense-objects such as sound, touch etc. He should have no longing for them. He should be without the sense of 'mineness' regarding them, as that sense arises from the misconception that the body, which is really non-self, is the self. He who lives in this way attains to peace after seeing the self.

2.72 This state of performing disinterested work which is preceded by the knowledge of the eternal self and which is characterised by firm wisdom, is the Brahmi-state, which secures the attainment of the Brahman (the self). After attaining such a state, he will not be deluded, i.e., he will not get again the mortal coil. Reaching this state even during the last years of life, he wins the blissful Brahman (the self) i.e., which is full of beatitude. The meaning is that he attains the self which is constituted of nothing but bliss. Thus in the second chapter, the Lord wanted to remove the delusion of Arjuna, who did not know the real nature of the self and also did not realize that the activity named 'war' (here an ordained duty) is a means for attaining the nature of Sankhya or

the self. Arjuna was under the delusion that the body is itself the self, and dominated by that delusion, had retreated from battle. He was therefore taught the knowledge called 'Sankhya' or the understanding of the self, and Yoga or what is called the path of practical work without attachment. These together have as their objective the attainment of steady wisdom (Sthitaprajnata) This has been explained in the following verse by Sri Yamunacarya: Sankhya and Yoga, which comprehend within their scope the understanding of the eternal self and the practical way of disinterested action respectively, were imparted in order to remove Arjuna's delusion. Through them the state of firm wisdom can be reached.