

Chapter 2: Saankhya Yoga – Yoga of Knowledge

The Lord rebukes Arjuna for exhibiting cowardice in the battlefield and tells him to get up and cause fright in the hearts of his enemies by using his Gaandiva bow. Arjuna starts narrating to the Lord his mental state in a pathetic manner. He does not want to greedily obtain materialistic wealth and happiness and be responsible for committing the sin of genocide. He did not like to entertain the thought of having to partake meals, which were smeared with the blood of his teacher. He found it better if he were to have meals by begging. He appealed to Lord Krishna to show him the path of true religion. How could he obtain salvation? He prostrated before the Lord and appealed to Him to be his revered teacher and he would be his disciple, so that he would be liberated. He begged for His grace and exclaimed that he was totally at His mercy. Arjuna asks for specific guidance from the Lord.

Understanding Arjuna to be a disciple totally at His Mercy, the Lord started giving Arjuna the lessons of the knowledge of the Absolute. He led Arjuna calmly slowly lifting his morale. Knowledgeable people are not arrogant. Their every thought and action is done with the intellect. They are beyond the push and pulls of wordly thoughts. They know that the relationship of the soul has nothing to do with the age, childhood, youth and old age of the human body. Similarly, they know that they do not have any relationship with this body or for that matter any other body, which they will have henceforth. The happiness derived by the body through the contact of senses with the objects is not going to last forever. The one who has the knowledge of the Absolute knows the difference between the real and the unreal.

Nobody can destroy the existence of the soul. The soul cannot be burnt, nor can it decay. It cannot be made wet nor can it be cut into pieces. Persons occupying a house stay for a certain length of time and then go away, but the house maintains its existence. The officers of a state leave after some time, but the state stays in its place. Just as a person throws away his clothes when they are worn out, similarly the soul discards the body when it is no longer required. The one who has taken birth will definitely die. Then why should one incur sin and for whom? Those for whom we incur sin will also die one day. One should therefore follow one's religion.

Lord reminds Arjuna that according to the fourfold division of society and according to his nature of work, he was a Kshatriya (soldier class). Hence, he should not shy away from battle. As a soldier, if he died fighting for his religion, he would be able to enjoy the happiness of heaven and if he lived (won the war), he would enjoy the happiness of the state as its ruler.

The Lord exhorts Arjuna to follow his religion according to his bounded duty and to consider happiness and unhappiness as equal. He should consider profit and loss with equanimity. He should consider winning and losing as two sides of the same coin and do his rightful duty, his religious duty, which is to FIGHT. This was, according to Lord Krishna the path of salvation of the soul.

On Arjuna's inquiry, the Lord first gave him the knowledge of the Absolute i.e. the basic knowledge. This root religious sermon is also known as *Saankhya*, i.e. nothing else remains to be known beyond this. The person who fully understands the teachings of this basic knowledge is called the knower of the Absolute.

After the Lord directed Arjuna to follow his religion, by performing his bounded duty as a soldier, Arjuna sought to know about the person who was the knower of the Absolute.

The Lord explained to Arjuna that the person who has renounced mentally all the thoughts and thereby desires relating to the world and solely committed to the assistance of the will of God, was a *Sthitaprajna*, the knower of the Absolute. Such a person has successfully withdrawn his senses from the outside world just like a tortoise, which has drawn its sense organs inside the shell for its protection.

He renounces the taste of the senses from his mind. The knower of the Absolute regards the person who is not fully conversant, as one lacking in knowledge. The materialistic person not knowing the level of knowledge of the knower considers him as a person of least knowledge.

A person driven by sensual pleasures and materialistic wealth is drowned in materialism and he cannot hope for undisturbed bliss. Only the knower of the Absolute, the *Sthitaprajna* can attain it and in the end he will be one with God.

Thus in this second chapter called the Yoga of Knowledge, Lord Krishna gave teachings to his disciple Arjuna regarding his bounded duty, knowledge of the Absolute, and the characteristics of the knower of the Absolute.