

Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 16: Chapter 2, Verses 30-35

(August 15 –August 21, 2018)

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ORIGINAL SANSKRIT DOCUMENT

TRANSLITERATION

देही नित्यमवध्योऽयं देहे सर्वस्य भारत ।
तस्मात् सर्वाणि भूतानि न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि ॥ ३० ॥
स्वधर्ममपि चावेक्ष्य न विकम्पितुमर्हसि ।
धर्म्याद्धि युद्धाच्छ्रेयोऽन्यत् क्षत्रियस्य न विद्यते ॥ ३१ ॥
यदृच्छया चोपपन्नं स्वर्गद्वारमपावृतम् ।
सुखिनः क्षत्रियाः पार्थ लभन्ते युद्धमीदृशम् ॥ ३२ ॥
अथ चेत्त्वमिमं धर्म्यं संग्रामं न करिष्यसि ।
ततः स्वधर्मं कीर्तिं च हित्वा पापमवाप्स्यसि ॥ ३३ ॥
अकीर्तिं चापि भूतानि कथयिष्यन्ति तेऽव्ययाम् ।
सम्भावितस्य चाकीर्तिर्मरणादतिरिच्यते ॥ ३४ ॥
भयाद् रणादुपरतं मंस्यन्ते त्वां महारथाः ।
येषां च त्वं बहुमतो भूत्वा यास्यसि लाघवम् ॥ ३५ ॥

dehī nityam avadhyo 'yaṁ dehe sarvasya bhārata
tasmāt sarvāṇi bhūtāni na tvam śocitum arhasi

svadharmam api cāveksya na vikampitum arhasi
dharmyāddhi yuddhāc chreyo 'nyat kṣatriyasya na vidyate

yadṛcchayā copapannaṁ svarga-dvāram apāvṛtam
sukhinaḥ kṣatriyāḥ pārtha labhante yuddham idṛśam

atha cet tvam imaṁ dharmyaṁ saṅgrāmam na kariṣyasi
tataḥ svadharmam kīrtiṁ ca hitvā pāpam avāpsyasi

akīrtiṁ cāpi bhūtāni kathayiṣyanti te 'vyayām
sambhāvitasya cākīrtir maraṇād atiricyate

bhayād raṇād uparataṁ maṁsyante tvāṁ mahā-rathāḥ
yeṣāṁ ca tvam bahu-mato bhūtvā yāsyasi lāghavam

TRANSLATION

- (30)** O Arjuna, this eternal soul within the body of every living entity is immortal; therefore you should not lament for any being.
- (31)** Moreover considering your righteousness you should not falter; indeed for upholders of justice there does not exist a more appropriate endeavor than a battle for righteousness.
- (32)** O Arjuna, happy are the upholders of justice who achieve a battle of this kind presented by its own accord and which is a wide open path to the heavenly planets.
- (33)** However if you do not engage in this war of righteousness then abandoning your natural spiritual duty and reputation you will incur sinful reaction.
- (34)** Also all people will speak of your infamy for all time and for respected persons infamy is worse than death.
- (35)** The mighty chariot warriors will consider that you retired from the battlefield out of fear and for those whom you have been held in great esteem you will fall into disgrace.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1q8HtNzUfLwrrHt3juxv4p0lwObWPGPpm/view>

Commentary:

Verse 30:

Often, in the course of his teachings, Lord Krishna explains a concept in a few verses, and then states a verse summarizing those teachings. This verse is a summary of the instructions on the immortality of the self, and its distinction from the body. The eternal soul embodied within the physical body, regardless of whether it is a human earthly body or the body of any living entity, is immortal and invulnerable even when the body perishes. Therefore, due to the fact that all souls are immortal, it does not behoove Arjuna well to lament as the soul is always entering into various external forms until liberation has been achieved.

Verse 31:

Swa-dharma is one's duty as an individual, in accordance with the scriptures. There are two kinds of *swa-dharmas*, or prescribed duties for the individual—*para dharma*, or spiritual duties, and *apara dharma*, or material duties. Considering oneself to be the soul, the prescribed duty is to love and serve God with devotion. This is called *para dharma*. However, since a vast majority of humankind does not possess this spiritual perspective, the Vedas also prescribe duties for those who see themselves as the body. These duties are defined according to one's *āśram* (station in life), and *varṇa* (occupation). They are called *apara dharma*, or mundane duties. This distinction between spiritual duties and material duties needs to be kept in mind while understanding the *Bhagavad Gita* and the Vedic philosophy at large.

Arjuna is being instructed that he should not hesitate in carrying out his duty as a warrior because there is no destruction for the eternal soul. By occupation, Arjun is a warrior, and so his occupational duty as a warrior is to fight for the protection of righteousness. He should without hesitation slay these miscreants who have perpetrated heinous offences. Arjuna stated in chapter one, verse thirty- one that he saw no benefit in slaying kinsman. That argument is now nullified because for a kshatriya there is no better option than to fight for the sake of righteousness, which is in conformity with the scriptures.

Verse 32:

The warrior class has always been necessary in the world for protecting society. The occupational duties of warriors demand that they be brave and even willing to lay down their lives, if required, for the protection of society. During Vedic times, while killing animals was forbidden for the rest of society, warriors were allowed to go into the forest and practice warfare by hunting animals. Such chivalrous warriors were expected to welcome the opportunity to defend righteousness with open arms. The discharge of their duty would be rewarded as a virtuous act in this life and the next. Therefore, why should there be any hesitation when such a great good fortune has come unsolicited? Fighting a righteous war is verily a direct gateway to the heavens. Such a war can only be fought by the most fortunate of *ksatriyas* and Arjuna should understand his good fortune.

Verse 33:

This verse illustrates the disadvantage of Arjuna acting contrary to his duty as a *kshatriya*. If through imprudent sentiment or bewildered ignorance Arjuna should fail to perform his prescribed duty as a *kshatriya* by fighting for the sake of righteousness, he would be abandoning boundless glory and rewards that would accompany his heroic acts, and not only lose his reputation as a hero, but also would incur great sin.

Verse 34:

The consequences of Arjuna acting contrary to his duty as a *kshatriya* are given in this verse. Not only will happiness and fame elude him if he disregards his duty as a *kshatriya* but also the world will chastise him and speak of his disgraceful act both publicly and privately. They will say Arjuna was a coward for when the battle was about to begin he gave only excuses and retreated hastily from the battlefield. The Supreme Lord Krishna is telling him that forever history will brand him for cowardice. For respectable people, their social image is very important. For warriors respect and honor are especially important. If Arjuna was to reply that what the public thinks is of no concern or consequence to him, the Supreme Lord counters that notion by stating that for a person of honour and valor like Arjuna, infamy is worse than death. Arjuna has never been defeated in battle, he is the son of the king of the demi-gods Indra, he is the dear friend of Lord Krishna, he possess unrivaled valor, possessing extremely praiseworthy virtues. So for him, infamy would be much more painful than death.

Verse 35:

Arjun was famous as a mighty warrior and a worthy opponent for even the most valiant of the Kauravas warriors, such as Bheeshma, Dronacharya, and Karna. He had attained fame by fighting many celestial gods. He had fought and overwhelmed even Lord Shiv, who had come in the disguise of a hunter. Pleased with his valor and skill, Lord Shiva had rewarded him with a celestial weapon, called *Pāshupatāstra*. His teacher at archery, Dronacharya, had also bestowed his blessings upon him in the form of a special weapon. Just before the start of the battle, if Arjun were to retire from the battlefield, these gallant warriors wouldn't know that affection for his relatives had inspired him to flee. They would consider him a coward, and assume that he had abstained from the war in dread of their prowess. Lord Krishna speaks this verse in the event that Arjuna might still insist in giving the reason for not fighting as compassion for relatives and as such he would rationalize that there is no censure or infamy.