

Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 174: Chapter 18, Verses 58-61

(September 1 – September 7, 2021)

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ORIGINAL SANSKRIT DOCUMENT

TRANSLITERATION

मच्चित्तः सर्वदुर्गाणि मत्प्रसादात्तारिष्यसि ।

mach-chittah sarva-durgāṇi mat-prasādāt tariṣhyasi

अथ चेत्त्वमहंकारान्न श्रोष्यसि विनङ्क्ष्यसि ॥ १८-५८ ॥

*atha chet tvam ahankārān na śhroṣhyasi
vinaṅkṣhyasi*

यदहंकारमाश्रित्य न योत्स्य इति मन्यसे ।

yad ahankāram āśhritya na yotsya iti manyase

मिथ्यैष व्यवसायस्ते प्रकृतिस्त्वां नियोक्ष्यति ॥ १८-५९ ॥

mithyaiṣha vyavasāyas te prakṛitis tvāṁ niyokṣhyati

स्वभावजेन कौन्तेय निबद्धः स्वेन कर्मणा ।

swbhāva-jena kaunteya nibaddhaḥ svena karmaṇā

कर्तुं नेच्छसि यन्मोहात्कारिष्यस्यवशोपि तत् ॥ १८-६० ॥

kartuṁ nechchhasi yan mohāt kariṣhyasy avāśho 'pi tat

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।

īshvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānām hṛid-deśhe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati

भ्रामयन्सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ॥ १८-६१ ॥

bhrāmayan sarva-bhūtāni yantrārūdhāni māyayā

TRANSLATION

- (58) If you remember me always, by my grace you will overcome all obstacles and difficulties. But if, due to pride, you do not listen to my advice, you will perish.
- (59) If, motivated by pride, you think, “I shall not fight,” your decision will be in vain. Your own material (Kshatriya) nature will compel you to fight.
- (60) O Arjun, that action which out of delusion you do not wish to do, you will be driven to do it by your own inclination, born of your own material nature.
- (61) The Supreme Lord dwells in the hearts of all living beings, O Arjun. According to their karmas, he directs the wanderings of the souls, who are seated on a machine made of the material energy.

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CHAPTER 18

Commentary

Verse 58

In this verse, Lord Krishna alerts Arjuna that by taking full shelter of Him--the Supreme Lord, with the mind totally fixed on Him while performing every activity, all obstacles and difficulties can and will be overcome by His grace. But if out of pride or vanity one disregards the instructions of the Supreme Lord Krishna, thinking that one knows better than the eternal wisdom provided by Him in Vedic scriptures, then one is all but doomed to fail the sole purpose of one's existence by committing sinful activities, which in turn will hurl one to the hellish worlds to suffer and rot in *samsara*, the perpetual cycle of birth and death.

Verse 59

In here, Lord Krishna gives further caution that one should not be deluded and think that one is independent of the Supreme Lord. If due to false ego one thinks that one is the independent doer of one's actions and take the decision to go against one's own natural propensity, it would be in vain. Lord Krishna's external energy is *prakriti*--the material substratum pervading physical existence. From *prakriti* arises the three *gunas* or modes of

material nature which adjust themselves automatically to the *karma* or reactions to actions acquired by the different activities a *jiva* or embodied soul performs in countless lifetimes. The predominant *guna* or mode of material nature will compel one to act in spite of all resistance. The mode itself will coerce one to acquiescence beyond one's control. For example, a *kshatriya* or warrior is situated in *raja guna* the mode of passion. The influence of *raja guna* is so strong that by its potency a *kshatriya* will be compelled to fight by his volition.

Verse 60

Continuing the discussion of the theme in the previous verse, Lord Krishna here reiterates and affirms that actions which are one's natural duty, which due to illusion one is not willing to undertake, will still compel one to do so by the predominating *guna* or mode of material nature which one possesses. Being situated in *raja guna*, the mode of passion, a *kshatriya* would naturally possess valor, courage and a heroic temperament that is not random but follows a thread from previous births. A *kshatriya* would not tolerate even the slightest ridicule or insult. So, upon hearing the raucous insults about his bravery and the degrading insults to his manhood, disparaging his prowess from the opposing enemy a *kshatriya* will not refrain from avenging his honor in battle regardless of the odds.

Verse 61

So far, Lord Krishna spoke of “doership” as dependent upon the three *gunas* or the modes of material nature that one is endowed with, which determine all actions based upon the *karma* or reactions to previous good and evil actions enacted in a physical body. This line of thinking is consistent with the *Sankhya* philosophy of analytical reasoning. Now, Lord Krishna declares that all *jivas* or embodied beings are also under the total control of *Ishvara*, who is the all-pervading Supreme Lord, seated as the indwelling monitor within *hrid deshe* or the core of the heart which is the source of all consciousness, and is the basis of all actions. The *Taittiriya Upanisad* (III.IX.II) beginning, “*sa yascayam purusha...*” states: “*The Supreme Lord residing on the plane of transcendental eternity is the same Supreme Lord that resides within the core of the etheric heart of all jivas or embodied beings.*” The purport is that just as a puppet master controls his puppets, so does the Supreme Lord control the *jivas*. In a way, Lord Krishna is giving an ultimatum to Arjuna in this verse about Arjuna's hesitation to fight the war, saying “Arjun, whether you choose to obey me or not, your position will always remain under my dominion. The body in which you reside is a machine made from my material energy. Based upon your past *karmas*, I have given you the kind of body you deserved. I too am seated in your body, and am noting all your thoughts, words, and deeds. So, I will also judge whatever you do in the present to decide your future. Do not think you are independent of me in any situation. Hence Arjun, it is in your self-interest to surrender to me.”