

Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 17: Chapter 2, Verses 36-41

(August 22 –August 28, 2018)

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अवाच्यवादांश्च बहून् वदिष्यन्ति तवाहिताः ।
निन्दन्तस्तव सामर्थ्यं ततो दुःखतरं नु किम् ॥ ३६ ॥
हतो वा प्राप्स्यसि स्वर्गं जित्वा वा भोक्ष्यसे महीम् ।
तस्मादुत्तिष्ठ कौन्तेय युद्धाय कृतनिश्चयः ॥ ३७ ॥
सुखदुःखे समे कृत्वा लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ ।
ततो युद्धाय युज्यस्व नैवं पापमवाप्स्यसि ॥ ३८ ॥
एषा तेऽभिहिता सांख्ये बुद्धिर्योगे त्विमां शृणु ।
बुद्ध्या युक्तो यया पार्थ कर्मबन्धं प्रहास्यसि ॥ ३९ ॥
नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते ।
स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ॥ ४० ॥
व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिरेकेह कुरुनन्दन ।
बहुशाखा ह्यनन्ताश्च बुद्धयोऽव्यवसायिनाम् ॥ ४१ ॥

TRANSLITERATION

*avācya-vādāṁś ca bahūn vadiṣyanti tavāhitāḥ
nindantas tava sāmartyaṁ tato duḥkhataraṁ nu kim
hato vā prāpsyasi svargaṁ jito vā bhokṣyase mahīm
tasmād uttiṣṭha kaunteya yuddhāya kṛta niścayaḥ
sukha-duḥkhe same kṛto lābhālābhau jayājayau
tato yuddhāya yujyasva naivaṁ pāpam avāpsyasi
eṣā te 'bhihitā sāṅkhye buddhir yoge tv imāṁ śṛṇu
buddhyā yukto yayā pārtha karma-bandhaṁ prahāsyasi
nehābhikrama-nāśo 'sti pratyavāyo na vidyate
svalpam apy asya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt
vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru- nandana
bahu- śākhā hy anantāś ca buddhayo 'vyavasāyinām*

TRANSLATION

- (36)** Your enemies will defame and humiliate you with unkind words, disparaging your might. Alas, what could be more painful than that?
- (37)** If you fight, you will either be slain on the battlefield and go to the celestial abodes, or you will gain victory and enjoy the kingdom on earth. Therefore arise with determination, O son of Kunti, and be prepared to fight.
- (38)** Fight for the sake of duty, treating alike happiness and distress, loss and gain, victory and defeat. Fulfilling your responsibility in this way, you will never incur sin.
- (39)** Hitherto, I have explained to you Sāṅkhya Yog, or analytic knowledge regarding the nature of the soul. Now listen, O Parth, as I reveal Buddhi Yog, or the Yog of Intellect. When you work with such understanding, you will be freed from the bondage of karma.
- (40)** Working in this state of consciousness, there is no loss or adverse result, and even a little effort saves one from great danger.
- (41)** O descendent of the Kurus, the intellect of those who are on this path is resolute, and their aim is one-pointed. But the intellect of those who are irresolute is many-branched.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1x2y3YsAZIgm-R3cXjVLANp_qoKD1QYEW/view?usp=sharing

Commentary:

Verse 36:

The condemnations from his enemies regarding Arjuna's failure to execute his duty as a *kshatriya* are presented in this verse. If Arjuna chose to flee from battle, not only would the assessment of his valor in the assembly of mighty warriors wane, but he would also be disparaged. Lord Krishna uses the word *nindataḥ* which means "to vilify." *Avāchya vādān* means the use of harsh words such as "Eunuch." Arjuna's enemies, like Duryodhan, would say many unbecoming things about him, such as, "Look at that coward Arjun fleeing from the battlefield" Shree Krishna reminds Arjuna that such a derision would be very painful to him.

Verse 37:

The previous statement given by Arjuna in Chapter 2, Verse 6, about his concern of not knowing which is better, whether to conquer the enemy or be conquered by the enemy, is now being clarified by the Supreme Lord. in this verse. He says that there are two possibilities: One, if Arjuna becomes victorious, a kingdom on Earth awaits him, and two, if he is slain in the battle while fighting bravely as a *kshatriya*, he would certainly attain the heavenly abodes. Therefore, Arjuna should get up and fight with determination.

Verse 38:

The previous statement given by Arjuna in Chapter 1, Verse 36 concerning his apprehension of sin falling upon him is now being nullified by Lord Krishna's instruction of non-attachment to the fruits of action. If we give up selfish motives, then our actions no longer create any karmic reactions. For example, murder is a sin, and the judicial law of every country of the world declares it to be a punishable offence. But if a policeman in the discharge of his duty kills the leader of a gang of bandits, he is not punished for it. If a soldier kills an enemy soldier in battle, he is not punished for it. In fact, he can even be awarded a medal for bravery. The reason for apparent lack of punishment is that these actions are not motivated by any ill-will or personal motive; they are performed as a matter of duty to the country. God's law is quite similar. If one gives up all selfish motives and works merely for the sake of duty, such work does not create any karmic reactions. So Shri Krishna advises Arjuna to become detached from the outcomes of his duty, but simply focus on performing it. When he fights with the attitude of equanimity, treating loss and gain, victory and defeat, pleasure and pain as the same, then despite killing his enemies as a matter of *kshatriya* duty, Arjuna will never incur sin.

Verse 39:

The word *Sāṅkhya* comes from the roots *Sāñ*, meaning "complete," and *khyā*, meaning "to know." So *Sāṅkhya* means the "complete knowledge". Lord Krishna has just explained to Arjuna another form of *Sāṅkhya*, which is the knowledge of the immortal soul. The wisdom of *Sankhya* is the ability to understand the distinction of spirit from matter, which leads to the realization of the eternal soul and is in essence the sankhya philosophy, as described in Smriti. Lord Krishna now says that He is going to reveal the science of working without desire for rewards. This requires detachment from the fruits of actions. Such detachment comes by practicing discrimination with intellect. Shri Krishna has interestingly called it *buddhi yoga*, or "Yoga of the Intellect." In subsequent verses (2.41 and 2.44), Lord Krishna goes on to explain how the intellect plays an important role in bringing the mind to a state of detachment. In the Bhagavad-Gita war is recommended as desirable for upholding dharma or righteousness, and performing the prescribed duties by a *kshatriya* is a means for salvation when it is said *karma bandham prahasyasi*.

Verse 40:

Arjuna might have some doubt regarding how the bondage from actions can be effectively neutralized by *karma yoga* or about the science of the Individual Consciousness (Atman) attaining the Ultimate Consciousness (Paramatman) by simply performing actions as a matter of duty. These doubts are now being alleviated by Lord Krishna in this verse which states that by the path of *karma yoga*, being free from fruitive desires, there is no loss or diminution from any endeavor that is undertaken in righteousness nor is there any effort wasted as is the case with actions having fruitive desires. In this path, there is no possibility of incurring any sin as these actions are performed in righteousness and are surrendered to the Supreme Lord, completely free from the desire of fruitive results. Moreover even the smallest amount of effort on this path of righteousness saves a living entity from the great danger of transmigration of being born again and again in the material world. The great danger we face is that we may not get the human form in the next life, and instead go into the lower species of life, such as animals, birds, reptiles, etc. We cannot be complacent that the human form will remain reserved for us, for the next birth will be determined

by our karmas and the level of consciousness we possess in this life. Kena Upanishad (2.5, V35) states: *iha chedavedīdatha satyamasti na chedihāvedīnmahatī vinaṣṭhiḥ* (“O human being, the human birth is a rare opportunity. If you do not utilize it to achieve your goal, you will suffer great ruin”). This is reiterated in Katha Upanishad (2.3.4, V36): *iha chedaśhakad boddhum prākśharīrasya visrasaḥtataḥ sargeṣhu lokeṣhu śharīratvāya kalpate*. (“If you do not strive for God-realization in this life, you will continue to rotate in the 8.4 million species of life for many births”). However, once we commence on the journey of spiritual practice, then even if we do not complete the path in this life, God sees that our intention to do so existed. Therefore, He grants us the human birth again, to enable us to continue from where we had left off. In this way, we avert the great danger.

Verse 41:

Attachment is a function of the mind. Its manifestation is that the mind repeatedly runs toward the object of its attachment, which could be persons, sensual objects, prestige, bodily comfort, situations, and so on. So if thoughts of some person or object repeatedly come to the mind, it is a possible indication of the mind being attached to it. However, if it is the mind that gets attached, then why is Lord Krishna bringing the intellect into the topic of attachment? Is there any role of the intellect in eliminating attachment?

Our body consists of the mind, the intellect, and the ego. In this subtle machine, the intellect is superior to the mind. It makes decisions while the mind creates desires and gets attached to the object of affection as determined by the intellect. For instance, if the intellect decides that money is the source of happiness, the mind hankers for wealth. If the intellect decides that prestige is the most important thing in life, the mind craves for reputation and fame. In other words, the mind develops desires in accordance with the knowledge of the intellect.

The above examples illustrate that as human beings our intellect possesses the ability to control the mind. Thus, we must cultivate the intellect with proper knowledge and use it to guide the mind in the proper direction. *Buddhi yoga* is the art of detaching the mind from the fruits of actions, by developing a resolute decision of the intellect that all work is meant for the pleasure of God. Such a person of resolute intellect cultivates single-minded focus on the goal, and traverses the path like an arrow released from the bow. But those whose intellect is many-branched find their mind running in various directions. They are unable to develop the focus of mind that is required to tread the path toward God.