

GITA CLASS- CHAPTER 2, PART 11

The preface by *Shankara* says, ‘*kasmāt avikriya eva.*’ For what reason is the *Atman* changeless? ‘*Ityāha nainam chidanti.*’

***Nainam chidhanti śāstrāni nainam dahati pāvakaḥ
Na chainam kledayantyāpo na śoṣayati mārutaḥ. 2.23***

2.23. Weapons do not cut It, fire does not burn It,
water does not moisten It, and air does not dry It.’

We can look at the *Shankara Bhashya*. ‘*Enam prakṛtaṁ dehinam na chindanti śāstrāṇ, niravayavatvāt na avayavavibhāgam kurvanti.*’ So, the *Ātman* described in this situation, ‘*enam prakṛtaṁ,*’ the embodied Soul, ‘*dehinam,*’ is not pierced by weapons, *na chindanti śāstrāṇi.*’ What is the reason for this? It is because the *Atman* is devoid of parts, ‘*niravayavatvāt.*’ Therefore, the Self is not subject to the destruction of limbs. That is what happens through weapons. Because the Self is not composed of parts, It cannot be made into many through weapons. This is ‘*avayavavibhāgam na kurvanti.*’

Then the *bhashya* continues, ‘*śāstrāṇi anyādīni.*’ Thus weapons and other instruments cannot make It into many. *Shankara* says, ‘in the same way, fire cannot burn It, by making It into ashes.’ ‘*Tathā na enam dahati pāvakaḥ, agnirapi na bhasmīkaroti.*’ ‘Also, water cannot wet It. Water has the ability to wet or decompose only objects having parts.’ This is, ‘*Tathā na cha enam kledayanti āpaḥ apāṁ hi sāvayavasya vastunaḥ ādrībhāvakaraṇena avayavaviśeṣāpādena sāmartyam.*’ ‘*Enam,*’ this, the *Atman*, ‘*āpaḥ na kledayanti.*’ Water cannot make It wet. What does water do? Through making objects that are composed of parts wet, water is able to decompose them. That is the *sāmartyam*, or power of water. It can make an object into many. It can also decompose an object through making it wet. However, water is unable to do these to the Self, because It is devoid of any parts.

Therefore, *Shankara* says, ‘*Tat na niravayave ātmani sambhavati.*’ Thus, these processes cannot occur in the Self, which is partless. This destruction cannot happen

to the *Ātman* because It has no divisions or limbs. Then *Shankara*, says, ‘likewise, the wind destroys an oil-soaked material by drying up the oil.’ This is, ‘*tathā snehavat dravyām snehaśoṣaṇena nāśayati vāyuh.*’ So, ‘*snehavat dravyām,*’ a material that is soaked, ‘*snehaśoṣaṇena,*’ through drying up that oil, ‘*nāśayati vāyuh,*’ this is how the wind, *Vāyu*, destroys. *Shankara* says, ‘even the wind cannot dry up this, the *Ātman.*’ ‘*Enam tu ātmānam na śoṣayati mārutaḥ api.*’ This is because the *Ātman* is devoid of parts. Now we can look at the *shloka*.

‘*Enam śastrāṇi na chidanti.*’ ‘*Enam,*’ this, the Self, ‘*śastrāṇi,*’ weapons, ‘*na chidanti,*’ do not pierce. ‘*Enam,*’ this, the Self, ‘*pāvakaḥ,*’ Fire, ‘*na dahati,*’ does not burn. ‘*Enam,*’ this Self, ‘*āpaḥ,*’ water, ‘*na kledayanti,*’ does not wet. ‘*Enam,*’ this Self, ‘*mārutaḥ,*’ the Wind, ‘*na śoṣayati,*’ does not dry up.

Because the meaning of the *shloka* is very clear, *Shankara* has not explained much in the commentary.

***Acchedyoyam adāhyoyam akledyo śoṣya eva cha
Nityaḥ sarvagataḥ sthāṇur achaloyam sanātanaḥ. 2.24.***

2.24. It cannot be cut, It cannot be burnt, cannot be moistened, and surely cannot be dried up. It is eternal, omnipresent, stationary, unmoving, and changeless.

Shankara prefaces this, as, ‘because the Self is such.’ ‘*Yataḥ evam tasmāt.*’ Because the Self is devoid of parts, and indestructible by anything, the Lord says this *shloka*, ‘*acchedyoyam it.*’ *Shankara* explains this, as, ‘The Self is Eternal, because the elements, which are corresponding causes of their destruction, cannot destroy It.’ This is, ‘*yasmāt anyonyanāśahetubhūtāni enam ātmānam nāśayitum notsahante tasmāt nityaḥ.*’ So, it says, ‘*anyonyanāśahetubhūtāni.*’ This means that each of the elements become a cause for the other’s destruction. Fire destroys water. Water destroys the wind. In this way, the 5 elements mutually destroy each other. Here, the word ‘*bhūtāni,*’ can mean the 5 elements, or it can also mean the living beings. These are mutually destructive. They cause the destruction of each other.

‘*Enam ātmānam,*’ however, this, the Self, in destroying That, ‘*na utsahante,*’ the elements are not powerful enough. They are not sufficient. Because these elements are unable to do this, ‘*tasmāt nityaḥ,*’ the Self is considered as Eternal.

Because the Self is Eternal, it is all-pervading. '*Nityatvāt sarvagataḥ.*' Because it is all-pervading, it is stable, like a pillar. '*Sarvagatatvāt sthāṇuḥ iva sthira iti etat.*' Then, what is the Self because of being stable? It is immovable, '*sthiratvāt achalaḥ.*' It doesn't move. '*Ayam ātmā ataḥ sanātanaḥ,*' Therefore, this *Atman* is everlasting, *sanātana*. It is constant, in all times. *Shankara* says that this means that It is not produced from any cause. It is endless. It is seated beyond Time. This is '*na kāraṇāt kutaschit niṣpanaḥ.*' Therefore, It is always the same, always new. '*Abhinava ityarthah.*'

Then, *Shankara* says, 'there is no defect of redundancy in these two *shlokas*. This redundancy is considered a defect in the most literature. This means to say the meaning of something, and again repeat the same meaning. This can be through redundancy of words, or through the redundancy of meaning. A person may think that both of these are here in these 2 *shlokas*. It says, '*na eteṣāṃ ślokānām paunaruktyam chodaniyam.*' This redundancy should not be questioned here. Such a problem shouldn't be considered. Why? '*yataḥ ekenaiva ślokena ātmanaḥ nityatvam avikriyatvam choktam 'na jāyate mriyate vā' ityādinā.*

This means that the qualities of the *Ātman*, such as being Eternal and changeless, were previously mentioned. Where? This was in the *shloka*, '*Na jāyate mriyate vā kadāchit.*' 'The Self is never born nor ever dies.' *Shankara* says that the matters discussed in that *shloka* are not different from what is described in this one. '*tatra yadeva ātmaviṣayam kinchit uchyate, tat etasmāt ślokārthāt na atirichyate.*' Therefore, *Shankara* says that repetition in the words used and of meaning will definitely occur in the *Gita*. In ordinary literature, this is considered a defect, but is necessary in the scriptures. This is, '*kinchit śabdataḥ punaruktam.*' Some repetition will be in the words, while, '*kinchit arthataḥ,*' some in the meanings. Why is this necessary?

Shankara says, '*durbodhatvāt ātmavastunaḥ.*' The reality of the *Ātman* is *durbodha*, difficult to know. It is difficult to understand for those who are undeveloped spiritually. That is why it is difficult to understand. Then *Shankara* says, 'the Lord explains the same Reality through the use of different words and examples.' '*Punaḥ punaḥ,*' again and again, '*prasaṅgam āpadya,*' speaking such, '*śabdāntareṇa tadeva vastu nirūpayati,* the same *Vastu*, or Reality, is elucidated

through different words, by the Lord in the Gita. ‘*Bhagavān vāsudevaḥ,*’ This is by the Lord, *Vāsudeva*, why does He do this?

The Lord elucidates the Truth of the Self in different ways to enable the unmanifest Self to become the object of man’s intellect, so that man may reach Liberation from *samsara*. This is, ‘*katham nu nāma avyaktam saṁsāriṇām,*’ how can this unmanifest Self, for those in *Samsara*, ‘*buddhigocharatām āpannam sat,*’ how can this Self become grasped through the intellect of those in this *Samsara*? What is the importance of this? ‘*Samśāranivṛttaye syāt iti.*’ This grasping of the principle of the True Self will aid the *Jiva* in attaining release from *Samsara*. So, because of this, a person cannot think, ‘because the Lord speaks again and again about the same thing, the *Ātman*, this is redundancy. This creates the defect of redundancy, as it applies in worldly literature.’ That is not true.

Also, through hearing again and again about the Self, a *sadhak* should not become disinterested or bored. Thus, an important matter in the scriptures is that there is no *punarukti*, redundancy. We can say that some sections of the Gita can be grasped without difficulty. However, some parts of the Gita are *durbodha*, difficult to understand. These differences are according to the suitability of the aspirant. If the aspirant is suitable, it is very easy to understand. However, because of the amount of *rajasic* and *tamasic* qualities in the ordinary person’s mind, the knowledge of the Self explained in the Gita will not shine within. This is because a lack of *chitta shuddhi*, mental purity. Thus, because this Self-knowledge will not occur for a person without sufficient mental purity, one means for this purity is through repetition, *punarukti*. This continuous repetition will enable the aspirant to attain mental purity.

When the mind accumulates more *sadvasanas*, positive impressions, the negative impressions, *durvasanas* will naturally decrease. Then this helps to attain mental purity, and consequently, the arising of Self-knowledge within (*Jnanotpatti*). Therefore, whether through the words or meanings, when this repetition occurs in the scriptures, this helps the aspirant to attain release from *Samsara*, the cycle of birth and death. Thus, this redundancy has a utility. A *sadhak* can never neglect this process of repetition. The Truth must be heard again and again.

When the mind becomes bored, or disinterested, or if one’s enthusiasm is lost, this is caused by the mind. That is the nature of the mind. One shouldn’t let the mind travel in that way. Instead, the *sadhak* should listen to the instructions of the

Lord again and again. There is no other way except that. That is what *Shankara* says here. Now we can look at the *shloka*.

‘*Ayam acchedyaḥ,*’ this Self is not to be pierced, ‘*adāhyaḥ,*’ not to be burned, ‘*akledyaḥ,*’ not to be wetted ‘*aśośyaḥ,*’ not to be dried up. ‘*Nityaḥ,*’ the Self is Eternal, ‘*sarvagataḥ,*’ all-pervading, ‘*sthānuḥ,*’ stable, ‘*achalaḥ,*’ immovable, ‘*sanātanaḥ,*’ and everlasting. This is clear.

***Avyaktoyam achintyoyam avikāryoyam uchyate
Tasmād evaṁ veditvainaṁ nānuśochitum arhasi. 2.25.***

2.25. ‘It is said that This is unmanifest; This is inconceivable; This is unchangeable. Therefore, having known This thus, you ought not to grieve.’

Shankara says before the next shloka, ‘*kincha,*’ ‘and also,’ the Lord continues in this line of instruction. *Shankara* explains the *shloka*. ‘Because this *Atman* cannot become the object of any instrument, such as the mind, senses, intellect, etc, It cannot become manifest. That is why the Self is Unmanifest. This is said as, ‘*avyaktaḥ sarvakaraṇāviśayatvāt na vyajyata iti avyaktaḥ.*’ Therefore the Self is Unmanifest. Also, the Self is not an object of thought. ‘*Ayam ātmā ataḥ eva achintyaḥ.*’ The Self cannot be fully elucidated through the mind. Why? This is because whatever is within the perception of the senses and mind can become an object of thought. However, the Self is imponderable because It is not within the range of perception of the senses. This is, ‘*Yad hi indriyagocharaḥ tat chintāviśayatvam āpadyate. Ayam tvātmā anindriyagocharatvāt achintyaḥ.*’

The Self is not an object of the senses. It is not possible to see, hear, or feel the Self. Thus, it is *achintya*, imponderable. The Self is also immutable, *avikaryaḥ*. *Shankara* says that the Self doesn’t undergo change in the way that milk can change into curds. This is, ‘*avikāryaḥ,*’ immutable, ‘*ayam yathā kṣīraṁ dadhyātanādinā vikāri,*’ in the way milk changes to curds, ‘*na tathā ayam ātmā,*’ the Self is not like this. Why? It is because It is not composed of parts. ‘*Niravayavatvāc cha.*’ Therefore, the *Atman* is immutable. When milk becomes curd, it changes into the curd. However, it isn’t possible to change the Self in this way.

Shankara says, ‘that which is not composed of parts, is not subject to change.’ ‘*na hi niravayavam kinchit vikriyātmakam dṛṣṭam.*’ If something is subject to change, it means that it is composed of parts. Therefore, because the Self is devoid of any change, It is considered as immutable, *avikāryaḥ*. This is, ‘*Avikriyatvāt avikāryaḥ ayam ātmā uchyate.*’ Then, *Kṛṣṇa* tells *Arjuna*, ‘knowing the Self in the described manner, you should not grieve.’ This is, ‘*tasmāt,*’ therefore, ‘*evam yathoka prakāreṇa enam ātmānam viditvā tvam na anuśochitum arhasi.*’ How was *Arjuna* grieving? *Arjuna* thought, ‘I will be their slayer.’ This is, ‘*hantāham eṣām.*’ Then, also, *Arjuna* thought, ‘They will be slain by me.’ ‘*Mayā te hanyante*’ *iti.*’ In this way, *Arjuna* thought, ‘I will kill them, and they will be killed.’

However, the Lord says that there is no point in thinking this. Why? It is because there is no destruction for the Self. This is said in response to *Arjuna*’s question at the end of the 1st chapter. This was, ‘should we kill them, or should they kill us?’ The Lord says, ‘both of these are not correct. The *Atman* is changeless. These do not happen to the Self.’ Now we can look at the *shloka*.

‘*Ayam avyaktaḥ,*’ This, the Self, is unmanifest, ‘*achintyaḥ,*’ unponderable, ‘*ayam avikāryaḥ uchyate,*’ and this Self is said to be immutable. ‘*Tasmāt,*’ therefore, ‘*enam evam viditvā,*’ having known this, the Self, ‘*anuśochitum na arhasi,*’ there is no point in grieving.

We said before, in the 11th *shloka*, ‘*Nānuśochanti paṇḍitāḥ.*’ The Wise do not grieve for living or the dead.’ This means that there is no point in grieving that one will die.

Now to the Preface of the next *shloka*. It says, ‘*ātmano anityatvam abhyupagamyā idam uchyate.*’ So, up until this point, the Lord has spoken about the true Nature of the Self. After this, the Lord will speak from the worldly point of view. What do the ordinary people think? ‘A person dies.’ ‘A baby is born.’ The ordinary man thinks in this way. Thus, from here on, the Lord will speak, accepting this point of view. So it says, ‘*ātmano anityatvam,*’ the perishability of the Self, ‘*abhyupagamyā,*’ accepting this, ‘*idam uchyate,*’ this is spoken by the Lord.

***Atha chainam nityajātam nityam vā manyase mṛtam
Tathāpi tvam mahābāho naivam śochitum arhasi. 2.26.***

2.26. ‘On the other hand, if you think this One is born continually or dies constantly, even then, O mighty-armed one, you ought not to grieve thus.’

The commentary begins with, ‘*atha cha.*’ *Shankara* says that this means that the Lord will be speaking from a different point of view, beginning from this *shloka*. This is, ‘*atha cha iti abhyupagamārthah.*’ This means that another philosophy is being accepted for the time being. The word, ‘*abhyupagama,*’ means ‘philosophy.’ The matters spoken of from here are not the primary instructions of the Lord. That’s why He says, ‘even if this is how you feel,’ or ‘even if this is how the world views things..’ This means that the Lord is temporarily accepting the viewpoint of worldly experience. That is what is called, ‘*abhyupagama.*’ *Shankara* explains the *shloka*, ‘On the basis of popular notion, if you think that this Self is perpetually born with the birth of the bodies It indwells, and that It perpetually dies with their destruction, still, O hero! You ought not to grieve in regard for It.’

This is said as, ‘*Enam,*’ this Self, ‘*prakṛtam ātmānam,*’ the Self which has been described before, ‘*nityajātam,*’ as being born, *lokaprasiddhyā pratyanekaśarīrotpatti jāto iti.*’ This means that one considers this Self as being born, whenever a body is produced, which is the viewpoint of the world. When each body is produced, the *Jiva* takes birth, continuously. In this view, the individual Soul continuously changes from body to body, life after life. In this way, *Bhīṣma* and *Drona*, and the warriors on the side of the *Kauravas*, are considered as being born. What if you think like this?

‘*Tathā pratitattadvināśam nityam vā manyase mṛtam mṛto mṛta iti.*’ ‘You think that the Soul perpetually dies with the destruction of the body, Arjuna.’ Thus, this process continuously occurs, where the Self is considered to be subject to death, through the destruction of the body. Therefore, the *shloka* says, ‘*nityam mṛta,*’ ‘you consider that the Self continuously experiences death. Also, it said, ‘*nityam jāta,*’ being continuously born. The word ‘*nityam*’ here, means ‘constantly.’ The Self is considered from the worldly view to constantly take birth when a new body is produced, and to be constantly destroyed as well. This view is that the Self is destroyed in the destruction of the body.

‘*Tathā api,*’ even if you consider like this, *Arjuna*, that the Self is constantly being born and destroyed, ‘*tathābhāvopi ātmani,*’ *Arjuna*, you should not grieve,

'tvam mahābāho, na evam śochitum arhasi.' There is no point in lamenting. Why? Because whatever is born must die, and whatever dies must again be born.' *'Janmavato nāśo nāśavato janma cha ityetau avaśyam bhāvinau iti.'* If this is considered logically, this destruction is inevitable. *'Yasmāt,'* therefore, *'na anuśochitum arhasi,'* there is no point in lamenting.

Therefore, even in the worldly view that the Self experiences birth and death, there is no meaning in grieving. Why? Because death is certain for one who is born, and birth is certain for someone who dies. This will be repeated in the next shloka. This is that whatever comes into existence, or is born, must be destroyed. These matters are inevitable; therefore there is no point in lamenting this. We can look at the *shloka*.

'Atha cha,' instead, *'enam,'* this Self, *'nitya jātam,'* as continuously being born, *'vā,'* or, *'nitya mṛtam,'* continuously experiencing death, *'manyase,'* if you think this, *'tvam mahābāho,'* Arjuna, *'tvam naivam śochitum arhasi,'* you should not grieve. This is because these are matters that are inevitable. Therefore, there is no meaning in lamenting.

***Jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyur dhruvam janma mṛtasya cha
Tasmād aparihāryerthe na tvam śochitum arhasi. 2.27.***

2.27. 'For death of anyone born is certain, and of the dead, birth is a certainty. Therefore, you ought not to grieve over an inevitable fact.'

Shankara's preface says, *'tathā cha sati,'* 'in this being so..' If this is considered in the worldly point of view, still, Arjuna, you should not grieve. *Shankara* explains the *shloka*. 'For one who is born, death is an inevitable concomitant.' This is, *'jātasya,'* for one who is born, *'hi dhruvo avyabhichārī,'* is certain, inevitable, *'mṛtyuḥ maraṇam,'* death, destruction. Then, *Shankara* explains, 'so too is birth for one who dies. *'Dhruvam,'* certain, *'janma mṛtasya cha,'* is birth for one who dies, also.

Therefore, the sequence of birth and death is unavoidable, and is a matter of course. This is, *'Tasmāt,'* therefore, *'aparihāryaḥ ayam janmamaraṇā lakṣaṇaḥ arthaḥ.'* This process of *janma*, birth, and *maraṇa*, death, is unavoidable. 'Therefore, you should not lament over something that is unavoidable. *'Tasmin,'* in that,

‘*aparihāryārthe*,’ in this unavoidable matter, ‘*na tvaṃ śochitum arhasi*,’ you should not grieve. ‘Then, *Shankara* says, ‘that which is born must be destroyed, and that which is destroyed must again be born. Therefore, that which is natural like this is considered inevitable. This is, ‘*janmavato nāśaḥ*,’ that which is born must be destroyed. ‘*Nāśavato janma*,’ that which is destroyed, birth, ‘*iti*’ thus, ‘*cha svabhābikaḥ chet, aparihāryaḥ saḥ arthaḥ*.’ This process is *svabhāvika*, natural for all beings, therefore, it is not something that can be avoided.

‘*Tasmin aparihāryārthe*,’ in that unavoidable process, ‘*na tvaṃ śochitum arhasi*,’ you should not grieve. This idea was expressed before, and is again made firm here. Now to the *shoka*.

‘*Jātasya*,’ for one who is born, ‘*mṛtyuḥ*,’ death, ‘*dhruvaḥ*,’ is certain. ‘*Mṛtasya*,’ for one who dies, ‘*janma*,’ birth, ‘*dhruvaṃ hi*,’ is for certain. ‘*Tasmāt*,’ therefore, ‘*aparihāryārthe*,’ in this unavoidable matter, ‘*tvaṃ*,’ you, ‘*śochitum na arhasi*,’ you are not suitable to grieve.

Now to the next part of the commentary, before the next *shloka*. It says, ‘all beings exist in the form of a combination, a mix of causes and effects. This is true for all objects. This is said, ‘*kāryakaraṇasaṃghātātmaḥ kānyapi*,’ these objects, composed of causes and effects, ‘*bhūtanyuddiśya*,’ referring to the beings in Creation, ‘*śoko na yuktaḥ*,’ there is no reason for one to grieve over anything in the world. Why is this? It says in the *shloka*..

***Avyaktādīni bhūtāni vyaktamadyāni bhārata
Avyaktanidhanānyeva tatra kā paridevanā. 2.28.***

2.28. ‘O descendant of Bharata! All beings remain unmanifest in the beginning; they become manifest in the middle, and after death, they certainly become unmanifest.

What lamentation can there be with regard to them?’

This is said according to man’s ordinary intellect. What is this? *Shankara* says, ‘Unmanifest’, i.e., unperceived or unknown, is the beginning of beings such as one’s sons, friends, etc.’ This is ‘*avyaktādīni avyaktaṃ adarśanam, anupalabdhiḥ ādīḥ yeṣāṃ bhūtānāṃ*,’ so, in the beginning, beings are ‘*avyaktaṃ*,’ or unmanifest. This means, ‘*adarśanam*,’ unseen, and unperceived. These are descriptions of an object,

before it comes into existence. Here, the word '*bhūtāni*' can mean, 'living beings.' It can also mean, 'the 5 elements.' Either meaning can be taken. Of such beings, '*putramitrādikārya karaṇasamīghātātmakānām tāni avyaktādīni bhūtāni prak utpatteḥ.*' Thus, these beings, such as '*putra,*' a son, or '*mitra,*' friends, are combinations of causes and effects, '*kāryas*' and '*karaṇas.*' These beings, before becoming manifest, are '*avyakta,*' unmanifest. They are unknown. All objects are unknown to us before their manifestation. Therefore, they are unmanifest. After destruction, also, they are unmanifest.

The period before and after an object's existence is a state of unmanifestation. Then *Shankara* says, 'having appeared, their intermediate state until death is 'manifest.' Only when the object is actually seen does it become manifest. This is said as, '*upannāni cha prāgmarañāt vyaktamadyāni.*' Then the *shloka* says, '*avyaktanidhanānyeva.*' These beings are again unmanifest in their destruction. So, it says, '*punaḥ avyaktam adarśanam nidhanam maraṇam yeṣām tāni avyakanidhanāni.*' This explains the phrase in the *shloka*, 'they are unmanifest in their end.' Beings are described as unmanifest in this way because they become unseen through their destruction, or death.'

What is after death? We cannot know. Therefore, it says, 'these beings are unmanifest again after their destruction.' Thus, it says, 'marañādūrdhvaṃ,' after death, '*avyaktatām eva,*' in unmanifestation, '*pratipadyante,*' the beings go. '*ityarthaḥ.*' This is the meaning. Therefore, man cannot make a firm decision about matters such as reincarnation. These matters cannot be grasped by the ordinary man's intellect. One thing is sure; we don't know where these beings come from. We don't know, 'where were they, how were they?' We can't know anything about this, before the manifestation of an object. We know the object when it is manifested. The period after the appearance of the object is also clear. Then, the object undergoes destruction, after which, we cannot know anything about the object.

Thus, it says, '*avyaktatām eva pratipadyante,*' these beings become unmanifest in their destruction. Even though some Great Souls can know about these matters, the ordinary man cannot. '*Tathā cha uktam,*' this is also said in the *Mahābhārata*. This is the verse, '*adarśanād apatitaḥ punaschādarśanam gataḥ / nāsau tava na tasya tvam vyathā kā paridevanā.*' So, it says, '*adarśanād,*' from being unseen, from unmanifestation, '*apatitaḥ,*' everything comes, all living beings. Then,

‘*punaschādarśanam gataḥ*,’ then again, in death, they are unseen, from being unmanifest. These beings attain darkness, unmanifestation.

‘*Na asau tava*,’ therefore, none of this is yours, ‘*na tasya tvam*,’ and you do not belong to anyone, ‘*vyathā kā paridevanā*,’ so what is the point of thinking of this and grieving?’ Thus, no one knows where these beings go. ‘*Iti*,’ thus, ‘why must you lament?’ ‘*Tatra kā paridevanā ko vā pralāpaḥ*.’ Why must you think about death and grieve? Therefore, ‘Arjuna, why do you grieve after these beings which are unseen, seen, and then destroyed, whose very essence is delusion?’ This is, ‘*adṛṣṭadṛṣṭapranaṣṭabhṛāntibhūteṣu bhūteṣu ityārthaḥ*.’ Here *Shankara* says that the meaning of ‘*bhūteṣu*,’ in all of these living beings, means the beings that are unseen, seen, and destroyed. Why is the essence of these beings delusion, *bhrānta*?’

This is because no one can determine where these beings come from, or where they leave to. Therefore, this is a delusion, like what is seen by an intoxicated person. Therefore, there is no point of you grieving in this. That is the meaning. Here, we are not even considering the process of reincarnation. In the knowledge of the ordinary man, both the origin and end of beings is utterly unknown. Therefore, nothing of ours is permanent. All relationships are destroyed. So, there is no need for you to suffer.

‘*Bhārata*,’ Arjuna, ‘*bhūtāni*,’ all of these living beings, ‘*avyaktādīni*,’ from unmanifestation, from ignorance, are coming. ‘*Vyaktamadyāni*,’ these are manifest in their middle stage, then, ‘*avyaktanidhanāni*,’ again, they go to unmanifestation. ‘*Tatra paridevanā kā*,’ what in this is lamentable? Why should you remember this and grieve? This matter is inevitable. Therefore, there’s no point in grieving, even in the destruction of these beings.

In whatever way possible, Arjuna should be lifted out of his grief and delusion. That is the aim of the Lord. First, the Lord spoke about the *tattva*, or true principle of the *Atman*. Arjuna heard this *tattvam*, but his grief did not leave him. In this situation, Arjuna was unable to understand the correct action to perform, according to the worldly regulations of *dharma* and law, which are vast and extensive. As Arjuna’s mind was circling in confusion like this, what happens when the Lord speaks about a high principle? He may not understand. Then, the Lord steps down from this highest principle, and adopts the logic from a worldly point of view.

The Lord says, ‘even if you think in the way of an ordinary person, there is no reason for you to grieve.’ The Lord felt after explaining this *Atma Tattvam*, ‘there hasn’t been any change in the grief of Arjuna. Is there any point in further explaining this?’ Then, the Lord spoke in a way that Arjuna could understand. However, the Lord doesn’t blame Arjuna for not being able to understand. He doesn’t say, ‘why can’t you understand this, Arjuna?’ Why is this? It is said in the next *shloka*, that this *Ātma Tattvam* is *durvijñeyo*, difficult to comprehend. Thus, the preface to the next *shloka* says, ‘*durvijñeyoyam prakṛta ātmā*,’ this Self, which having been explained is difficult to understand.’ Especially if a person who lacks mental equipoise hears this *Tattvam*, he may not be able to understand it.

‘*Kim tu*,’ however, ‘*kim tvāmevaikam upālabhe*,’ why should I blame you for this?’ ‘*Sādhāraṇe bhrāntinimitte*.’ This is because all beings are like this. It is hard for them to understand this *Atma Tattva*, because of delusion. All beings are controlled by delusion, ‘*bhrānti*.’ Therefore, I am not blaming you alone, even though you haven’t understood after I spoke this *Tattvam* to you. After the Lord spoke to Arjuna, Arjuna hadn’t clearly grasped the matters instructed by the Lord.

Then, ‘*katham durvijñeyaḥ ayam ātmā āha*.’ Then why is this *Atman* difficult to understand? The next *shloka* explains this. The Self is indeed difficult to understand, *durvijñeyam*.

***Āścharyavat paśyati kaśchid enam
Āścharyavad vadati tathaiva chānyaḥ /
Āścharyavac chainamanyaḥ śṛṇoti
Śrutvāpyenam veda na chaiva kaśchit. 2.29.***

2.29. ‘Someone sees It as a wonder; and similarly indeed, someone else talks of It as a wonder; and someone else hears of It as a wonder. Having heard, (seen, and spoken of) no one truly knows This.’

This is a *mantra* that also appears in the *Upanishads*. There are some who think about the Self. For those who try to know the Self, It appears to them as a Wonder. ‘What is That, which is beyond the intellect?’ It is *adr̥ṣṭapūrvam*,’ having never been seen before. When we see something that we have never seen before, we

feel wonder. Also, when we see something that surprises us greatly, we feel wonder. This is said in the commentary, ‘*āścharyavat āścharyam,*’ as a wonder, ‘*adr̥ṣṭapūrvam,*’ unseen before, ‘*adbhutam,*’ a miracle, ‘*akasmāddr̥śyamānam tena tulyam,*’ equal to something seen by surprise, ‘*āścharyavat enam ātmānam paśyati,*’ some see this Self as a wonder. This means some hear, speak, think, etc., about the Self. All of these are included in this part.

They say that the Self is like a wonder. When we know an ordinary object, it ceases to remain a wonder to us. However, because our inner faculties cannot know the Atman, it is seen as a wonder, heard as a wonder, and spoken of as a wonder. This is said as, ‘*āścharyavat enam vadati tathaiva cha anyah, āścharyavat cha enam anyah śṛṇoti.*’ Some speak of this *Ātman*, ‘*enam vadati,*’ as a wonder, ‘*āścharyavat.*’ Also, as a wonder, ‘*āścharyavat,*’ others hear of this Self, ‘*anyah śṛṇoti.*’ However, having heard about This again and again, having seen This again and again, none at all comprehend this Self. Having seen, means to try to see It within the mind. Then, after speaking about This again and again, ‘*enam ātmānam veda na chaiva kaśchit,*’ no one knows This in Its Fullness. Therefore, even though I have spoken about this *Atman* to you and you haven’t understood, I am not upset. There’s nothing wrong with that. That is Its nature. That is the meaning. This is said as, ‘*śrutvā dr̥ṣṭvā uktvā api ātmānam veda na chaiva kaśchit.*’

Then *Shankara* says, ‘whoever sees This, the Self, is himself a wonder. This is, ‘*athavā,*’ otherwise, ‘*yah ayam ātmānam paśyati,*’ whoever sees This, the Self, ‘*saḥ āścharyatulyah,*’ he is equal to a wonder. Then *Shankara* says that such a person who speaks about the Self and hears about It is but one among thousands of men. Thus, such a person is a wonder. He creates the feeling of wonder in others, because he sees what others are unable to see. He is able to speak about and hear about the Self; therefore, he becomes an object of wonder. This is, ‘*yah vadati,*’ he who speaks, ‘*yah cha śṛṇoti,*’ and who speaks, ‘*saḥ anekasahasreṣu kaśchideva bhavati,*’ he is one among thousands.

Either way of commentating is correct. Then *Shankara* says, ‘this *shloka* means that the Self is *durbodha*, difficult to know. This is not something easy for an individual such as *Arjuna* to grasp and understand. Thus, it says, ‘*ataḥ,*’ therefore, ‘*durbodhaḥ ātmā ityabhiprāyah,*’ the meaning of this is that the *Atman* is difficult to know. Therefore, the Lord doesn’t feel the need to blame *Arjuna* for not

understanding this principle of the *Atman*. Because of this, the Lord speaks to Arjuna after this in a manner he can understand. The Lord consoles Arjuna here, to free him from his suffering. Knowing that Arjuna did not understand the matters instructed by the Lord, He consoles Arjuna through these words. Now we can look at the *shloka*.

‘*Kaśchit*,’ someone, ‘*enam*,’ This Self, ‘*aścharyavat paśyati*,’ sees as a wonder. ‘*Tathā eva*,’ similarly, ‘*anyaḥ*,’ another, ‘*enam*,’ this Self, ‘*aścharyavat*,’ as a wonder, ‘*vadati*,’ speaks. ‘*Anyah*,’ another, ‘*enam*,’ this Self, ‘*aścharyavat*,’ as a wonder, ‘*śṛṇoti cha*,’ also hears. ‘*śrutvā api*,’ having heard (this means having heard, seen, and spoken of, all of these), ‘*kaśchit*,’ anyone, ‘*na veda eva*,’ does not know at all. Having seen, heard, and spoken of the Self, ‘*na kaśchit*,’ no one at all knows This, the *Atman*. No one knows the true reality of This. Therefore, some commentators say that this means that nobody can know the *Atman*. *Shankara* accepts this, and also says, ‘one who knows It is an object of wonder.’

In other words, nobody can know the Self in Its true nature. It is unknowable by nature. Therefore, the Lord is not blaming Arjuna for not understanding the true nature of the Self. The commentary said, ‘Why should I blame you alone when the cause of this delusion is universal?’ There would be no point in that. That is the kind of subject discussed here.

Here the meanings of the *shlokas* are very clear, so *Shankara* hasn’t given a detailed explanation. Now to the preface of the next *shloka*. It says, ‘Now the subject at hand is concluded.’ This is, ‘*atha idānīm prakaraṇārtham upasaṁharati* – ‘To conclude this subject, the next *shloka* is said.

***Dehī nityam avadhyoyam dehe sarvasya bhārata
Tasmāt sarvāṇi bhūtāni na tvam śochitum arhasi. 2.30.***

2.30. ‘O descendant of Bharata, this embodied Self existing in everyone’s body can never be killed. Therefore, you ought not to grieve for all these beings.’

The commentary says, ‘Eternally’ – at all times and in all states, the embodied Self is indestructible, because It is devoid of parts and everlasting. It says, ‘*yasmāt*,’ from

which, ‘*dehī*,’ the embodied Soul, ‘*nityam sarvadhā sarvāvasthāsu avadhyah*,’ is unslayable. It is impossible to slay This, the embodied Soul, in any condition, ‘*niravayavatvāt*,’ because It is devoid of parts, ‘*nityatvāt*,’ and eternal.

Then, *Shankara* says, ‘The Self dwelling no body may be slain. Being all-pervasive, the Self present even in inert objects such as trees is indestructible.’ This is said, ‘*tatra avadhyoyam dehe sharīre sarvasya sarvagatvāt sthāvarādiṣu sthitopi*.’ ‘This Atman, ‘*avadhyah*,’ is unslayable, ‘*dehe sharīre sarvasya*,’ everywhere, in every body ‘*sarvagatvāt*,’ because It is all-pervasive in every body, ‘*sthāvarādiṣu sthitopi*,’ and It is present even in inert objects, not just moving creatures.

Shankara says, ‘even in the slaying of bodies, the Self remains unslain.’ This is, ‘*sarvasya prānijātasya*,’ of all beings, everywhere, ‘*dehe vadhyamānepi*,’ even in the destruction of the *deha*, the body, ‘*ayam dehī*,’ this, the embodied Self, ‘*na vadhyah*,’ remains unslayable. Therefore, because this *Atman* is unslayable, there is no point in you grieving over any being in creation, including *Bhīṣma* and the *Kaurava* warriors. This is, ‘*tasmāt*,’ therefore, ‘*bhīṣmādīni*,’ *Bhīṣma* and others, ‘*sarvāṇi bhūtāni*,’ all of Creation, ‘*uddiṣhya na tvam śochitum arhasi*,’ you should grieve because of any of these. The Self is all-pervasive and in all bodies. That is why It is called ‘*dehī*,’ that which possesses a body, *deham*.

Here, in these shlokas, the word ‘*ātmā*,’ is used very sparsely. In some sections, the word ‘*ātmā*’ is not used, but ‘*dehī*’ instead. Why? This is because one’s self-awareness is situated in the body. Therefore, the word ‘*dehī*’ is used. We are able to see the body, so it says, ‘the one who possesses the body.’ Because this identification with the body is deeply ingrained within, the word ‘*dehī*’ is used by the Lord. This means, ‘one with a *deham*, a body.’ Because it is defined thus, This Self is not the body. It is That which possesses the body. In this way, the word ‘*dehī*’ is used to relate the Self with the body, and clearly distinguish between the two. That is why this word is said repeatedly here.

Thus, the embodied Self is not the body. The Self is one, and the body is another. This name is used to thus distinguish between these two. Then the *shloka* says, ‘*bhārata*,’ Arjuna, ‘*sarvasya dehe*,’ in all bodies, ‘*ayam dehī*,’ this, the embodied Self, ‘*nityam avadhyah*,’ is eternally unslayable, unable to be destroyed. ‘*Tasmāt*,’

therefore, ‘*sarvāṇi bhūtāni*,’ in all of Creation, ‘*tvām*,’ you, ‘*śochitum na arhasi*,’ should not grieve.

Having given all these justifications to Arjuna as to why he should not grieve, and consoling him for not understanding the true principle of the *Atman*, the Lord takes his instruction to a level Arjuna can relate to, which is one’s duty. That is next, in the commentary. *Shankara* says, ‘if Arjuna’s situation is seen in light of the supreme Truth, neither grief nor delusion is possible.’ This is said as, ‘*iha*,’ here, in these *shlokas*, ‘*paramārthatattvāpekṣāyām*,’ in the level of the supreme Truth, ‘*śoko moho vā na sambhavati ityuktaṁ*,’ it said that neither grief nor delusion can occur.’ However, this is true not only in the level of the supreme Truth. It is not true only in that light of reasoning. This is, ‘*na kevalam*,’ not alone, ‘*paramārthatattvāpekṣāyām*,’ in the level of the supreme Truth, ‘*eva*,’ indeed. Then what? ‘*Kim tu*,’ this is said next.

***Svadharmam api chāveksya na vikāṁpitum arhasi
Dharmyāddhi yuddhādc chreyonyat kṣatriyasya na vidyate. 2.31.***

2.31. ‘Even considering your own duty you should not waver, since there is nothing greater for a kṣatriya than a righteous battle.’

Shankara explains this shloka. What is ‘*svadharma*’ here? ‘*Svadharma*,’ means, ‘*sva*,’ one’s own *dharma*. This is the *dharma* of the *kṣatriya*. What is that? It is war. The duty of a *kṣatriya* is to fight in a righteous war. This is said as, ‘*svadharmam api, svo dharmah*,’ your inherent duty, ‘*kṣatriyasya*,’ of the warrior class, ‘*yuddham*,’ is a war. Even if you consider this, your inherent duty, you should not be perturbed. You should not waver. There is no need for a wavering attitude in this war. This is said, ‘*tam*,’ that *svadharma* of war, ‘*api aveksya*,’ having considered, ‘*tvam na vikāṁpitum prachalitam*,’ for you to waver, to be perturbed, ‘*na arhasi*,’ you should not do that. There is no reason for you to withdraw from the war. Why? Because this war is ‘*dharmyam*,’ a righteous war.

In the *shloka*, it says, ‘*dharmyād hi*,’ from a righteous war. Here it says, ‘from the natural *dharma* of the *kṣatriya*, nothing is greater.’ This is, ‘*kṣatriyasya*,’ of one in

the warrior class, ‘*svābhāvīkādharmaṁ*,’ from this natural *dharma*. This action happens naturally. This is the *dharma* that is spontaneously accepted by a *kṣatriya*, who is of a *rajasic* temperament. This is the quality of the *kṣatriya*. *Shankara* says that this *dharma* is the nature of *Arjuna* also. This is, ‘*ātmasvābhāvīyād ityabhiprāyaḥ*,’ this is the opinion expressed by the Lord here. This duty comes to the *kṣatriya* from his nature. What is this nature? It is the *rajas* quality. This means that the quality of *rajas* is natural for the *kṣatriya*.

The *shloka* says that this war is ‘*dharmyam*,’ righteous. This word comes from the word ‘*dharma*,’ righteousness,’ so is a form of this word as an adjective. So why is this war ‘*dharmyam*?’ It is because through it, the *kṣatriya* may gain victory on earth, protect *dharma*, and ensure the safety of the people. Thus, this is called ‘*paramam dharmam*,’ ‘supremely righteous.’ This is said as, ‘*tat cha yuddham*,’ also, that war, ‘*pṛthivī jayadvāreṇa*,’ the gate to victory on earth, ‘*dharmārtham*,’ for protection of *dharma*, ‘*prajārakṣaṇārtham*,’ for protecting the people of the kingdom, ‘*cha iti*,’ all of these, thus, ‘*paramam dharmyam*,’ is supremely righteous.

This war is not fought for the sake of selfishness. Having gained victory of the kingdom, *dharma* must be established. By re-establishing *dharma*, the safety of the people must be protected. When *adharmic* people disturb the society, it is destroyed. When *dharma* is destroyed, the people will be destroyed. Therefore, in order to establish *dharma* and protect the people, war may be necessary in certain times. That is the meaning. Why? This is in order to defeat attackers. If the attackers can understand peace, then peace can be used as a means. But what if they don’t understand peace at all? If there are such transgressors, especially in that time, the king would have to lead a war. Then, the king could only fight the transgressors, in order to protect the people.

Therefore, the protection of the people in the kingdom is the *dharma* of the king. It is not that the citizens must protect themselves. The job of protection is entrusted to the king. The king collects tax from the citizens only because it’s his duty to protect them. So, in a situation where there is no other means to protect the people but through war, the king must lead a war for the citizens’ welfare. It is not that war can be avoided completely. If that war becomes unavoidable for the people’s protection, then the war becomes ‘*dharmyam*,’ righteous. *Shankara* says, ‘*dharmāt anapetaṁ dharmyam*.’ This means that such a war is not separated from *dharma*.

If a war must be fought in this way, according to the logic of *Niti* and *Dharma śāstras*, then there is nothing greater that exists for a *kṣatriya*. There is no higher greatness for one of the *warrior* class. Because of this, *Kṛṣṇa* encourages *Arjuna* to fight. He says, ‘you must fight!’ Here, the Lord inspires *Arjuna* to act. This is said as, ‘*tasmāt*,’ therefore, ‘*dharmyāt yuddhāt*,’ besides such a righteous war, ‘*śreyaḥ anyat*,’ any other greatness, ‘*kṣatiryasya na vidyate*,’ doesn’t exist for the *kṣatriya*. ‘*Hi yasmāt*,’ because of this, the Lord asserts that *Arjuna* must fight.

When we normally hear about war, we don’t wish for war, but peace. However, this situation is different. Aside from war, there was no other way of protecting the people. In such a circumstance, peace as a means has failed. Then there is only war as a means to protection of the people. In such a situation, where war is the last recourse, and all the components of a righteous war are present, what if the king doesn’t fight? It will be impossible to protect the people. They will be destroyed. If we look at our history, we can see that that is what happened.

When attackers from outside India came here, the ministers of the kingdom thought they could defeat them with black magic, ‘*mantra tantra*.’ The attackers came, defeated us and took control everywhere. That is how India came under the control of foreigners. The instructions of the Gita ceased to exist. In such circumstances, when attackers come to the kingdom, it may be impossible to bring about a change in their mental attitude. The *Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa* had tried that. However, it wasn’t possible even for the Lord to bring an inner change to *Duryodhana* and the other *Kauravas*.

It isn’t possible for anyone to bring a transformation to someone with such a strong *vasana*. Everyone gave advice to *Duryodhana*. His father advised him, his mother advised him. They told him to withdraw from the war. Even *Vyāsa* advised him. These are not bad people. Grandsire *Bhīṣma* advised him, as well as the *raja guru Drona*. All of the *gurus* present in the palace advised him. His friends advised him. In the end, only *Duryodhana* was left in the battle. Near the end, *Duryodhana*’s friend *Aśvattama* advised him to retreat from the war. He said, ‘We are not going to win. We will surely be defeated in this war.’ Despite this, *Duryodhana* was unable to retreat from the war. He could only fight.

When a person with such a strong evil tendency is intent on attacking a kingdom unrighteously, there will no other way but war to stop him. So when war

becomes necessary, it must be fought. That is what the Gita says. That war must be along with righteousness, *dharma*. That is why the *shloka* says, '*dharmyam*,' this righteous war. That is why *Kṛṣṇa* tells *Arjuna* here that it isn't possible to avoid such a righteous war. Because of not listening to that instruction of the Lord, India had to become controlled by foreigners for such a long time. At that time, India adopted a different way. Because of belief in *ahimsa*, the country didn't fight. In the scriptures, war for gaining more land and wealth is prohibited. However, when attackers come and threaten the kingdom, there is no other way but war to protect the people.

Therefore, in such a situation, peace isn't possible. There will come a time when one cannot avoid fighting. Where the attackers can be appeased through peaceful means, that is fine, but when peaceful means fail, there is no other way but through war to ensure the citizens' protection. That is what is said. Therefore, in that manner, the Lord is making Arjuna fight in the war. It is a dharmic war. So if you feel there is any kind of defect in the Gita, you should just bear it.

Some commentators, thinking of protecting the image of the Gita, have omitted these points. However, if you feel there are any defects with the Gita, you should just accept them. It is not that these points are not in the Gita. Forthrightness is a quality we need in the mind. To interpret something in a way differently than how it is intended is a defect of the intellect. Through this intellectual defect, we may interpret anything in any way we like. However, that is not correct. We should explain things how they were written. Here, this is what the Lord is saying. The Lord is requesting to fight the war. How can you explain this otherwise? Some people may leave this out, or explain otherwise, because they consider it as a defect of the Gita. The presence of a defect in the Gita is a different matter. Thus, thinking the Gita contains a defect, some commentate on the Gita like this.

Whether or not there is a defect in the Gita is not our problem. Who are we to change the Lord's problem? We are nobody. If we are above the Lord, then so be it. The *shloka* says, '*svadharmam api chāveksya*,' even if you consider your inherent duty, '*tvam vikampitum na athasi*,' you should not be perturbed. In other words, you should not retreat from the war. '*kṣatriyasya*,' for a *kṣatriya*, '*dharmyāt yuddhāt*,' from a righteous war, '*anyat śreyah*,' any other greatness, '*na vidyate*,' does not exist.

Therefore, there is nothing greater for the *kṣatriya*, besides a righteous war. When we talk about this '*yuddham*,' the war, we must always include that it is

‘*dharmyam*,’ righteous. It is a war that is fought from necessity. It is not war where one kingdom invades another for selfish reasons. Here, it is not that kind of war. Instead, it is necessary. It must be fought.

So, how was the duty of the *kṣatriya* in that time? The Lord is speaking to Arjuna according to this *dharma*. The preface to the next *shloka* says, ‘Why is this war the duty of Arjuna?’ This is, ‘*kutaścha*,’ how, ‘*tat yuddham*,’ that war, ‘*kartavyam iti*,’ is a duty? ‘*Uchyate*,’ this is said in the next *shloka*.

***Yadṛcchayā chopapannam svargadvaram apāvṛtam
Sukhinaḥ kṣatriyāḥ pārtha labhante yuddham idṛsam. 2.32.***

2.32. ‘O son of Pṛthā, happy are the Kṣatriyas who come across this kind of a battle, which presents itself unsought for and which is an open gate to heaven.’

Shankara says that this war is like an open gate to heaven. Like a surprise, the war has presented itself as an open gateway to heaven. This is how the *kṣatriya* views a righteous war. This is said in order to awaken the *kṣatriya* courage and fiery strength within Arjuna. This is said as, ‘*yadṛcchayā cha*,’ by surprise, also, ‘*aprārthitatayā*,’ having not requested, ‘*upapannam āgatam svargadvaram*,’ the gateway to heaven, attained, ‘*apāvṛtam adhāṛitam*,’ being opened, ‘*ye*,’ those who, ‘*etat idṛsam yuddham labhante*,’ attain this kind of war, ‘*kṣatriyāḥ*,’ a warrior, ‘*he Pārtha*.’ O Arjuna, ‘*kim na sukhinaḥ te*,’ why are you not happy?

As a *kṣatriya*, having attained this righteous war, aren’t you happy? This is a way to attain heaven. Now to the *shloka*.

‘*Pārtha*,’ Arjuna, ‘*apāvṛtam svargadvaram yadṛcchayā*,’ an open gateway to heaven is unexpectedly attained by you, therefore, ‘*idṛsam yuddham kṣtriyaḥ sukhinaḥ labhante*,’ on attaining this kind of war, the *kṣatriyas* are delighted. *Kṛṣṇa* is saying, ‘don’t the warriors of a righteous war attain heaven?’ According to the *Dharma Shāstras* of the time, it is said that a *kṣatriya* who fights a righteous attains the heaven of warriors, ‘*vīra svarga*.’ The Lord is speaking to Arjuna according to that line of reasoning. Thus *Kṛṣṇa* says, ‘even if you think in this way, you should not be perturbed.’

This is the first child lesson for a *kṣatriya*. This is that a righteous warrior attains *vīra svarga*, the heaven of warriors. Arjuna had forgotten this. Therefore, the Lord is reminding him of this. When warfare is taught to a *kṣatriya*, this heaven of warriors is also taught. ‘You have forgotten this, Arjuna, haven’t you? Why are you retreating from this war, which is the way to attaining heaven?’

Thus, the Lord is trying to bring Arjuna to the war, in any way possible. That is the aim of the Lord. The Lord is thus using all kinds of principles of *dharma*, law, or any logic. At first, the Lord used the principle of the True Self. However, because of the difficulty in grasping that, the Lord switched to using worldly logic and reasoning. The Lord thus reminded Arjuna of the principles in the *Dharma* and *Nita Shāstras*, the scriptures of righteousness and law. Arjuna had already studied these, previously. Therefore, the Lord says, ‘according to the natural *dharma* of the *kṣatriya*, he cannot retreat from battle.’ What is the defect of retreating from war? That is what is said next. *Shankara* says, ‘*evam*,’ thus, ‘*kartavyatāprāptam*,’ this war being Arjuna’s duty, ‘*api*,’ still, the next *shloka* says.

***Atha chet tvam imam dharmyam saṁgrāmaṁ na kariṣyasi
Tataḥ svadharmaṁ kīrtim cha hitvā pāpam avāpsyasi. 2.33.***

2.33. ‘On the other hand, if you will not fight this righteous battle, then, forsaking your own duty and fame, you will incur sin.’

Shankara says, ‘on the other hand’ if you do not fight in this war that is righteous, i.e. the war that conforms with the rules of *dharma*, for that very reason, abandoning your ‘*svadharma*,’ and forfeiting the renown gained through duels with *Shiva* and others, you will incur sin. This is said as, ‘*atha chet tvam*,’ now if you, ‘*imam dharmyam vihitaṁ*,’ this war, which is righteous and ordained to the *kṣatriya*, ‘*saṁgrāmaṁ yuddham*,’ this war, ‘*na kariṣyasi chet*,’ if you do not fight, ‘*tataḥ tad akaraṇāt*,’ from not doing that, ‘*svadharmaṁ kīrtim cha*,’ your inherent duty and reputation, ‘*mahādevādisamāgamanimittām*,’ which is caused by your duels with warriors, including *Mahādeva*, *Shiva*, will be sacrificed.

So *Arjuna* had been victorious in many wars before this. He is a person who fought with *Paramashiva*, to obtain the *Pāsupati* missile. Thus it says in the

commentary, ‘the renown gained from duels with *Shiva* and others.’ Arjuna had fought with *Shiva*. Therefore, all of that fame, ‘*hitvā*,’ having sacrificed, along with your duty, ‘*pāpam avāpsyasi*,’ you will obtain sin. Not only will all of your good reputation be destroyed; you will also obtain sin. According to the *dharma* of *kṣatriya*, if the *kṣatriya* retreats from a fight with an attacker, he attains sin.

‘You will thus obtain sin, *papa*. Therefore, you must not retreat from the war. You must fight!’ This is what the Lord is requesting of Arjuna. We can look at the *shloka*.

‘*Atha chet*,’ instead, ‘*tvam*,’ you, ‘*imaṁ dharmyaṁ saṁgrāhaṁ*,’ this righteous war, ‘*na kariṣyasi chet*,’ if you do not fight, ‘*tataḥ*,’ from that, ‘*svadharmam cha kīrtim hitvā*,’ having sacrificed your inherent duty and renown, ‘*pāpam avāpsyasi*,’ you will obtain sin.

What did Arjuna say before? He said if we fought this war, ‘*pāpam aśyayed asmān*.’ We will incur sin, if we fight these attackers.’ That was the logic of *Arjuna*. What does the Lord say? ‘If you do not kill these attackers, you will attain sin.’ This is said according to the *dharma* of the *kṣatriya*. Here, the authority of this is the *Dharma Shāstra*, the scriptures dealing with *Dharma*. These are the *Smṛtis*. Thus, if instead of fighting, you retreat from the war, you will obtain sin. It is not how you think; it is the other way, in truth.’

The Lord here is speaking to Arjuna according to the laws of *Dharma*. The Lord tells Arjuna the *dharma* of a *kṣatriya*; ‘a *kṣatriya* does not have the right to retreat from a righteous war.’ If that happens, he will obtain sin.’ This means that it is actually the opposite of what Arjuna had thought.

***Akīrtiṁ chāpi bhūtāni kathayiṣyanti te’ vyayām
Saṁbhāvitasya chākīrtir maraṇād atiricchyate. 2.34.***

2.34. ‘People also will speak of your unending infamy.
And to an honoured person, infamy is worse than death.’

Shankara’s preface says, ‘you will not just renounce your fame and inherent duty, incurring sin, instead, this *shloka* says that all will recount Arjuna’s infamy. This is,

‘*na kevalam*,’ not only, ‘*svadharmakīrtiparityāgaḥ*,’ not just renouncing your duty and fame, ‘*akīrtim ityādi*,’ this *shloka* adds more to this defect.

Shankara explains, ‘All will recount your everlasting ‘infamy’ for a long time to come. For one honored so far with virtues like righteousness, bravery, etc., infamy is worse than death.’ This is said as, ‘*akīrtim chāpi yuddhe*,’ infamy in war, also, ‘*bhūtāni kathayiṣyanti*,’ everyone will tell, ‘*te tava avyayām dirghakālām*,’ of you, for a long time, everlastingly, of your infamy. They will continuously tell of this, everlastingly, for a long time. Without you forgetting, others will continuously speak of your dishonor.

How? What did people say about Arjuna then? He is a ‘*dharmātmā*,’ a righteous soul, the embodiment of *Dharma*, one who knows *Dharma*. He is a ‘*sūra*,’ a brave person. ‘*Iyevamādibhiḥ gunaiḥ*,’ along with these good qualities, ‘*saṁbhavitasya*,’ for a person who adored by the world, for him, ‘*akīrtiḥ*,’ dishonor, ‘*marañād atirichyate*,’ is less esteemed than death. ‘*Saṁbhāvitasya cha akīrteḥ varaṁ maraṇam ityarthāḥ*.’ For one who is thus honored, death is held as preferable to dishonor.’ Therefore, even if you die in this war, that is good. This is because you are honored that much by the world as a *kṣatriya*.

Thus, in whatever field it is, it is speaking about disrepute for one who is honored in that field. Here, it is in the field of battle. In this field, in which you have gained adoration throughout the world, you will attain dishonor. They will call you a ‘coward,’ for running away from the war. Death is better than that. What did Arjuna say before? He said that death is better than fighting. However, the Lord says, ‘no, that’s not true. The dishonor you will attain from retreating from the war is worse than death.’ In this way, the Lord gives a reply to each one of Arjuna’s doubts. In truth, retreating from the war is worse than death. Therefore, for any reason whatsoever, you must not retreat.

***Bhayād raṇād uparataṁ maṁsyante tvāṁ mahārathāḥ
Yeṣāṁ cha tvaṁ bahumato bhūtvā yāsyasi lāghavaṁ. 2.35.***

2.35. The great warriors will think of you as having desisted from the fight out of fear; and you will fall into disgrace before them to whom you been estimable.’

Shankara says in the preface to this *shloka*, ‘That’s not all.’ ‘*Kim cha.*’ Then, the explanation says, ‘Due to fear of *Karna* and others you have withdrawn from battle and not due to compassion’ – so will mighty heroes like *Duryodhana* think. Those very heroes, *Duryodhana*, etc., who esteemed you as very rich in virtues, now you will become light in their esteem.’ This is said, ‘*bhayāt,*’ from fear, ‘*karṇādibhayaḥ,*’ of *Karna* and others, ‘*raṇāt yuddhāt,*’ from the war, ‘*uparataṁ nivṛttaṁ,*’ retreated, ‘*maṁsyante chintayiṣyanti,*’ they will think, ‘*na kṛpayeti,*’ not by compassion. They will think, ‘it wasn’t from compassion, but fear that he retreated from the war.’ Who? ‘*Tvāṁ mahārathāḥ duryodhanaprabhṛtayaḥ,*’ they, the great heroes, such as *Duryodhana*, will think this of you, in this way. No one will think that out of affection, you have retreated. Therefore, what about *Duryodhana* and the other warriors? Even though they are enemies, they respected you. What do they say about you? It says, ‘*yeṣāṁ,*’ of those, ‘*cha tvāṁ duryodhanādīnāṁ bahumato,*’ by whom you were respected, ‘*bahubhiḥ guṇaiḥ yuktaḥ,*’ as ‘he has many good qualities. He is brave, and a courageous warrior.’ That is what they said then. ‘*Ityevaṁ mataḥ,*’ this opinion of theirs, ‘*bahumato bhūtvā,*’ you having been respected even by your enemies, ‘*punaḥ yāsyasi lāghavaṁ laghubhāvaṁ.*’ In their eyes, you will be seen as very insignificant. You who have been respected even by your enemies, will become a nothing.’ That is the meaning. Now to the *shloka*.

‘*Te mahārathāḥ,*’ those great warriors, ‘*tvāṁ,*’ you, ‘*bhayāt raṇāt uparataṁ maṁsyante,*’ will consider that you retreated from the battlefield out of fear. ‘*Yeṣāṁ,*’ of those, ‘*tvāṁ,*’ you, ‘*bahumataḥ,*’ respected, ‘*bhūtvā,*’ having been, ‘*lāghavam yāsyasi,*’ will become insignificant. Or, we can say, ‘*yeṣāṁ,*’ by whom, ‘*mahārathāṇāṁ,*’ by these great warriors, ‘*tvāṁ,*’ you, ‘*bahumataḥ,*’ are respected, ‘*teṣāṁ,*’ by them, you will become insignificant. ‘*Lāghavam yāsyasi.*’ Therefore, you must not withdraw from the war.’

Avāchyavādāṁścha bahūn vadiṣyanti tavāhitāḥ

Nindantastava sāmartyaṁ tato duḥkhataraṁ nu kim. 2.36.

2.36. ‘And your enemies will speak many indecent words while denigrating your might. What can be more painful than that?’

Shankara says, ‘also,’ *‘kim cha,’* ‘many unmentionable insults’ – they are of many sorts that your foes will hurl at you, pouring scorn over your competence, established by your encounters with *Nivātakavacha* and others. Is there any pain worse than suffering such insults? That no pain can be more miserable is the sense.’

This is said as, ‘*avāchyavādān avaktavyavādāmscha,*’ words that should simply not be said, ‘*bahūn anekaprakārān,*’ in many different ways, ‘*vadiṣyanti,*’ they will speak. Who? ‘*Tava ahitāḥ śatravaḥ,*’ your enemies, ‘*nindantaḥ kutsayantaḥ tava sāmartyam,*’ all of your abilities will be insulted by them. How? ‘*Nivātakavachādi yuddhanimittam.*’ During the time of the 11 years of exile, Arjuna went on pilgrimage. At that time, *Arjuna* fought and killed several *asuras*, which is why it says, ‘encounters such as with *Nivātkavacha.*’ The *Mahābhārata* speaks about all of these encounters. In this way, in different ways, Arjuna had fought and defeated great opponents, such as *Paramashiva*, and *Nivātakavacha*. Therefore, this competence of yours will become a subject of your enemies’ scorn. They will say that you have no competence.

‘*Tasmāt,*’ therefore, ‘*nindāprāpter duḥkhāt duḥkhataram nu kim,*’ the *dukham*, or suffering caused from that scorn, ‘*duḥkhataram nu kim,*’ what suffering could be greater?’ In other words, ‘*tataḥ,*’ from that, ‘*kaṣṭataram duḥkham,*’ more painful suffering, ‘*na asti ityarthāḥ,*’ there is none. For a warrior, a *kṣatriya*, what is greater than the suffering born of scorn? Therefore, you must not retreat from the war. Now the *shloka*.

‘*Tava sāmartyam,*’ your competence, ‘*nindantaḥ,*’ scorning, ‘*tava ahitāḥ,*’ your enemies, ‘*avāchyavādān,*’ words not to be said, ‘*bahūn,*’ many, ‘*vadiṣyanti,*’ they will say. They many speak things about you which shouldn’t be said. ‘*Tataḥ,*’ from that, ‘*duḥkhataram nu kim,*’ is there a great suffering?’ Therefore, you must not retreat.

***Hato vā prāpsyasi svargaṃ jītvā vā bhokṣyase mahīm
Tasmād uttiṣṭa kaunteya yuddhāya kṛtaniśchayaḥ. 2.37.***

2.37. Either by being killed you will attain heaven, or by winning you will enjoy the earth. Therefore, O Arjuna, rise up with determination for fighting.’

Shankara says in the shloka's preface, 'and what about if you decide to fight with *Karna* and the other warriors?' This is 'yuddhe,' in war, 'punaḥ kriyamāṇe' acting, 'karṇādibhiḥ,' with *Karna*, etc., then what?

Shankara says, 'If you are slain, you will attain heaven. Victorious over heroes like *Karna* and others, you will enjoy this world. In either case, you stand only to gain - this is the Lord's opinion. Such being the case, O son of *Kunti*! Get up, determined to fight, having resolved, 'I shall either conquer my foes or perish.' This the meaning.'

This is, 'hato vā,' having been slain, 'prāpsyasi svargaṁ,' you will attain heaven. 'Hataḥ san svargaṁ prāpsyasi,' being slain, you will gain heaven. 'Jītvā vā karṇādīn sūrān bhoksyase mahīm.' And what about if you win? After defeating foes such as *Karna*, you will experience this Earth. 'Ubhayathāpi,' in either way, 'tava lābhaḥ evetyabhiprāyaḥ,' you will gain. This is the opinion of the Lord. 'Yataḥ evaṁ,' from that, 'tasmāt,' therefore, 'uttiṣṭa kaunteya,' Arjuna stand, 'yuddhāya kṛtaniśchayaḥ,' decided to fight. Before this, Arjuna had decided to take *sanyassa*. The Lord says, 'that's not enough. You must decide to fight.'

'Jeṣyāmi śatrūn, mariṣyāmi vā,' iti niśchayaṁ kṛtvetyarthaḥ.' You should have the decision, 'I will defeat my enemies or die.' In this way, you should be decided to fight. This part is clear. Here, this is an encouragement to fight. It is said clearly, that the Lord is preparing Arjuna to fight. In other words, there are two ways of the Lord's instructions. In the first, the Lord tries to remove Arjuna's grief and delusion through revealing to him the true principle of the *Atman*. In the second, the Lord encourages Arjuna to fight by reminding him of the *dharma* of a *kṣatriya*. In either way, it is clear that *Kṛṣṇa* is preparing Arjuna to fight.

It is very clear what the Lord said. Some people misinterpret this, and say that Arjuna fought because he didn't understand the Lord's instructions. This is after saying this much. This means that these commentators have more intelligence than Arjuna. They think, 'Arjuna didn't understand, but I understand.' There are people who say this. Now we can look at the *shloka*.

'Hataḥ,' being slain, 'svargaṁ prāpsyasi,' you will attain heaven. 'jītvā vā,' and if you win, 'mahīm bhoksyase,' you will experience the Earth. 'Tasmāt,' therefore, 'yuddhāya kṛtaniśchayaḥ,' having decided to fight, 'uttiṣṭa,' stand!'

Thus, this is in 2 ways. Through instructing the principle of the Self, and through reminding Arjuna of the *kṣatriya*'s dharma, the Lord is preparing Arjuna to fight. This is clear.

**Hato vā prāpsyasi svargaṁ jītvā vā bhokṣyase mahīm
Tasmād uttiṣṭa kaunteya yuddhāya kṛtaniśchayaḥ. 2.37.**

Having said this much in the Gita, some commentators have said that the Lord did not encourage Arjuna to fight. Here is the reason for this. If this is said, the Gita would become a scripture that is an encouragement to fight war. If that happens, then there is a defect, because the Bible encourages peace, while the Gita says to fight. They won't say this outside, but that thought is there within them. To answer them, we can say that the Lord is telling Arjuna to fight. Then, they will think that their religious scripture will become bad. To avoid this defect, such people say that the Lord didn't say to fight. What is that? They are opposing the Lord's words. Then, at the end of the Gita, didn't Arjuna fight? If you ask them this, they will say that it is because Arjuna didn't understand. That is what they will say.

These people are even more backwards than Arjuna. While Arjuna didn't understand this, which happened right in front of him, these people who are alive centuries later understand. They are so much greater than Arjuna. If they were alive during that time, the Lord would've left Arjuna and instructed them. That they weren't there is the misfortune of the Lord. Therefore, the Lord got poor Arjuna and instructed him. This is what we will think when we read some of these commentaries. We need not try to save the Gita like that. All that is needed to protect the Gita is inside it. That is what the Lord Himself says. Even if the Lord instructs to fight, the solution as to why it is so is contained in the Gita itself. The Lord Himself explains why. In our next discussion, we will continue this in the next shloka.