



भगवत् गीता

द्वितीयोऽध्यायः - सांख्य योगः

Chapter 2

Volume 4

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Sri Krishna starts His गीतोपदेश to Arjuna with the words "अशोच्यान् अन्यशोचस्त्वं, . ." etc. There is Absolutely no need for you to entertain शोक - sorrow and distress - with respect to भीष्म and द्रोण, because they are the very embodiment of धर्म in their daily lives, and whatever they do is conducive to their own spiritual progress towards gaining मोक्ष; aside from that, from the point of view of the true nature of existence, भीष्म and द्रोण, as for that matter, all of us, are आत्मा स्वरूपाः. Our true nature - our unchanging nature - is आत्मा; and आत्मा is नित्यः - Atma is Eternal - which means, all of us are indeed Eternal, in the sense, we are non-separate from Existence that is Eternal - just as a transient wave is non separate from the ocean which is relatively eternal. There is no need to feel sorrowful about That which is Eternal.

आत्मा is सत्-चित्-आनन्द स्वरूपः - सत्, चित् and आनन्द indicate the nature of Atma. सत् means सत्यं - कालत्रयोऽपि तिष्ठति यत्, तत् सत्यं that which exists in all the three periods of time - past present and future - That is सत्यं - That is सत्. चित् means ज्ञानस्वरूपः - Absolute Knowledge, not simply knowledge of something - but Knowledge itself - the limitless undifferentiated Knowledge - which is the source of all knowledge; and That is Pure Consciousness - Pure Awareness; आनन्द means सुखस्वरूपः - Absolute Happiness - not simply Happiness dependent on something but Happiness Itself - the limitless undifferentiated Happiness which is the source of all Happiness.



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More about चित् and आनन्द - we will see later. In today's verses, Sri Krishna talks about सत् - Absolute Existence, Eternal Existence, and असत् - Transient or temporary Existence.

Introducing these two states of Existence, भगवान् says:

नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः ।

उभयोरपि दृष्टोऽन्तः त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः ॥

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This is one of the famous verses in भगवत् गीता; it requires repeated reflection for a full appreciation of the content of this verse. Sri Krishna uses two words here, namely, भव् and सत् which have the same dictionary meaning, namely, "to exist". भव् means "to exist", and सत् means Existence; and असत् means - That which is not सत्; or NOT-Existence or Non-existence. With these meanings, the first line of the verse says:

असतः भावः न विद्यते - For असत्, there is no भाव, which means for non-existence, there is no existence; similarly,

सतः अभावः न विद्यते - For सत्, there is no अभाव, which means for existence, there is no non-existence.

Therefore, the first line of the verse says: For Non-existence, there is no existence; and for Existence, there is no non-existence. On the face of it, this statement appears trivial; but भगवान् hastens to add in the second line:

अनयोः उभयोः अपि अन्तः तत्त्वदर्शिभिः तु दृष्टः which means the real significance of the above two states of existence (namely असत् and सत्) is seen - or appreciated - only by the wise people, which shows that the above statement is not a trivial one. If so, what is the significance of the statement about सत् Existence and असत् Non-existence.

Commenting on this verse, Sri Adi Sankaracharya points out three fundamental Vedantic concepts, namely:

- (1) the difference between सत् and असत्
- (2) the total independence of सत्, and
- (3) the identity of असत् and सत्



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Let us now try to understand these concepts. All Existence can be classified under two kinds of Knowledge, namely, the सत्-Knowledge and the असत्-Knowledge. In Vedantic terminology, सत् means that which has an independent existence. Because it is independent, it is unbound, unlimited, unchanging, ever-present and causeless. Such Existence is called Real Existence, True Existence or Eternal Existence. Such Existence is Absolute Existence, in the sense, It is not the Existence of any particular object, but It is Existence Itself - It is object-free Existence Itself.

An object-free Existence can only be Subject-Existence, which means, Self-Existence - the nature of one's own Self - The Atma. Therefore आत्मा is सत् स्वरूपः, and आत्मा is नित्यः Eternal. That is why भगवान् says: सतः अभावः न विद्यते - For Absolute Existence, For सत् existence, there is no non-existence - which means that सत् Existence is Eternal Existence. In contrast, असत् means that which has a dependent Existence, i.e., an existence depending on a cause. Therefore, असत् Existence is always in the form of an effect of a cause.

It is only common knowledge that while the cause can be one, its effect may take various forms depending on other factors which are subject to change. Consequently, असत्-Existence is always a temporary, or transient existence. असत्-Existence comes and goes; it is ever subject to change.

Relative to सत्-Existence - Eternal Existence, असत्-Existence - transient existence is not existence at all; transient existence is simply an appearance which comes and goes; it has no Absolute existence. That is why भगवान् says:

असतः भावः न विद्यते - For असत्-Existence there is no existence at all; it is just an appearance which comes and goes.

With this understanding of सत् -Existence, and असत्-Existence, let us look at ourselves, and the world around us; what do we see? Generally speaking, we see only cause-effect relationships in us, and all around us; every effect has a cause, and every cause also is only the effect of another cause. Consequently,

- if anything that is an effect,
- if anything that has a cause,
- if anything that has only a transient existence,

should be understood and appreciated as असत्, then, all forms and names in this creation - including all of us, and this entire creation itself - all come under the category



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of अस्त-existence - or transient existence. So is the case with all our pleasures and pains, successes and failures, and ups and downs of every day life; they all come and go; they have no eternal existence; they have only अस्त or temporary existence.

Relative to सत् -Existence -True Existence, all our experiences and emotions have only अस्त-Existence, which means they have no true existence at all; they are simply appearances which come and go. If that is so, does it mean

- that everywhere in this creation, there is only transient existence?
- that the entire world of physical and emotional reality has no true existence at all?
- Are they all just appearances?
- If that is so, wherefrom all these appearances come? How are they sustained while they last, and when they disappear, where do they go?

When we reflect on these questions, we begin to realize how much we have been missing in our daily lives. The missing element is concerned with our perception and appreciation. In every transaction of worldly knowledge involving means and ends, two kinds of knowledge are simultaneously available; they are सत् बुद्धि and अस्त बुद्धि - the सत् knowledge and the अस्त knowledge.

For example, when I see an object, I not only see the object, I recognize also the Existence the object is in; if Existence is not there, the object cannot exist. On the other hand, Existence is there, even if the object does not exist, because I can recognize the Existence in something else that exists.

Thus in you, in me, and in everything else that is around, the knowledge involved is not only about the object involved, but it is also about That amazing Being - That amazing वस्तु - called Existence which is common to all objects in Existence. All objects are अस्त - transient, they come and go. But Existence - Absolute Existence is सत्. It is Eternal.

Generally, while we have learned to recognize and appreciate the nature of objects in existence - अस्त-existence - transient-existence, we have missed learning to recognize and appreciate the nature of सत्-Existence - Eternal Existence, which is everywhere and in everything - as our उपनिषत् says - ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वं.

While the objects in Existence can and do change, Existence Itself is Eternal and Unchanging. Existence is ONE and the objects in Existence are many - which means, सत्-Existence - Eternal Existence is ONE, and अस्त-existences - meaning transient existences are infinite.



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Further, all असत्-existences - all transient appearances, arise from सत्, are sustained by सत्, and ultimately disappear into सत् - The Eternal Existence. The relationship between सत् and असत् - Eternal Existence and transient appearances, is just like the relationship between the ocean and the waves in the ocean.

Just as ocean is independent of the waves, while the waves are dependent on the ocean, so also सत् - Existence is independent of असत्-existences, while असत् existences are dependent on The सत् -Existence.

Now, how does one recognize the identity of असत् and सत्? It is just like recognizing the identity of the wave and the ocean, or the pot and the clay. Recognizing identity simply means recognizing that both असत् knowledge and सत् knowledge indicate the same वस्तु -The same Being.

It requires further enquiry, as we will be seeing later, to establish that the Ultimate Being indicated by all object pointers is indeed Brahman.

What भगवान् says here in this verse about सत् and असत् is an introduction to what he says in the next verse.

अविनाशि तु तद्विद्धि येन सर्वं इदं ततम् ।
विनाशं अव्ययस्यास्य न कश्चित् कर्तुम् अर्हति ॥

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अविनाशि तु तत् विद्धि - In contrast to असत् - transient appearances, सत् - The Eternal Existence is अविनाशि - never subject to destruction, change or negation at any time;

Please understand that you will have to grow up to appreciate this fact, namely That सत् is येन सर्वं इदं ततम्. That सत् Existence - The Eternal Existence, is That by which this entire universe of objects and appearances are pervaded in and out. What is called in Vedanta as Brahman, That is indicated by the word सत्. That सत् is all pervading, including आकाश, the space.

Since space is everywhere, one may think that आकाश is सत् - No, it is not so. We must understand that आकाश space is also an object; it is also असत् - transient existence. Everything in this universe is located in space; there is no object which is away from space. Therefore आकाश - The space - pervades everything in space.



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Now the question is, where is space located?

The location for the object आकाश - the object space - is the subject I Itself - the Universal Pure Consciousness, The शुद्ध चैतन्यं or आत्म चैतन्यं. If that is so, where is That consciousness located? This question does not arise because the question of location is only with reference to space. Once the space is absorbed in आत्म चैतन्यं the question of location for आत्म चैतन्यं does not arise because there is no place where आत्म चैतन्यं is not there.

A little later भगवान् says एकांशेन स्थितो जगत् (10-42) -This entire universe is only a minute fraction of That ब्रह्मन् which is the सत् स्वरूप आत्मा - The आत्म चैतन्यं - Pure Consciousness.

Just as various objects exist in space - being pervaded by space, in and out - similarly this entire universe, along with the space is pervaded by ब्रह्मन् - That is सत्.

That सत् अविनाशि इति विद्धि - Please understand that सत् to be अविनाशि - not subject to destruction, change or negation, because

अस्य अव्ययस्य विनाशं, न कश्चित् कर्तुं अर्हति Nobody is capable of destroying आत्मा. Destruction means disappearance, or non-existence in form and name; nobody can bring about the destruction of आत्मा which is अव्यय - free from any kind of change or limitation. No one, not even ईश्वर can bring about a change in ब्रह्मन् because ईश्वर is non-separate from ब्रह्मन् - ईश्वर is ब्रह्मन् .

आत्मा is ईश्वर, आत्मा is ब्रह्मन्. आत्मा, ईश्वर - ब्रह्मन् - all being identical, even for ईश्वर, आत्मा is not available as an object for change or destruction.

Because of the identity of the subject and the object, action of any kind is not possible for आत्मा .

In the next verse, Sri Krishna talks about असत् and सत् in a peculiar way. Let us see what He says

अन्तवन्त इमे देहा नित्यस्योक्ताः शरीरिणः ।
अनाशिनोऽप्रमेयस्य तस्मात् युध्यस्व भारत ॥

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भगवान् says:

इमे देहाः अन्तवन्तः - These physical bodies are subject to destruction

इमे देहाः - देहाः means स्थूल शरीराः the gross physical bodies which are available for perception. These gross physical bodies, your body, my body and everybody else's body, so says Sri Krishna - they are all अन्तवन्तः, subject to destruction and disappearance. They do not exist for ever- that is their nature. Further, this physical body has no independent existence;

If one analyses the constitution of one's physical body, one finds that it is just a विकार modification of the पञ्चमहाभूताः - of the five great elements namely, आकाश, वायु, अग्नि, आपः and पृथिवी - space, air, fire, water and earth.

Thus देह - this gross physical body has no independent existence. Therefore all gross physical bodies are असत्, they have only transient existence.

Now, Sri Krishna distinguishes between देह and देही - the one who permeates the entire देह is देही - that देही is called here as शरीरि. The one who permeates the entire शरीर is called शरीरि.

देह means body; शरीर also means body; but there is a big difference.

According to Vedanta, every जीव, you, I and everybody else, is associated not only with a gross physical body called देह or स्थूल शरीर - which is available for perception. Each one of us is also associated with two other bodies which are not available for perception at this time. These bodies are called सूक्ष्म शरीर, the subtle body, and कारण शरीर the causal body.

The subtle body and the causal body are just expressions of one's own past karmas, which have not yet matured into a gross physical body which is nothing more than an expression of the fruits of one's own past karmas. Thus one's सूक्ष्म शरीर and कारण शरीर are one's कर्मफल in their incipient state; more about these three kinds of bodies we will talk later.

We just note here that while देह means the gross physical body, the word शरीर includes all the three bodies, and the word शरीरि means That which permeates all the three bodies, in and out at all times - and That is indeed आत्मा.



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Sri Krishna says here:

ईमे देहाः शरीरिणः - These physical bodies are of आत्मा, which means देह and आत्मा are in ONE. This physical body, as long as it lasts, is inseparable from आत्मा.

देह is असत् - by its very nature. देह, this physical body, is transient. It cannot exist for ever. On the other hand, आत्मा is सत्, आत्मा exists for ever: and देह and आत्मा are distinct, but inseparable. Thus every person is an inseparable combination of असत् देह - transient physical body and सत् आत्मा - the eternal आत्मा. That being so, "Arjuna, please ask yourself this question, when you talk of causing death in this धर्म युद्ध - war rooted in धर्म, are you bringing death to असत् देह or सत् आत्मा?

No one can keep the असत् देह going forever, nor can anyone destroy सत् आत्मा at any time by any means. In this entire cosmic scheme of existence, every देह, every physical body has got its own destiny. The final destination for everybody, including yourself, is मोक्ष - ONENESS with आत्मा.

Bearing this in mind, you just do whatever you need to do in terms of धर्म, at this time and place, under your circumstances. So long as you act in accordance with धर्म, so long as you do your duty, in whatever you do, you are nothing more than a mere instrument in serving the ultimate destiny of cosmic existence.

That is the message of Sri Krishna here. भगवान् gives the same message in Chapter 11 in a different context by the words:

निमित्तमात्रं भव सव्यसाचिन् (11-33)

Just be an instrument to serve the will of परमेश्वर

भगवान् goes back to explain again the nature of सत् existence - the सत् स्वरूप आत्मा - as नित्यस्य उक्ताः शरीरिणः अनाशिनः अप्रमेयस्य. He says, the सत् स्वरूप आत्मा is नित्यः, अनाशिनः and अप्रमेयः; and concludes the verse by saying, तस्मात् युध्यस्व भारत - Therefore carry on this war, fight as you must, O! Arjuna.

This part of the verse needs some explanation, which we will see next time.