

CHAPTER 7

|| WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE ||

The blessed Lord said:

1. *Listen now with your mind fixed on me, practicing Yoga and taking refuge in me, you shall know me, O Partha, to the uttermost beyond doubt.*
2. *I shall tell you in full about wisdom together with knowledge, by knowing which nothing remains that needs to be known.*

Then Lord Krishna said to Partha, you have already become endowed with Yoga. I shall now explain to you wisdom along with worldly knowledge so that you will know me fully, like a gem kept on your open palm. You may think why a person should need to possess this worldly knowledge. It is, however, essential to know it first. Then he is able to turn his back on worldly knowledge and fix his mind on wisdom; just as a boat fastened to the shore does not rock. That which the intellect does not penetrate, that from which thought beats a retreat and that from which the reasoning does not pierce (1-5), that O Arjuna, is wisdom; other than this is worldly knowledge and that which regards the world as real, is ignorance. Wisdom destroys all ignorance and worldly knowledge and conduces to the knowledge of the self. It spouts a stop to any further discourse on it or the desire to hear it and all talk about distinctions of high and low. I shall explain to you this wisdom in words, so that even if you know a little of it, it will comfort you.

3. *Among thousands of men one perhaps strives for perfection; and even among those who strive and become perfect, rare is the person who knows Me in truth.*

Really among thousands only a few wish to attain to this wisdom and among these, there is rarely one who comes to know Me (6-10). When after carefully selecting every soldier in this world, an army is organized hundred thousand strong, and when the soldiers of this army receive blows of weapons, only one among them comes out victorious, so thousands of persons leap into the flood of God-realization, but hardly one reaches the further shore. This wisdom is not ordinary, but extraordinary knowledge. I shall explain it to you later, but now I shall tell you about worldly knowledge.

4. *Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intellect and egoism - these constitute My eightfold nature.*

O Partha, give me your attention. Just as the body has a shadow, these principles such as *mahat* are My *Maya* (11-15). This is called *prakriti*, which consists of eight different parts. All the three worlds are produced by this *prakriti*. If you ask me what these eight parts are, I shall explain them in detail. Earth, water, wind, fire and space, mind, intellect and egoism are these different parts.

5. *This is (my) inferior nature; other than this know My higher nature, O mighty armed (Arjuna); consisting of living beings, by which this world is upheld.*

My higher *Prakriti* is the state of equilibrium of these eight parts; this is also known as *Jivabhuta* as it gives life to the insentient (body), enlivens the intellect and makes the mind experience grief and delusion (16-20). The intellect owes its intelligence to the contact with this higher *Maya* and the egoism resulting from her, sustains the world.

6. *Know that all beings have this prakriti as their womb; of this universe I am the origin as also the dissolution.*

When this subtle *prakriti* becomes united with the gross, then the creation (minting) of beings in this world, starts. The dice which produces these beings, bears four stamps and although they have the same worth, they are of different species. These species number eighty-four lakhs and their collection is unlimited. The inner sanctum of the *Adimaya* is filled with the coins of these creatures. In this manner the *Adimaya* produces such countless number of coins of the same worth from the five great elements and she alone is able to keep a count of them (21-25). The coins, which she multiplies after testing them, she melts them later; in the meantime she keeps them engaged in action. If we leave aside this figure of speech, in plain words I can say that this *prakriti* alone lays out this diversity of name and form. As this *prakriti* is a reflection of mine and nothing else, I alone am the cause of the origin, the middle state and the dissolution of the world.

7. *There is none whatever higher than Me, O winner of wealth. All this is strung in Me like rows of pearls in a string.*

If we start looking for the source of a mirage, we find that it originates not from the rays of the sun, but the sun itself. So Arjuna, when this *Prakriti* manifested as the world begins to dissolve, then know that I alone exist (26-30). Thus all that is perceptible and imperceptible abides in Me. All this world is held by Me like pearls held in a string. Just as beads of gold are strung in a thread of gold, this world, both internal and external is upheld by Me.

8. *I am the taste in water, the light in the moon and the sun, the syllable **Om** in all Vedas, the sound in space and manhood in men.*

9. *I am the sweet fragrance in the earth, the brilliance in fire, I am life in all beings, and austerity in ascetics.*

That which is taste in water, the touch in the wind, the light in the sun and the moon, know that to be Myself. I am the natural fragrance in the earth, the sound in the sky and the *Om* in the *Vedas*. I tell you I am the manhood which resides in man and which is the essence of his ego (31-35). When you remove the cover of what is known as fire, the real nature of light becomes manifest; I am that light. In these three worlds, creatures take birth in different species and subsist in different ways. Some drink the wind, some live on grass, some live on food and some are nourished on water. In this way whatever is the means of livelihood, which suits the nature of every creature, I am that means.

10. *Know me, O Partha, to be the eternal seed of all beings. I am the intellect of the intelligent, and the brilliance of the brilliant.*

11. *I am the strength of the strong, free from desire and attachment; I am the passion among creatures, not contrary to duty, O best of Bharatas.*

I am that which in the beginning of creation sprouts in the form of *akasha* and grows and then devours the letters of *Om* at the time of dissolution (36-40). I am that which appears as the world as long as the world has form and exists in a formless state at the time of dissolution, I am that beginningless seed of the world; I am showing it to you as if you are holding it on your open palm. When you will compare this knowledge with the *Sankhya* doctrine, then you will come to know the purport of my discourse. Now leaving aside this irrelevant talk, I would tell you this knowledge in brief. Know without doubt that I am the penance of the ascetic, the strength of the strong and the intellect of the intelligent (41-45). I am that desire among creatures which finds fulfillment in the acquisition of wealth and the performance of duty, so said Lord Krishna. Even though this pure desire gratifies the senses according to the flow of his feelings, the *yogi* does not allow them to go against the dictates of duty. When this desire leaves the by-path of prohibited actions and goes by the royal path of prescribed actions, he always carries the lamp of self-restraint. Conducting itself thus, this desire fulfills the demands of duty and conduces to liberation. It fosters, under the power of *Vedic* ritualism, the growth of the creeper in the form of universal life in such a way that overlaid with foliage and fruit, it reaches consummation in liberation (46-50). The Supreme *Yogi* said, I am that restrained desire, which provides the seed for the creation of the universe. Why should I tell you all this? know that all this totality of created things has originated from Me.

12. *Know that whatever conditions there are, whither they belong to the sattva, rajas or tamas quality, they arise from Me alone and are in Me, but I am not in them.*

Know that whatever good, passionate and dull forms there are, they have all originated from Me. Just as the wakeful state does not sink in the deep waters of dream, so even though they have originated from Me, I am not in them. When a seed full of sap sprouts and later on turns into wood (51-55), does the wood possess in it the quality of the seed? So although the qualities of goodness etc. arise from Me, I am not in their modifications. The clouds brushing against one another, does it contain water? The smoke, no doubt, comes out of fire, but does it contain fire? Likewise, all the modifications arise from Me, but I am not in them.

13. *This whole world deluded by these three conditions of gunas, does not recognize Me, who am imperishable and beyond the three gunas.*

But Just as the moss begot from water covers it up, or the clouds cover up the sky (56-60), or the unreal dream seems real under the sway of sleep and makes one forget its unreality, or the cataract which is formed from water in the eye affects one's sight, in the same manner this *Maya*, consisting of the three *gunas*, which is my reflection and shadow, acts as a veil hiding My true nature. Therefore, the beings created by Me do not know Me and are not in Me, just as pearls produced from water do not get dissolved in water. The pot made out of clay mixes into it easily, but does not do so when baked in fire (61-65); so all the creatures are truly My limbs and have come into being through the play of My *Maya*. So though they belong to Me, they are not the Self and do not recognize Me and have become blinded by sense-objects and deluded by the notions of 'I' and 'Mine'.

14. *This Divine Maya, consisting of gunas is difficult to cross. Those who take refuge in Me alone, pass beyond this Maya.*
15. *Not in Me do the evil-doing, deluded and vile men take refuge; (for) deprived of wisdom by Maya they adopt demoniacal ways.*

Now, O Arjuna, how can one cross this *Maya* of mine, consisting of *Mahat* etc. and become one with me? This river of *Maya* had its origin on the precipice of the mountain of *Brahman*, which desired to become many and produced tiny bubbles of fine elements. This river has been rushing with great speed between the steep banks of action and renunciation (66-70). And when the clouds in the form of the three qualities send heavy rains, they sweep away in the flood of delusion the town in the form of self-control and restraint of the senses. This river is full of the whirlpools of hatred and meanders with bends of malice, while there bask in it, big fish in the form of heedlessness. The river has many turnings of worldly existence, in which it becomes flooded with action and inaction, and dry leaves and other rubbish in the form of pleasure and pain keep floating on its water. Waves of passion toss against the form of beings, get accumulated there. From the swift currents of ego-sense, arise bubbles of pride of knowledge, wealth and power which burst into waves of sense-objects (71-75). The billows in the form of sunset and sunrise create deep waters in the form of cycles of births and deaths in which bubbles in the form of bodies made up of five elements appear and disappear. There the big fish in the form of infatuation and delusion swallow the flesh of fortitude, and the whirlpools of ignorance revolve all around. The *Jiva* is caught in the muddy water of delusion and the mire of desires and the noise of his activities arising from the *rajas* quality reaches heaven. In this river there are currents of *tamas* quality and deep waters of *sattva* quality. In short, this *Maya* is full of mischief. When the billows of rebirths rise, they carry away the ramparts of *Satyloka*, and then the rocks of the cosmic globes speedily come down with a bang (76-80). Because of the great speed of its currents, these billows do not come to a stop. Who can swim across this flooded river of *Maya*?

It is surprising that whatever attempts were made to cross this river turned out to be obstacles. Those who leaped into it relying on the power of their intellect, are not traceable. Those who jumped into the deep waters of knowledge were devoured by pride. Those who went in the boat of the three *Vedas*, loading it with rocks full of conceit of their learning, were swallowed by the big fish of arrogance. Those, who relying on the strength of their youth took to amorous pursuits, were chewed to death by crocodiles in the form of sensuous pleasures (81-85). They were soon caught in the wave of old age and became entangled in the net of dotage. When being dashed against the rocks of grief and getting choked in the whirlpool of mire they tried to raise their head, they were pecked at by vultures, in the form of calamities. Caught in the quagmire of grief they were lost in the sands of death and so those who took recourse to sensuous pleasures in youth were lost forever. Those who tied a float around the belly in the form of sacrificial rites were caught in the rocky fissures in the form of heavenly pleasures. Those who relied on the arms of actions hoping for liberation were caught in the maze of injunctions and prohibition (86-90). In this river the canoe of dispassion cannot enter and the bamboo of discrimination could not hold out. Perhaps the eightfold Yoga would enable one to cross this river. To say that a person can cross it by his own effort is as difficult as to get well without observing the prescribed diet. If it is possible for a good man to understand

the evil designs of a wicked person or for a greedy person to turn his back on riches, or for a thief to attend an open meeting or for the fish to swallow a bait, or for a coward to overpower an evil spirit or the young one of a doe to gnaw the snare set by a hunter, or for an ant to climb the *Meru* mountain, then alone will a living being reach the other shore of this *Maya* (91-95). Just as it is difficult for a lustful person to keep his wife under control, so a person cannot cross this river of *Maya* (by his own effort). But he who surrenders himself to Me easily crosses this river of *Maya*, in fact the mirage in the form of *Maya* vanishes even on this side of the river for him who has girded himself for the experience of *Brahman* and has found the raft in the form of self-knowledge and the *Guru* as the steersman. Then throwing away the burden of egoism and escaping the gale of doubt and the strong current of passion, he reaches the ford of knowledge, which is the easiest way of gaining the experience of absolute unity. Then taking a leap forward towards the other shore of dispassion (96-100) and treading the water with powerful strokes of arms in the form of renunciation and floating on the strength of his staunch faith that he himself is the Supreme *Brahman*, he reaches without effort the other shore of dispassion. Those who worship Me like this, transcend this *Maya*, but such devotees are rare, not many.

16. *O Arjuna, virtuous persons of four kinds worship Me - those in distress, the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of wealth and the man of wisdom, O best of Bharatas.*
17. *Of these the man of wisdom, ever controlled and devoted to One (i.e. Me) alone, excels; for I am exceedingly dear to a man of wisdom, and he too is dear to Me.*

But others who are possessed by the evil spirit of egoism have become oblivious of self-knowledge. They do not remember how the apparel of self-restraint has slipped away, and without feeling any shame for their downfall, they merrily perform actions prohibited by the *Vedas*. They forget that they have come to inhabit the home of the human body for a specific purpose (101-105) and prattle about 'Me' and 'Mine' on the track of sense-enjoyment, surrounding themselves by clusters of various passions. When they receive buffets of grief and misery, they suffer from loss of memory. This is because they have come under the sway of *Maya*.

There are four kinds of devotees who have achieved the ends of human life through devotion to Me. The first is known as man in distress, the second is the seeker of knowledge, the third is the seeker of wealth and the fourth is the man of wisdom. Some desire relief from misery, some desire to know the Truth and some desire to amass wealth (106-110). But the fourth kind has nothing to achieve in return. He is the man of wisdom, My true devotee, because in the light of knowledge he has gone beyond duality and unity. Though he has become one with Me, he still remains My devotee. Just as a crystal placed in moving water seems moving for a moment, the same is the case of a man of wisdom. when the wind stops it becomes identified with the sky, so when the devotee becomes one with Me, he still continues to be a devotee. When the wind blows it appears to have a separate existence from the sky, otherwise it continues to be with it (111-115). So when the devotee performs actions, he appears as a devotee, but internally he has attained identity with Me. And in the light of knowledge, he regards Me as his Self; and so I too, being pleased with him, consider him as My very Self. If a person works in full realization of his true state beyond his present life, can he though in a separate body, remain separate from Me?

18. *Noble indeed are all these, but I hold the man of wisdom as My very Self. For with a concentrated mind, he has resorted to Me alone, as the Supreme goal.*

I like even the devotee who worships Me with a selfish motive, but I really love the devotee who has realized Me. O Arjuna, people bind the legs of a cow to milk her, but how does she suckle the calf without being so bound (116-120)? Because the calf does not recognize anyone else with its heart and soul and knows the cow to be its mother by mere sight. The calf is solely devoted to the cow and so the cow likes it. *Shri Jnanadeva* says, undoubtedly what the Lord said is absolutely true. Then the Lord said, no doubt, I like the other three kinds of devotees who are also good. Just as the river joins the sea without looking backward, so the devotee who realizes Me forgets the worldly existence. When the river of experience, starting from the valley of his mind, meets Me, he becomes one with Me. What more can I say of him (121-125)? Thus he, who is called a *Jnani* is My very Self. I should not have said this, but I spoke as the occasion required it.

19. *At the end of many birth the man of wisdom attains to Me, (knowing that) Vasudeva is All; such a great soul is rare to find.*

He (a man of wisdom) avoids the difficult situations of desire and anger in the thickets of sensuous pleasures and ascending the mountain of good intentions, takes, O valiant Arjuna, in the company of holy men, the royal road of moral conduct, leaving the by-path of evil actions. He traverses the way of devotion without wearing the shoes in the form of desire for the fruit of action during many births. Who will then keep an account of the methods for doing it? In this way, when after assuming many bodies he has traveled through the night of ignorance, his *karma* is destroyed ushering in the dawn of knowledge (126-130). Then with the grace of his *Guru*, he enjoys the mild rays of the sun of knowledge, and the glorious treasure of the unity of all things comes into his vision. Then wherever he casts his eyes, he sees Me alone, and even if he sits quietly, he sees nothing else but Me. Just as the pot sunk in water has water both within and without, so he lives in Me and I abide both inside and outside of him. His state cannot be described in words, so what I have said is enough. The treasure house of knowledge becomes open to him and wherever he goes, he thinks that he has become the whole world (131-135). He has the faith born of experience that the world is the manifestation of God and so he is the great devotee and *jnani* as well. O Arjuna, he in whose experience this whole world, both animate and inanimate is contained, is a great soul, who is difficult to come across. then, O Arjuna, there are those who, blinded by the darkness born of attachment to the fruits of actions, worship Me with a selfish motive.

20. *But those robbed of true knowledge by various desires resort to the deities, observing this or that rule, governed by their own natures.*

When desire enters their heart due to their attachment to the fruits of actions, then know that the light of knowledge is extinguished. So when they are overtaken by the darkness of ignorance externally and internally, they forget Me and eagerly worship other Gods with their heart and soul (136-140). Such persons become slaves of *Maya*, and demean themselves in the pursuit of sensuous pleasures. What can one say of such persons who are addicted to the worldly pleasures? They worship these deities after making sure of the rules to be followed, the articles of worship needed and the things to be offered to them.

21. *Whichever deity a devotee seeks to worship with faith, I make his faith unflinching.*

But, whoever worships a deity with a desire for reward, I grant that desire Myself. They do not understand that these deities are not different from Me and from one another.

22. *Imbued with that faith he seeks to propitiate that deity and obtain from it the desired objects verily granted by Me alone.*

So imbued with this faith, they carry out the worship until it bears fruit (141-145). In this way, they receive the fruit desired by them, but in reality that fruit is granted to them by Me alone.

23. *But the reward of the men of poor wit has an end. Those who worship the deities go to them, My devotee's alone come to Me.*

Such devotees do not know Me; because they do not get over their narrow views. Though they receive the desired fruit, it is perishable. Why say more! Such worship only leads to the cycle of birth and death. Their enjoyment of fruit is like the experience in a dream. Even if we leave this aside, whatever deity he likes to worship, he attains to its region only. But those who resort to My way, heart and soul, attain to oneness with Me on leaving the body (146-150).

24. *The ignorant think of Me the unmanifest, as having manifestation, not knowing My Supreme nature, unchanging and unsurpassed.*

But the ordinary men do not act thus and lose their good. They wish to swim by taking water in their hand. Why should a person take a dip in the sea of nectar and keep his mouth shut and yearn to drink from a dirty pond?

Why should he not take a dip in the sea of nectar and become immortal after drinking nectar? Why, O Arjuna, does he not leave the cage of desire and rise freely in the sky on the wings of experience? Why does he not soar high happily in the sky of self, which has spread all-around in its full glory (151-155)? Why does he try to measure Me, who am limitless, regard Me who am formless as become manifest, and take the trouble to please Me by external means, when I dwell in their heart. But if you ask Me, O son of *Pandu*, such questions do not find favor with anyone.

25. *Nor am I revealed to everyone, being veiled by Maya; this deluded world knows Me not as unborn and eternal.*

Being blinded by the film of the *Adimaya* over their eyes, they do not see Me through attachment to the body, though I am the light. Else is there anything in which I do not reside? Is there any water without taste? Is there anyone who is not touched by the breeze? Is there anything not enveloped by space? I alone abide in this world (156-160).

26. *I know the beings that are past, those that are present and those that are yet to come, but no one knows Me, O Arjuna.*

O Arjuna, I remained in all creatures that have been: I am also in those who exist at this time. Those who are going to come in the future are not separate from Me. In reality nothing is born and nothing dies. No one can conceive of the creatures because of their unreality, just

as no one can say whether the serpent superimposed on the rope is black, grey or of wheat color. In this way, O son of *Pandu*, I abide ever in these creatures. But it is a different story why they are involved in this worldly existence. I shall tell you in brief this story, when egoism fell in love with the body (161-165), please listen.

27. *Confused by the pairs that spring from desire and hatred, all creatures in creation walk in delusion, O Bharata, source of the foes.*

A daughter named desire was born out of this love. When she came of age, she mated with hatred. She gave birth to a son, by name delusion, in the form of pleasure and pain, and he was brought up by his grandfather, egoism. He was hostile to fortitude and restraint of the senses and was nourished on the milk of hope. Then, O Arjuna, he became infatuated by the wine of discontent and lived happily with excitement in a room of sensuous pleasure. He spread thorns of doubt in the way of pure devotion and laid out by-paths of evil deeds (166-170). Because of this, all creatures which were deluded and caught in the jungle of worldly existence were oppressed by the onslaught of misery.

28. *But as for virtuous men whose sins have come to an end, they, free from the delusive pairs of opposites, worship Me with steadfast vows.*

But virtuous men who see these blunt thorns of doubts are not deterred by the delusion of mind. They crush these thorns of doubt by following the steps of one-pointed devotion and avoid the forest of great sin. Then they come close to Me, with the speedy gait of virtue, and so escape from the clutches of waylayers in the form of desire and anger.

29. *They, who resorting to Me, strive for freedom from old age and death, know all about Brahman, the Self and action in its entirety.*

O Partha, When one strives with faith to put an end to birth and death (174-175), then his effort brings him the fruit of God - realization from which oozes the juice of perfection. When he attains fulfillment, he sees the world as full of joy, and his desire for self-realization is satisfied. Then his activity stops and his mind rests in peace. Then, O Arjuna, he soon realizes the Self, as he invests Me as capital in his spiritual undertaking. With increase in his equanimity, he acquires the wealth of unity with *Brahman*, and then does not experience the penury of dualism.

30. *They who know Me as Supreme over elements, deities and sacrifice, also know Me, with minds controlled, even at the time of departure from this world.*

Those who knowing My essential nature as *Adhibhuta* through experience, comprehend My Divine state (176-180); and when they come to know Me by way of understanding as the Lord of sacrifice, they are not affected by the separation of the body. Otherwise when the thread of life is likely to snap, the living beings become agitated about their impending death. Seeing them, even those who are not going to die, feel that the end of the world has arrived. But I know not how, those who are devoted to Me, do not part from Me even at the time of departure. Know that those who have attained to wisdom, have become self-controlled *yogis*.

When Lord Krishna was pouring out this discourse through the phial in the form of these words, Arjuna did not move forward to receive it with attention in the hollow of his palms

joined together. His mind was still lingering over the words explaining *Brahman* (181-185), which were full of meaning like juicy fruits and which spread fragrance of devotion all around. These words of the Lord had entered his ears, carried by the cool breeze of grace. They seemed like ripe fruits fallen from a tree, fashioned as it were from *Vedanta* doctrines and coated with the sugar of bliss and dipped in the ocean of *Brahman*. Astonished by the purity and excellence of these words, Arjuna began to drink them with a fixed gaze. He became so happy that he mocked at heaven and his heart was filled with extreme joy (186-190). Enamoured by the external beauty of these words, Arjuna felt a craving for tasting their juicy substance. Therefore, he took these in the palm of inference and put them in his mouth in the form of experience. But the tongue of thought could not bolt them nor could the teeth of reason crack them, knowing this Arjuna would not touch them with his mouth. He said in astonishment, "Oh! these are like the glittering reflections of stars in water. How have I been deceived by their external form! They are not words but the folds of *akasha*. Even if my intellect were to take a dip in them, it would not be able to fathom them (191-195)."

With these thoughts, Arjuna turned his gaze towards the Lord, and the great warrior began to entreat him. He said, "O Lord, these seven words are uncommon and untested. Can one comprehend philosophic truths by merely hearing words without concentration? Now your discourse is not simple. Even astonishment became amazed seeing this string of words. When their rays entered my heart through the windows of my ears, my attention slipped because of stupor (196-200). I long to know the meaning of these words and cannot brook any further delay. Therefore, O Lord, explain them to me without loss of time."

Note how skillfully Arjuna has asked this question by taking note of the ground covered by the Lord, by keeping in view his main object and expressing meanwhile his intention. In doing so, Arjuna did not overstep the bounds of propriety and stopped short of hugging the Lord. Only ambidextrous Arjuna knew how a disciple should proceed with humility while asking his *Guru* to explain a point. Note with what relish *Sanjaya* will tell us of Arjuna's query and the Lord's reply to it (201-205). Now listen carefully to this narration, which will be told in simple Marathi, so that it will have a greater appeal to the eyes than to the ears. Before the intellect relishes the mellifluous words, the beauty of its diction will conquer the senses. The jasmine flowers please the nostrils by their fragrance, but does not their beauty give pleasure to the eyes? So the beauty of Marathi diction will so please the senses that they will find it easy to grasp the philosophical truths. Please, therefore, listen to these words, which silences all talk, so says *Jnanadeva*, the disciple of *Nivrutti* (206-210).

