

VERSE 35

Ways and Means to Control the Mind

35

The Lord said,

O Mighty-armed, the mind is restless and is difficult to control, no doubt; but by practice and by dispassion, O Son of Kuntī, it can be controlled.

In previous verses the Lord gave the clear and direct teaching that Self-realization is attained by quieting the mind. Arjuna raises his doubts because he thinks that because the mind is restless, turbulent, strong, and unyielding by nature, he cannot achieve quietude of mind by any means. Consequently, Self-realization is impossible.

In this verse the Lord agrees with Arjuna's doubts that deem the mind to be restless, turbulent, strong, unyielding, and very **difficult to control**. However, the Lord states that the mind is not impossible to control, and that persistent practice and dispassion are the means to achieve that control. Here Lord Kṛṣṇa uses the term **O Mighty-armed** for his disciple, Arjuna the warrior, to indicate that Arjuna is capable of controlling the mind by persistent practice and dispassion.

Persistent practice consists of an earnest and regular effort to concentrate the mind on a spiritual object. Dispassion means renouncing desire for worldly objects and also renouncing the expectation for the fruit of action. Persistent practice and dispassion work hand in hand. By persistent practice one develops dispassion and by dispassion, meditation becomes more concentrated. In this way both regular practice and dispassion strengthen each other and the mind is stilled.

Dispassion germinates from repeated practice of concentration on a spiritual object. The mind develops an understanding that all worldly objects are transient and a source of bondage. This automatically creates non-attachment to worldly objects. When, by persistent practice and dispassion, the mind comes under control, it becomes established in equanimity and achieves a state that is conducive to Self-realization.

This same idea is stated in **Yoga Sūtras** as follows: "The mind can be controlled through practice of meditation and dispassion." (I: 12); "Of these two methods, the attempt to make the mind steady is called practice." (I: 13); and "The highest form of dispassion represents absence of thirst for the modes of *prakṛti* (the three *guṇas*)." (I: 15)

Śloka 36

असंयतात्मना योगो दुष्प्राप इति मे मतिः ।
वश्यात्मना तु यतता शक्योऽवाप्तुमुपायतः ॥ ३६ ॥

asaṁyatātmanā yogo duṣprāpa iti me matiḥ
vaśyātmanā tu yatatā śakyo'vāptumupāyataḥ

असंयतात्मना	<i>asaṁyatātmanā</i>	by him whose self is uncontrolled
योगः	<i>yogaḥ</i>	yoga
दुष्प्रापः	<i>duṣprāpaḥ</i>	hard to attain
इति	<i>iti</i>	thus
मे	<i>me</i>	My
मतिः	<i>matiḥ</i>	opinion
वश्यात्मना	<i>vaśyātmanā</i>	by the self-controlled one
तु	<i>tu</i>	but
यतता	<i>yatatā</i>	by striving
शक्यः	<i>śakyaḥ</i>	possible
अवाप्तुम्	<i>avāptum</i>	to obtain
उपायतः	<i>upāyataḥ</i>	by (proper) means

VERSE 36

Those Who Do Not Have Self-control, What Will Their Destiny Be?

36

Yoga is hard to attain by him of uncontrolled self; but he who is self-controlled, by striving, can obtain it by proper means. Such is My opinion.

The previous verse stated that a restless mind can be controlled by persistent practice and dispassion. This verse says that one cannot practice meditation if the sense organs are not properly controlled. When the sense organs are unrestrained, the mind gets scattered and loses its abilities of concentration and meditation.

As long as the mind does not concentrate or meditate perfectly, *rajas* and *tamas guṇas* will predominate in the mind. *Rajas guṇa* projects the mind outwardly to the world (*vikṣepa*), and *tamas guṇa* veils the mind (*āvaraṇa*). Without reducing *rajas* and *tamas guṇas* by regular practice of meditation, *sattva guṇa* will be unable to overpower *rajas* and *tamas guṇas* in the mind of the meditator. Without predominance of *sattva guṇa*, it is very hard to achieve any equanimity of mind.

However, a yogi who is striving to attain Self-realization controls the sense organs and the mind by observing the discipline of regulated diet, recreation, sleep, and wakefulness. Such a yogi attains perfection in meditation, which develops equanimity. A subdued mind gives up its restless, turbulent, strong, and unyielding nature. It is easily engaged in meditation and attains Self-realization. The Lord states here that, "It is My personal opinion."

Śloka 37

अर्जुन उवाच

अयतिः श्रद्धयोपेतो योगाच्चलितमानसः ।

अप्राप्य योगसंसिद्धिं कां गतिं कृष्ण गच्छति ॥ ३७ ॥

arjuna uvāca

*ayatiḥ śraddhayopeto yogāccalitamānasaḥ
aprāpya yogasamsiddhiṁ kām gatim kṛṣṇa gacchati*

अर्जन उवाच	<i>arjuna uvāca</i>	Arjuna said
अयतिः	<i>ayatiḥ</i>	uncontrolled
श्रद्धया	<i>śraddhayā</i>	by faith
उपेतः	<i>upetaḥ</i>	possessed
योगात्	<i>yogāt</i>	from yoga
चलित्	<i>calit</i>	one whose (mind) wanders
मानसः	<i>mānasaḥ</i>	mind
अप्राप्य	<i>aprāpya</i>	not having attained
योगसंसिद्धिम्	<i>yogasamsiddhim</i>	perfection in yoga
काम्	<i>kām</i>	which
गतिम्	<i>gatim</i>	end
कृष्ण	<i>kṛṣṇa</i>	O Kṛṣṇa
गच्छति	<i>gacchati</i>	meets

VERSES 37-38

*Arjuna's Question About the Consequences of
Uncontrolled Mind*

37

Arjuna said,**Kṛṣṇa, one who is uncontrolled, though possessed of faith; whose mind wanders away from yoga, having failed to attain perfection in yoga; with what end does that one meet?**

In the previous verse the Lord said that for one of “uncontrolled self” (unsubdued mind) it is hard to attain equanimity. Arjuna now raises a question about the seeker who strives with faith to attain Self-realization, but whose mind, due to lack of self-control, **wanders away from yoga**, and consequently fails to achieve **perfection in yoga**. Arjuna wants to know what becomes of that yogi, at the time of death, who has failed to attain Self-realization due to diversions of the mind.

Śloka 38

कच्चिनोभयविभ्रष्टश्छिन्नाभ्रमिव नश्यति ।

अप्रतिष्ठो महाबाहो विमूढो ब्रह्मणः पथि ॥ ३८ ॥

*kaccinnobhaya vibhraṣṭaś---chinnābhramiva naśyati
apraṭiṣṭho mahābāho vimūḍho brahmaṇaḥ pathi*

कच्चित्	<i>kaccit</i>	is it that?
न	<i>na</i>	not
उभयविभ्रष्टः	<i>ubhayavibhraṣṭaḥ</i>	fallen from both
छिन्न	<i>chinna</i>	rent
अभ्रम्	<i>abhram</i>	cloud
इव	<i>iva</i>	like
नश्यति	<i>naśyati</i>	perishes
अप्रतिष्ठः	<i>apraṭiṣṭhaḥ</i>	supportless
महाबाहो	<i>mahābāho</i>	O Mighty-armed
विमूढः	<i>vimūḍhaḥ</i>	deluded
ब्रह्मणः	<i>brahmaṇaḥ</i>	of Brahma
पथि	<i>pathi</i>	in the path

O Mighty-armed (Kṛṣṇa), fallen from both (worldly success and Self-realization), does that one not perish like a cloud that has been rent; supportless and deluded in the path leading to God-realization?

In the previous verse Arjuna asked about the consequences for the seekers who strive with faith, but due to lack of self-control, fall from yoga and are unable to achieve success in their endeavor. By his question in this verse, Arjuna indicates his belief that a seeker who fails to attain Self-realization in this very life will be disappointed both now and in the hereafter.

Arjuna refers to seekers who renounce all worldly activities and engage themselves on the path of Self-realization. They strive hard with faith, but due to restlessness of mind and lack of self-control fail to attain Self-realization. On one hand, due to restraining from selfish activities, they are deprived of success in the world, and on the other hand, due to failure in achieving God-realization, they are deprived of the bliss of Brahma. Do not such seekers lose both life in the world and unity with Brahma? Do they not perish like a cloud fragment that has been torn away and is floating in the sky without support?

The simile of a rent cloud is used because it is neither useful to create rain for others, nor does it achieve anything for itself. During the summer, the mountainous shaped white cloud rises up in the sky and moves slowly. When a strong gust of wind hits the cloud, pieces of the cloud are torn away. The small cloud fragments separated from the main body drift in the sky at the mercy of the wind, and disappear without serving any immediate purpose. In the same way, Arjuna is saying, the striver can also get lost without serving the purpose of life. The purpose of life is *bhoga* (experience) and *apavarga* (liberation).

Śloka 39

एतन्मे संशयं कृष्ण छेत्तुमर्हस्यशेषतः ।

त्वदन्यः संशयस्यास्य छेत्ता न ह्युपपद्यते ॥ ३९ ॥

*etanme saṁśayaṁ kṛṣṇa chettumarhasyaśeṣataḥ
tvadanyaḥ saṁśayasyāsyā chettā na hyupapadyate*

एतत्	<i>etat</i>	this
मे	<i>me</i>	my
संशयम्	<i>saṁśayam</i>	doubt
कृष्ण	<i>kṛṣṇa</i>	O Kṛṣṇa
छेत्तुम्	<i>chettum</i>	to dispel
अर्हसि	<i>arhasi</i>	it behooves You to
अशेषतः	<i>aśeṣataḥ</i>	completely
त्वत्	<i>tvat</i>	than You
अन्यः	<i>anyaḥ</i>	of this
संशयस्य	<i>saṁśayasya</i>	of doubt
अस्य	<i>asya</i>	of this
छेत्ता	<i>chettā</i>	dispeller
न	<i>na</i>	not
हि	<i>hi</i>	verily
उपपद्यते	<i>upapadyate</i>	is fit

VERSE 39

Arjuna Prays to the Lord to Dispel His Doubt

39

O Kṛṣṇa, dispel this doubt of mine completely, because it is not possible for anyone but You to dispel this doubt.

In the preceding verse Arjuna questioned the fate of a seeker who has fallen away from both knowledge of the Self and success in the world. A human incarnation in this world is for two purposes: *bhoga* (experience) and *apavarga* (Self-realization). *Bhoga*, or experience, includes *dharma* (virtuous action in the world), *artha* (the accumulation of wealth), and *kāma* (the fulfillment of virtuous desire). *Apavarga* includes *mokṣa* (liberation from all experience). Arjuna thinks a seeker who fails to achieve Self-realization is deprived of both *bhoga* (experience) and *apavarga* (liberation). This is because in the process of achieving liberation the seeker renounces all worldly enjoyments, and if the seeker does not achieve Self-realization, then the seeker is deprived of both worldly pleasure and spiritual liberation.

Arjuna prays to his Lord to dispel his doubt because he believes his teacher to be the remover of all doubts. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the only one who is capable of removing such doubts, because He is the omniscient Lord, and hence the only one who has that pure wisdom.

Śloka 40

श्री भगवानुवाच

पार्थ नैवेह नामुत्र विनाशस्तस्य विद्यते ।

न हि कल्याणकृत्कश्चिद् दुर्गतिं तात गच्छति ॥ ४० ॥

śrī bhagavānuvāca

*pārtha naiveha nāmutra vināśastasya vidyate
na hi kalyāṇakṛtkaścīd durgatim tāta gacchati*

श्री भगवान् उवाच	<i>śrī bhagavān uvāca</i>	the Lord said
पार्थ	<i>pārtha</i>	O Pārtha (Arjuna)
न	<i>na</i>	not
एव	<i>eva</i>	verily
इह	<i>iha</i>	here
न	<i>na</i>	not
अमुत्र	<i>amutra</i>	in the next world
विनाशः	<i>vināśaḥ</i>	destruction
तस्य	<i>tasya</i>	of him
विद्यते	<i>vidyate</i>	is
न	<i>na</i>	not
हि	<i>hi</i>	verily
कल्याणकृत्	<i>kalyāṇakṛt</i>	he who does good
कश्चित्	<i>kaścīd</i>	anyone
दुर्गतिम्	<i>durgatim</i>	bad state or grief
तात	<i>tāta</i>	O My Son
गच्छति	<i>gacchati</i>	goes

VERSE 40

Destiny of One Who Strives For God-realization

40

The Lord said,

O Pārtha (Arjuna), there is no fall for him either here or hereafter, for none who strive for Self-realization ever, O My Son, ever comes to an evil destiny.

In this verse the Lord says that a seeker of Self-realization who is unable to achieve success never falls, either in this life or hereafter. The seeker will not lose the present state even after leaving the body, because the imprints of all the thoughts, actions, and knowledge that take place in one's day-to-day life create one's future and those imprints are passed on to future incarnations. In those future births the seeker will possess the same *samskāras* (prints in the mind) of faith in God, aim to attain Self-realization, and desire for spiritual practice. Therefore, the seeker will not be deprived of either purpose of life: enjoyments of the world or God-realization.

An unsuccessful striver cannot get lost like the rent cloud referred to in verse 38. Although the seeker may fail and be unable to achieve the aim in one lifetime, what has already been attained will not be lost; that attainment will be passed into the next incarnation and the yogi will begin striving again from the point where the yogi previously stopped or slipped away from the path.

The Lord addresses Arjuna as **O My Son** to express His great love. He reassures Arjuna that one who strives for Self-realization is never degraded to a lower state in the next incarnation.