

Chapter 2

1. Samjaya said: Madhusudana then spoke the following words to Arjuna who was filled with compassion, whose eyes were agitated and full of tears, and who was lamenting.
2. The Lord said: Whence could such faintheartedness have come upon you at this time of trial? This is not proper for a civilised man, it does not lead to heaven and it will bring dishonour upon you.
3. Do not give up your up manhood in this way, Partha! Such a mood ill becomes you. Giving up this pathetic weakness of heart; arise, O destroyer of the foe.
4. Arjuna said: O Madhusudana, how can I employ my arrows in fighting with Bhishma and with Drona on the field of battle? They are worthy of my worship, O slayer of the foe.
5. It would be far better to refrain from killing such noble-minded teachers and to live in this world by begging for our food. Our teachers are desirous of wealth, but if we kill them the rewards we would then enjoy would be tainted with blood.
6. Nor do we know which would be better for us, defeating them or being defeated by them, for after killing the sons of Dhritarashtra who are now positioned before us, we would have no wish to live.
7. My very existence is afflicted by problems caused by weakness and my mind is confused about dharma. So now I am asking you which is the best course to adopt. Answer me clearly for I am now your student. Instruct me for I am surrendering to your guidance.
8. I cannot see anything that will dispel the grief that is drying up my senses, not even attaining a prosperous kingdom on earth without any rival, nor even gaining lordship over the gods.
9. Samjaya said: After speaking in this way to Hrishiksha, Gudakesha said to Govinda, "I will not fight." He then fell silent, O destroyer of the foe.
10. With a slight smile, Hrishiksha then spoke these words to the lamenting Arjuna in the space between the two armies.
11. The Lord said: Grieving for that which should not be lamented over, you speak words that appear wise. But learned men grieve for neither the living nor the dead.
12. There was never a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor these lords of men; nor shall any of us cease to exist in the future.
13. For the embodied soul present in this body there is childhood, youth and then old age and in the same way it then acquires a different body. One who is wise is not confused about this.

14. It is contact with the senses, Kaunteya, which leads to sensations of heat and cold and pleasure and pain. Being impermanent, these sensations appear and then disappear and you must learn to endure them, Bharata.
15. If these sensations do not distract a person, O best of men, and he can remain equal in sorrow and happiness, then such a wise person gains the state of immortality.
16. That which is unreal never comes into being and that which is real never ceases to be. Those who perceive the truth can recognise this conclusion concerning these two.
17. You must understand the indestructible principle that pervades this whole world. No one can bring about the destruction of this unchanging principle.
18. This embodied soul is eternal, indestructible and unlimited. The bodies it inhabits, however, must come to an end. Therefore fight, O Bharata.
19. Neither the person who thinks that this is the killer nor one who thinks it is killed properly understands it, for it does not kill and it cannot be killed.
20. It is never born and it never dies. It is existing now and it will never cease to exist. It is unborn, eternal, everlasting and most ancient. It is not killed when the body is killed.
21. How can a person who properly understands it as indestructible and eternal cause the death of anyone or kill anyone. What will he cause the death of? What will he kill?
22. Just as a man casts aside old clothes and puts on other ones that are new, so the embodied soul casts aside old bodies and accepts other new ones.
23. Weapons cannot cut it, fire cannot burn it, water cannot make it wet and wind cannot dry it.
24. This cannot be cut, it cannot be burned, and it cannot be moistened or dried. It is eternal, all-pervasive, fixed, immovable and everlasting.
25. It is said that it is imperceptible and inconceivable and it is not subject to transformation. Understanding it in this way, you should lament no more.
26. And even if you think that it is born repeatedly and repeatedly dies, still you should not lament over it, O mighty one.
27. For one who has been born death is certain and for one who has died birth is certain. Therefore you should not lament over something that cannot be avoided.
28. In the beginning living beings are not manifest. They become manifest in the interim stage, Bharata, but at their end they become non-manifest again. Why should there be lamentation over this?

29. By some wonder a person may see it, by some wonder another person may speak of it and by some wonder yet another person may come to hear about it. But another person may not understand it even after hearing about it.
30. It is impossible to kill this embodied soul that is always presents within the bodies of all beings. Therefore you should not lament over any living being.
31. Considering the nature of your own personal dharma, you should not hesitate. For a *kshatriya* there is nothing superior to fighting for the sake of dharma.
32. *Kshatriyas* who encounter a war of this type become joyful, Partha; it comes unsought and yet opens the door to heaven.
33. And if you do not engage in this dharmic battle then both your personal dharma and your honour will be destroyed and you will accumulate sin.
34. People will then speak of your everlasting dishonour and for a person who has achieved renown, dishonour is worse than death.
35. The great chariot warriors will think that you have left the battle due to fear. Those who had previously thought highly of you will now hold you in contempt.
36. Your enemies will speak many insulting words about you, condemning your prowess. What could be more painful than that?
37. Either you will die and reach heaven or else you will conquer and rule the earth. Therefore arise, Kaunteya, with your resolve set on battle.
38. Become equal-minded towards happiness and distress, gain and loss, victory and defeat and then engage yourself in battle. You will never acquire sin by acting in this way.
39. I have spoken so far on the basis of Samkhya but now listen to this concerning Buddhi Yoga, the Yoga of the intellect. When you engage in action on the basis of this understanding (*buddhya*) you will free yourself from the bondage of action.
40. There is nothing to lose in this attempt and neither can there be any failure for even a slight engagement in this dharma frees one from great danger.
41. Here the resolute intelligence becomes fixed on one point, O child of the Kurus, but the understandings of those who are irresolute have many branches and diversify without limit.
42. Persons lacking in insight who are attached to the religion of the Vedas speak in flowery language. “There is nothing more than this”, they say.
43. Filled with desires and seeking the heavenly worlds they advocate many different types of rituals, which lead to a higher birth as the result of the action. Pleasure and power are the goals they seek.

44. The resolute form of intelligence existing in the state of *samadhi* can never arise for such persons who remain attached to pleasure and power and whose minds are carried away by such desires.
45. The Vedas are permeated by the three *gunas* but you must become free of the three *gunas*, Arjuna. One who is self-possessed transcends duality, always adheres to the quality of Sattva and has no interest in gain or protection of property.
46. All the purposes served by a small reservoir of water can be fulfilled by a lake. In the same way the purposes served by all the Vedas are fulfilled for a Brahmin who is enlightened by knowledge.
47. You have a right to perform prescribed action but you are not entitled to the fruits of that action. Do not make the rewards of action your motive and do not develop any attachment for avoiding action.
48. Situated in Yoga, perform your actions giving up all attachments, Dhananjaya. Remain equal in success and failure for such equanimity is what is meant by Yoga.
49. Action (*karma*) is greatly inferior to Buddhi Yoga, Dhananjaya. Seek shelter in the intellect (*buddhau*); those motivated by the fruits of action are petty-minded.
50. By engaging the intellect (*buddhi-yukto*) one sets aside both righteous and unrighteous deeds. Therefore engage yourself in this Yoga for Yoga is the true art of performing action.
51. Wise men who engage in the Yoga of the intellect abandon the fruits that are born of action. Free from the bondage of rebirth, they attain a position that has no blemish.
52. When your intellect breaks free of the dense thicket of illusion you will reach a state of indifference for what should be heard and what has been heard in the past (*shruta*).
53. Your intellect becomes perplexed by the Shruti, but when it remains steady and fixed in concentration without any wavering, you will then have achieved success in Yoga.
54. Arjuna said: What is the defining feature of a person whose realisation is steady and who remains firm in his concentration, Keshava? How does such a steady-minded person speak? How does he sit? How does he move?
55. The Lord said: When a person sets aside all the desires running through his mind, Partha, and satisfies himself in the self alone he is then described as one whose wisdom is steady.
56. When the mind does not grieve over life's sorrows, when a person remains untouched by the joys of life and free of passion, fear and anger he is described as a sage whose understanding is steady.

57. When a person has no affection for any object at all and feels neither joy nor loathing when he gains desirable and unwanted results, then his wisdom is firmly established.
58. When a person withdraws all his senses from their objects, like a tortoise withdrawing its limbs, then his wisdom is firmly established.
59. The objects of pleasure do not touch the embodied soul who abstains from them. In this way one restricts one's inclination although the inclination remains, but after perceiving the Supreme one completely renounces such desires.
60. The agitating senses can forcibly carry away the mind of even a perceptive person who makes the proper endeavours, Kaunteya
61. Restraining all these senses, one engaged in this practice should remain dedicated to me. When he has his senses under control then his wisdom is firmly established.
62. When a person thinks about the objects of the senses, attachment for them inevitably arises. Due to that attachment desire appears and from desire anger comes into being.
63. From anger comes delusion and as a result of that delusion one's memory is lost. When memory is lost one's intelligence is destroyed and when intelligence is destroyed a person is lost.
64. But one who possesses self control can move amongst the sense objects using senses that are free of desire and loathing and are directed by his will alone. Such a person attains a state of absolute tranquillity.
65. In that state of tranquillity all his sufferings disappear. And when one's mind is thus at peace the realisation then becomes steady.
66. But there can be no realisation for one who does not engage in this practice and indeed no higher knowledge. Without that higher knowledge there is no peace and how can there be happiness without peace?
67. Whichever of the roaming senses the mind becomes attached to will carry away a person's understanding, just as the wind carries away a boat on the ocean.
68. Therefore, O mighty one, only if a person completely draws back his senses from their objects is his wisdom firmly established.
69. One who practices this restraint is awake when it is night for all living beings. And that period in which living beings are awake is night for the perceptive sage.
70. Just as rivers flow into the sea, which is never filled and remains steady and immovable, so all these desires flow into such a person. It is he who attains peace, not one who seeks to fulfil those desires.

71. Giving up all desires such a person moves through life without attachment. He has no sense of 'mine' or 'I'; it is he who attains peace.
72. This is the transcendental state, Partha, and on reaching such a position one is no longer deluded. If one can remain situated in this state of consciousness even at the time of death then one attains Brahma Nirvana.