

The Devotee's Bhagavad Gita
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Chapter II, Verse 37

Sri Nerode's Translation:

37

Slain, thou wilt inherit heaven; victorious thou wilt reign over the earth. Therefore, arise, brace up your courage and strike.

Helpful Translation:

The results of right effort are never lost, so “fight” and fulfill your duty.

Commentary:

The excuses and false rationalizations to avoid one's inherent, intuitive, conscience-guided actions are endless. You are never too old, never too handicapped, never too limited to make an effort. Right effort produces right results.

The “heaven” one inherits through failure is greater understanding. Negative experiences also increase one's strength and endurance.

The “victory” of success is self-apparent. Sometimes it is the praise of others, at other times it is a reward of material excess, and it may be both. Like failure, success can increase understanding and strength by reinforcing positive steps.

To get the maximum benefit from either success or failure requires introspection. Without considering the actions that created positive or negative results, it's impossible to learn how to repeat success or how to avoid failure.

Krishna addresses the more worldly form of Arjuna as Kaunteya in this verse. Kaunteya is an ignorant Kshatriya who has gained an opinion about living, as opposed to the more naïve Partha. Kaunteya demands a material result to motivate his efforts. Krishna tells this worldly Arjuna that to win the battle of Kurukshetra is to gain a worldly kingdom while to die in this battle results in the attainment of a heavenly kingdom.

The atheist, who claims no belief in heaven and who criticizes those who do believe, fails to understand a basic requirement for progress. Progress is not possible without a concept of the impossible. “Heavenly realms” are better than motivation by fear because the heavenly realms offer hope. Motivation by the promise of “heaven” is a positive way to motivate people (though it may be misused to encourage negative actions, like suicide bombers). Motivation by the threat of “hell” is negative. Heaven holds the promise of joy and love. Hell holds the promise of suffering and loneliness. Positive motivations produce positive and lasting results. Negative motivations may produce short-term results that seem positive but ultimately anything inspired by fear creates havoc and suffering.

During daily introspection if one finds himself motivated by the fear, it’s crucial to change one’s perspective. Only positive motivations lead to long-term positive success.

Easter Eggs:

Easter Eggs (hidden references to deeper meanings) in the original version of this this verse include:

Kaunteya – Son of Kunti

Kunti is Arjuna’s mother. (His “father” is Indra, the lord of heaven, Svargaloka, who has a thunderbolt, Vajra, in his hand.) Kaunteya indicates the state of consciousness that is worldly, or no longer naïve. Contrast with Partha. The feminine origin of this moniker indicates it is related to the ida nadi.

For the six verses, verse 32 through verse 38, Krishna makes persuasive arguments for the ego and blind intellect. In verse 37, Krishna addresses Arjuna as Kaunteya, previously he addressed Arjuna as Partha. Partha is “naïve” while Kaunteya is “worldly” yet both are consumed by the ego and the blind intellect.