

A simple way
to saner living -
THE BHAGAVAD GITA

Swami
Venkatesananda

A Simple Way to Saner Living

by Swami Venkatesananda

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Foreword

Gita embodies in itself a solution to the immediately pressing problems of man, and carries a wonderful message of encouragement, hope, cheer, and consolation. It is a direct appeal to divinise the entire nature of man.

This little book is a constant companion for every man. It finds a place in the pocket of every man.

It gives man a positive promise of salvation, and makes him fearless. Therein lies the supreme value of the Gita.

In this little book, Swami Venkatesananda has given a brief outline of the practical instructions of the Lord. If you practise the Lord's precepts, He will Himself reveal the Truth from within you; you will yourself understand the sublime philosophy of the Gita. Philosophy is not something to be studied from books, but something to be realized. God is not in text-books, but in your own heart, and you can realize Him if you purify your heart in accordance with the method suggested in the Gita.

May you shine as Sthithaprajnas, Yogis, Bhaktas, and Gunatitas in this very birth. May the blessings of Bhagavan Sri Krishna be upon you all.

Swami Sivananda.

Foreword

For countless generations, the Gita has inspired mankind, and an extensive literature is available today in this age of press and publicity. Almost in every civilised language today, translations of Gita, commentaries, and other works about Gita are very easily available. Hence, the Bhagavad Gita, or any book on that sacred classic, needs no introduction. Perhaps no book in the world has such universal appeal as the Bhagavad Gita. To those afflicted with grief, it brings solace; to the wavering multitude, it gives courage and shows the right path. The course of conduct and mental attitude advocated by it can be adopted by everybody, without compromising one's own religious tenets.

The author of this book, like his great illustrious master - Swami Sivananda - so well known all over the globe for the output of extensive literature on divine subjects, neither Swami Venkatesananda nor His works need an introduction. Night and day, the Ganga of divine spiritual nectar - knowledge, in the form of words, sentences, chapters, and works, is flowing from His pen. It is a matter of great joy for every seeker of Truth, and one who needs guidance, that a man of Swamiji's ability and divine wisdom has entered this arena of service by pen, to fulfil a great divine mission in such an immature age, but in a great masterly mature way and understanding; and, undoubtedly he is going to do service undone in the past, in his long future life.

Although Swamiji very modestly calls this work 'Bhagavad Gita for Students' - 'A Simple Way to Saner Living - The Bhagavad Gita', it is, in my view, a true, but very simple, side by side perfect revelation of the meaning and import of the Gita's doctrines in a language befitting to the masses, very sincerely and faithfully presented. It should be of inestimable benefit, not only to the students, but to all seekers, who are often bewildered by the intricacies and controversies surrounding those doctrines. The busy man and the student community in general should find this book especially useful. It takes only a few hours to read through. Among the extensive literature on the Gita, such an effort most surely must find a place. I think, this little book takes on new interest and significance, because of the clarity and beauty of the style in which it is written by Swamiji. I congratulate Him from the bottom of my heart for this great service He has done through this book to our young generation.

Swami Krishnananda.

A Challenge

Here is a challenge.

Over five thousand years ago - on a modest estimate, Sri Krishna lived on this earth. He taught yoga to Arjuna, His friend and disciple. That teaching is what has come to be known as the Bhagavad Gita. The Bhagavad Gita is as true today as it was when Sri Krishna taught it to Arjuna.

The sun rises in the east today as it rose there millions of years ago. These eternal verities do not change. What changes? We need not worry about it, for in any case it changes, and so is not worth a very deep study. A working knowledge of the changing phenomena is enough.

Can you be the living proofs of the Bhagavad Gita? Can you demonstrate that what Sri Krishna as taught in the Bhagavad Gita can be practised even today? You can, if you will.

But why? - you ask. Because in the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna assures us that if we do what He asks to do, we shall enjoy peace and happiness, and shall know God. Is He right or wrong? Like the big philosophers, we shall not argue. Arguments profit none but the aspirin maker. We shall try to do what Sri Krishna asks us to do, and show to the world that dear Sri Krishna was - and is even today - right.

That is the challenge: can the Bhagavad Gita be practised today?

Yes! And youth, lead the way!

Swami Venkatesananda.

What the Bhagavad Gita is

Bhagavad Gita means 'Divine Song'. It is like the Gospel, and hence has been styled as 'the Indian Bible'. It is Revelation, in the sense that Incarnate God taught it to man. It is in the form of a dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, a warrior. It is generally accepted as historical and not legendary. The place chosen was a battlefield; and it contains wonderful object-lessons to guide us in our daily battle of life.

All these are incapable of either proof or disproof. But, what matters to you and me is: can we derive some inspiration and benefit from it, is it of any use to us? It is here that the Bhagavad Gita is of the greatest value. Even today, it is the 'Guiding Hand' of many of India's foremost national leaders, and it has stirred the hearts of many of the world's western philosophers, too.

That is because the Bhagavad Gita re-enacts a routine human drama. The situation portrayed in the Gita occurs several times in our own daily lives. And the Gita tells us how to act in those situations.

It is a small scripture of seven hundred couplets. But it is amazing what a wealth of sheer information and inspiration it contains. All this we are not asked blindly to gulp down. You and I have the inalienable right to examine carefully, accept what appeals to us, and leave alone what does not in our present stage of evolution.

Its study does not imply conversion of anyone from one faith to another; it expressly discourages such practice. Its study will only confirm us in our own faith.

This small book has been translated into all the Indian languages, committed to memory by thousands of Indians, and has been translated and commented upon by even Westerners.

Dr. Zimmer, a great Indologist of Europe, believes that the Bhagavad Gita is a synthesis of the Aryan and pre-Aryan thought. According to him, pre-Aryan religious thought is what, in its Brahmanized Aryanised version, is preserved in the two systems of Indian philosophy - Sankya and Yoga, as also in Jainism. These systems and Jainism emphasised the urgent need for man to withdraw himself from the world, and to attain Liberation from 'matter'. The Aryans, however, believed in life- and world-affirmation. The synthesis of these two thoughts is found in the Bhagavad Gita, where we are asked to 'live in the world, but not be of the world'.

Dr. Zimmer, who admits that the Bhagavad Gita has become the most popular, widely memorised authoritative statement of the basic guiding principles of Indian religious life, says: "It was in the great paradoxes of the epoch-making Bhagavad Gita that the non-Brahminical, pre-Aryan thought of aboriginal India

became fruitfully combined and harmonised with the Vedic Ideas of the Aryan invader."

In our own times, Mahatma Gandhi 'lived' the Gita, and demonstrated not only that it can be applied to our life, but that such an application will greatly enrich our life. Its teachings are entirely non-sectarian and universal.

The Philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita is an important scripture, because it is universal in its appeal, practical in its approach to life's problems, and especially adapted to present-day conditions. It was revealed on a battlefield five thousand years ago, to signify that it is to be applied to the problems that arise in the daily battle of our life.

It is a gospel of courage. The teaching opens with these heartening words, "You grieve - worry - unnecessarily." It concludes with a reiteration of this thought, "I will liberate you, grieve not." How is this liberation achieved?

Firstly, by the recognition of the immortality the soul. The body is the outer cloak worn by soul - the image of God - in us. This cloak is changed whenever it becomes useless: but the wearer lives on.

Matter, which clothes this Immortal Spirit, is subject to change - birth, growth, decay, and death. This the second cornerstone of the philosophy of the Gita. The man who identifies his Immortal Spirit with such matter, who, in ignorant infatuation, gets attached to this world of flux, experiences pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour, success and failure, alternately. He who has turned his gaze away from this material world, who is established in spiritual values, recognises the world to be ever changing, and realizes he is the Immortal Spirit. He goes beyond the pairs of opposites I just now mentioned, and enjoys perpetual happiness, because he is rooted in eternal values. Such men are the saints, prophets, and saviours, of mankind.

That Immortal Spirit of God is not far away in caves and jungles, in a distant planet or star. In fact, as my divine Master Swami Sivananda emphatically declares, God is closer to us than our breath. We have forgotten the art of looking within, which has been variously described by Yogis and saints as prayer, chanting of hymns, repetition of the Divine Name, contemplation, communion, meditation, and the practice of the Presence of God. By these we look within, and discover the Godhead within us; and we look within everybody and everything around us, and realize that God is the Indwelling Omnipresence. This immanence of God is the third vital revelation of the Gita.

When these three truths are realized by us, when they are no longer mere theories, but become living experiences, then we attain liberation. Liberation from our own wrong notions, ignorance. Liberation from our own imperfections. Liberation from our littleness. Liberation from sins. Liberation from pain and rebirth. The spirit is freed from the trammels of matter. This liberation is promised here and now, not in an unknown future. That is the the vital truth revealed by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita - Divine Song.

What is even more significant, a foretaste of this liberation and its fruits, namely peace and perennial happiness, is granted to the seeker after Truth, even as he

takes the first step on the right path. If you meditate upon these four truths in the morning, and keep it up during the day's activity on just one day, you are sure to experience that day a little of the peace and great joy that can ever be yours if you live the yoga of the Bhagavad Gita.

Those four great truths are: immortality of the soul, evanescence of the world, immanence of God, and immediacy of liberation.

The Place of the Bhagavad Gita in our Life

To a mountaineer, the rope is a life-line; if he slips, it saves him. To a condemned criminal, the same rope is the death-noose; it strangles him. It is not the fault of the rope, but the way in which, the purpose for which it is used.

People today are asking the question all over the world: "Is God and religion necessary in the modern world at all? Don't we have a powerful enough protector or providence in money, and a strong enough force in technology to ensure our happiness and prosperity?" Wealth and technology are like the rope; they are insentient tools in the hands of a sentient man, an intelligent person. Religion is that factor or agent that refurbishes the intelligence of man, and awakens him to the purpose, the meaning and the goal of his life.

In the ultimate analysis, religion is what the President of India, Dr.Radhakrishnan, calls a personal encounter of the individual with God. Here it loses all labels and distinguishing marks; and here it blends with life, and thus obliterates even the artificial boundary between the 'religious' and the 'worldly'.

But in our spiritual infancy, we often need the fostering care of the mother who gave birth to us; and, as the doctors and nurses in nursing homes do, the mother - the particular religion - and the infant - the followers of that particular religion - are given a name, a label, and a mark of identification.

Even as the infant is fed with the mother's milk for a considerable time, the spiritual infant, too, is nourished with the milk of wisdom, from the particular mother; and this milk of wisdom is what we regard our scripture. Mother's milk is necessary for the healthy growth of the infant; but a living organism is not expected to be spoonfed throughout its life. At first, we are asked to study the scriptures and imbibe their wisdom. But this wisdom must soon become part of our being. Scriptures impart knowledge to us, and that knowledge, when it becomes our own, liberates us from dependence upon all external aids.

Religion and scripture must free our soul from all artificial boundaries, fanaticism, bigotry, and prejudice. Otherwise they, too, will strangle us and destroy the very life they themselves helped to build.

I am very anxious that these vital factors be borne in mind by every young man and woman who cares to study the scripture - the Bhagavad Gita - whose teachings I shall summarise in these pages.

We elders - only in age, not necessarily in wisdom - have often been guilty of high-handedness and disrespect on one hand, and ignorant indulgence on the other, in our attitude towards the youth. Hence, we have woefully neglected our vital duty towards them - that of imparting ethical and fundamental religious knowledge. Of course, there have been noble exceptions. The youth thus spiritually neglected has had to learn the simple tenets of our religion the hard

way, after much suffering and toil.

Confucius, the sage of China, said: "A youth is to be regarded with respect. How do we know that his future will not be equal to our present? If he reached the age of forty or fifty, and has not made himself heard of, then indeed he will not be worth being regarded with respect." In other words, youth shall always be respected! Respectfully taught and introduced to the spirit of real religion.

I have chosen to convey this teaching through the Bhagavad Gita; or rather, convey the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita. What it is, I shall discuss in this book. But, in conclusion, I shall merely quote a few tributes from great men:

Schopenhauer said: "In the morning, I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita, since whose composition many years of the Gods have elapsed and, in comparison with which our modern world, and its literature seem puny and trivial".

Mahatma Gandhi said: "When doubts haunt me, when disappointments stare me in the face, I turn to the Bhagavad Gita and find a verse to comfort me. Then I begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow. Let the Gita be to you a mine of diamonds as it has been to me. Let the Gita be your constant guide and friend on life's way. Let the Gita light the path and dignify your labour".

My Gurudev Swami Sivananda said: "Gita embodies in itself a solution to the immediately pressing problems of man, and carries a wonderful message of encouragement, hope, cheer, and consolation. It is a direct appeal to divinise the entire nature of man. It gives man a positive promise of salvation, and makes him fearless. Therein lies the supreme value of the Gita."

The Birth of the Bhagavad Gita

With prayerful obeisance to the Lord and to our Guru, we commence our devout study of the Bhagavad Gita.

Bhagavad Gita means the Song of God. It is so called because the author, Sri Krishna, is believed to have been an incarnation of God. He figures prominently in two Indian scriptures - the Mahabharatam and the Bhagavatham.

The Bhagavad Gita is set in the Mahabharatam, as a beautiful diamond is set in a crown. The vital part of the Bhagavatham is Sri Krishna's play. The Bhagavatham explains to you how creation came into being, and how this universe is playfully protected by the Lord. The Mahabharatam explains to you the laws that govern this creation, and how it is maintained - in Sanskrit it is called 'dharma', very difficult to translate into English. Sri Krishna was born in order to uphold 'dharma.' He came into this world in order to destroy wickedness. He Himself says so in the Bhagavad Gita. The historicity of Krishna is accepted by scholars, though they differ in regard to the date.

The Mahabharatam, the epic which describes the laws that govern creation - dharma, is presented to us in the form of the story of the conflict between good and evil, and the eventual triumph of the good over the evil. There were two rival families - the Pandavas and the Kauravas. They - good and evil - were cousins! The Pandavas were virtuous; the Kauravas were wicked. Wickedness has an unscrupulous daring, which produces spectacular, quick, but short-lived success. But it has no moral strength, and so, even the temporary success is tainted by fear and worry. Finally, it is defeated by virtue. The Kauravas, by cunning methods, took away the kingdom that rightfully belonged to the Pandavas. They subjected the Pandavas to inhuman hardships. The Pandavas, led always by the eldest brother Dharmaputra, who was virtue itself, were enduring, patient, loving, forgiving, truthful, virtuous, and noble. The Kauravas took the best undue advantage of this!

The Pandavas tried to regain their kingdom by peaceful means. They sent their friend and guide, Sri Krishna, to mediate between them and the Kauravas. But, the wicked Kauravas turned a deaf ear to Sri Krishna, and refused to give even an inch of space to the Pandavas. He who is in power does not recognise anybody else's rights.

War was declared. Both Duryodhana - the eldest of the Kaurava brothers - and Arjuna - one of the Pandava brothers - approached Sri Krishna for help, in the course of their campaigns for canvassing the support of other rulers. Now, look at the magnanimity of Sri Krishna. The Lord is impartial. He said, "Both of you are dear to Me. Therefore, now choose what you want: you can have either Me or My vast army. But, please remember also, I will not take up arms and fight."

Wicked Duryodhana had worldly values: he chose the big army of Sri Krishna.

Arjuna gladly accepted the Lord, who became his charioteer! You know, in the end, the Kauravas were defeated. Poor fellows, they chose quantity. The Pandavas preferred quality, divinity. If you have the Lord Himself on your side, success is always yours. If you do not have Him, but have all the world to back you up, failure is inevitable. Remember this: history abounds in events to prove this. Even if the whole world opposes you, if you are on His side - if you are virtuous, you will win. Not only will ultimate victory be yours, but at every step your clear conscience will be to you a fountain of peace and joy.

The Mahabharatam tells us how Sri Krishna helped the Pandavas in various ways, even though He never fought. The greatest such help was the Bhagavad Gita. It infused strength into one of the greatest warriors of the time - Arjuna - to fight; and it strengthens us even today in our daily battle of life.

Though Sri Krishna taught the Bhagavad Gita to Arjuna on the very first day of the battle, it was revealed or recorded later. The story goes something like this:

Just before the war began, sage Vyasa - the grand-father of all the brothers - offered Dhritarashtra - the father of the Kauravas who was born blind - temporary eye-sight, to enable him to witness the battle. Dhritarashtra refused the offer. He did not want to see death and destruction, soon after gaining his sight for the first time. Wise man!

Thereupon, Vyasa blessed Sanjaya with supernatural vision. Sitting in the palace near Dhritarashtra, Sanjaya was able to see what was going on in the battlefield - a type of telepathic television. He was able to know even what people thought! In the beginning, Dhritarashtra was not interested! On his son's side, there was the greatest warrior of the time - Bhishma, the invincible. Through a great service he had rendered his father, by renouncing the throne, and by undertaking the vow of life-long celibacy, he had acquired the boon of 'death only at will'. Dhritarashtra had the faith that Bhishma would crush the Pandavas in no time. This, brother, is called 'blind faith'. To believe that, in spite of all wickedness and unrighteous action, one will win by sheer might or worldly power, is blind faith; and this is what Dhritarashtra had.

Even the great Bhishma could not arrest the power of Divine Will, which always supports the good. On the tenth day of the battle, Bhishma was defeated - though he actually died, of his own choice, much later. His defeat meant the defeat of the Kauravas. When Dhritarashtra heard this, his blind faith was shattered, and his inner vision was opened as it were. Then, he asked Sanjaya, "O Sanjaya, tell me, when my sons and the Pandavas assembled on the battlefield, what did they do?" This is the translation of the first verse of the Bhagavad Gita:

dharmaksetre kuruksettre samavetff yuyutsavah mamakah pandavas cai'va kim akurvata samjaya

What did Pandavas and also my people do when they assembled together on the holy plain of Kurukshetra, desirous to fight, O Sanjaya?

It was Sanjaya who actually transmitted the Bhagavad Gita to Dhritarashtra and to us. The blessed archangel! Sanjaya knew that Dhritarashtra would like to hear about his own son's doings first. He started with what Duryodhana did at the commencement of the battle. Duryodhana went to his Guru, Drona and, in tremulous voice, expressive of fear, asked the venerable old man to guard the commander-in-chief, Bhishma.

Bhishma blew his conch, and, following him, all the warriors blew their conches. It was a signal that they were ready to fight. Very calmly, Arjuna asked his charioteer, Sri Krishna, to place the chariot between the two armies, so that he could have a look. Sri Krishna placed it right in front of Bhishma and Drona, the two people for whom Arjuna had the greatest respect! The Lord's ways are always mysterious. He was preparing the 'stage' for revealing the Bhagavad Gita. "How can I kill them?" asked Arjuna. "It is a great sin. Even though the Kauravas are wicked, they are our brothers. No, we should not kill them. Instead of enjoying the kingdom after killing my teachers and my own people, it is better to beg for my livelihood." After thus arguing for a while, Arjuna collapsed at the feet of Sri Krishna. "I do not know what I should do. I beg of you. I am your disciple. Tell me what I should do".

Sri Krishna then taught him the Yoga, the philosophy which is embodied in the seven hundred verses now known as the Bhagavad Gita. In essence, he said: "Realize that it is my will, and that you are only an instrument in my hand. Do not vainly imagine: 'I am fighting', or 'I will not fight'. Surrender yourself completely to me. Think of me always. Do whatever you have to do as my service. You will never incur sin. You will not be reborn in this world. You will always remain with me." From the minutest details of conduct useful to us in our daily life, to the highest philosophical truths, the Bhagavad Gita contains everything.

As a result of the teaching, Arjuna regained his spirit and began to fight. If this had not happened, the whole story would have been different. Sri Krishna's teaching served its purpose. But it has also been the Light guiding the life of thousands and thousands of people in every generation of mankind in this world, all these five thousand years since the scripture was born on the battlefield of Kurukshetra.

Chapter One

The first chapter of the Bhagavad Gita describes how the Kauravas and the Pandavas were pitted against each other on the battlefield, and how Arjuna, on seeing his own kith and kin, arrayed against him as 'enemies', refused to fight. I have described all this already. Many have ignored this chapter. Some have made it symbolical: that is, they take Sri Krishna, Arjuna, and others to be 'ideas', not actual personalities. We need not bother ourselves about these. God is true on all sides. Sugarcandy tastes sweet on its surface, as it does in its innermost core - it is waste of energy breaking it.

We saw that wicked Duryodhana approached his Guru, trembling with fear. Even that wicked man, when he was faced with a fateful event, thought of his Guru. Thus the Bhagavad Gita teaches us the supreme importance of devotion to the Guru, the teacher or preceptor. We should physically or mentally pray to the Guru before commencing the day's activities, every day.

Duryodhana had a vast army, much stronger than that of the Pandavas, his enemies. Yet, he was afraid. Why? Arjuna, on the contrary, was not worried or afraid. Coolly he asked Sri Krishna to take the chariot and place it between the two armies, so that he could have a look!

This is the first lesson of the Bhagavad Gita. Wickedness engenders fear. You need never be worried or afraid if you are on the right path.

From his birth, Sri Krishna was always mischievous. Mischievously He killed many demons. Mischievously He gave joy to His devotees. Mischievously He taught great lessons. That is why I feel that Sri Krishna was ever young, ever a child, ever a darling, never losing the fragrance of a fresh flower, the charm of a youth. He placed the chariot apparently right in front of Bhishma and Drona, and said to Arjuna: "Look at this army, presided over by Bhishma and Drona." The hint was obvious: "You have to kill them."

Promptly Arjuna fainted! That was what Sri Krishna obviously wanted. For, He wanted to teach Arjuna, and through him, us all, that weakness is as sinful as wickedness. We should know what is right, dare to be virtuous, and never flinch in our faith. Do not mistake weakness for meekness. If virtue is weak, then, in all probability, it is only superficial, artificial, or one of the can't-do-otherwise type - "I am virtuous, because I am scared to do otherwise, though I would love to!" This is worse than bold wickedness. Bold and open wickedness will find the path to true goodness sooner than hidden evil in a noble garb. The latter would often be proud in addition to being weak and wicked! And, there can result a lot of slippery philosophy and perverted reasoning - all to hide the inner hollowness, even as an overgrowth of grass hides a barren well infested with poisonous reptiles. This often leads the weak-willed but vice-filled man into positions of power and authority, where he can have his evil intention worked out 'legally'. Or, it compels him to indulge in crime fiction or cowboy films, where he vicariously

delights in acts which he would love to do but dare not.

That was exactly what Arjuna did. And, look at Arjuna's pride! Trembling with weakness, he yet posed as a man of great learning and wisdom. He even gave a learned discourse on dharma to Sri Krishna! "Oh, what a pity," he said, "that knowing all this we are about to commit a great sin. Thank God, Krishna, that I have realized this before it is too late. Let us stop all this and go away as beggars. Let the Kauravas rule." On the surface, it looks wonderful. You are tempted to exclaim: "Ah, what nobility, compassion! What a spirit of renunciation." But soon, Sri Krishna exposed the hollowness of Arjuna's wisdom, and the perversion of his intelligence.

But, not yet; for it was an ancient rule that one should not teach a person who was not ready and receptive. So, at first, Sri Krishna merely taunted Arjuna, and said: "Don't be silly, get up and fight."

klaibyam ma sma gamah partha nai'tat tvayy upapadyate
ksudram hrdayadaurbalyam tyaktvo 'ttistha paramtapa
Yield not to impotence, O Partha! It does not befit thee.
Cast off this mean weakness of heart. Stand up, O Arjuna. (II:3)

Suddenly, a change came over Arjuna. Perhaps Sri Krishna's radiant smile, compassionate look, peaceful countenance, and wisdom-presence, put Arjuna to shame. He might have thought, "To whom have I been preaching all this wisdom? To the Living God, Sri Krishna? What a fool I am!" When somebody scolds you, do not retort. When someone boasts in front of you or flouts you, be calm. When someone is upset, keep smiling. The murderer's dagger will fall from his hand, if you smile happily at the point of his weapon. That is what Sri Krishna's teaching will enable you to do - and that is what He demonstrated when Arjuna bragged. The tables were turned. Arjuna, who was teaching the Lord, dropped on his knees. He begged of Sri Krishna to tell him what he should do. He adopted the attitude of Sri Krishna's disciple. He confessed: "I know nothing. Please teach me."

yac chreyah syan niscitam bruhi tan me
sisyas te 'ham 'sadhi mam tvam prapannam
Tell me decisively what is good for me.
I am thy disciple. Instruct me who has taken refuge in Thee. (II:7)

That is the proper attitude if you wish to learn anything. Keep your knowledge at the door when you enter your teacher's room. You will be able to learn more and very quickly.

Dear Sri Krishna smiled.

Sri Krishna taught through His actions. His smiles were eloquent. His winks had meanings. Sri Krishna knew at all times that He was God incarnate. Yet, He volunteered to be Arjuna's charioteer. Willingly, He made Himself the servant of Arjuna. What humility! Arjuna would command, and Sri Krishna would obey. We should also be like that. Be humble. Obey. In these two lie real divinity, real

greatness, real strength. Not in empty show of valour, power or superiority. As psychologists tell us now, behind a show of superiority, an inferiority complex lies hidden. If you are really strong and superior in inner wisdom, you will not be afraid of being crushed or vanquished or overwhelmed, and you will, therefore, not see any sense in wearing your strength on your sleeves. The man of inner sense is self-confident; and the man of self-confidence is very calm and humble.

When Arjuna prattled wisdom, Sri Krishna did not at once ridicule him. He merely smiled. What patience He has with His friends. We, too, are His friends. He Himself says so in the Bhagavad Gita. Whatever be our faults, He will patiently bear with us and teach us, as He taught Arjuna.

Now we have reached the eleventh verse of the second chapter.

Chapter Two

The second is a very important chapter of the Bhagavad Gita. In fact, it contains the very essence of the entire scripture. Memorise it. Repeat it when you are alone; you will never be lonely. Study the meaning. Think. You will be surprised; you will get newer and newer ideas each time. Call them 'revelations' if you please, by Sri Krishna Himself, from within you. We saw that Arjuna had collapsed grief-stricken at the very thought of so many of his kinsmen being killed in the battle and that, instead of fighting, he wanted to run away from the battle. Sri Krishna, who was smiling till now, applied the axe with a master-stroke to the root of the problem, as soon as Arjuna surrendered his little ego to Sri Krishna. He shattered Arjuna's grief with one brief sentence - but what a sentence it was! Never have two words meant so much.

asocyān anvasocāś tvam prajnavādāms ca bhasase
You grieve for those whom you should not grieve for - or, in other words, You grieve in vain.

This expression 'asocyān anvasocāś tvam' is really a talisman. You can use it with reference to both people and events. It has helped me a thousand times. Repeat this as often as you like - just these two simple, powerful, divine words. They will keep worry, fear, and anxiety away from you.

The world is somebody's creation. We are all somebody's creation. He who created us - not our earthly father, knows how to protect us. The wheat of which was prepared the bread you ate this morning, grew some time ago, at His bidding. He knows our needs long before they arise. We need not be anxious at all, knowing that God is omnipresent - is everywhere, omniscient - knows everything, and omnipotent - can do anything. We need not be anxious, therefore, that He is not here to protect us, that He does not know our problems, or that He may not be able to help us.

Mischievous Sri Krishna, who was Arjuna's - and is our - friend, sweetly taunted him! "Yet, you speak words of wisdom!" - these words are full of compassion, mischief, solicitude, and pity.

"You are speaking like a wise man, but acting like a fool. Tell Me: what are you?" How often does this apply to us. Immediately, He added: "Neither you, nor these people, will ever die; you - the real You - are all immortal."

ajo nityah sasvato 'yam purāno na hanyate hanyamāne 'sarire (II:20)
This soul is unborn, eternal, changeless and ancient; it is not killed when the body is killed.

A significant fact you notice in the Gita is that Sri Krishna never argues about the existence of God or the Self - Atma. He boldly asserts it. That is the sign of one who knows. He clearly tells us what to do; and He assures us that, if we do what we should do, we shall know what He promises we shall know, viz. God or the Self.

Whether you believe in God or not, you have got to believe in something within each one of us which is not the body, and by whose power alone the body exists and functions.

We can very easily understand that, when the body dies, something leaves it. It was that something which spoke, acted, and thought. For, when it has gone, the body is able to do nothing. Even supposing that something, too, can have a death, then something should depart from within it, too. It is like a plantain stem. You peel off layer after layer, till you arrive at the pith. You can peel no more; you have arrived at the dead-end. That is the Self or Atma or God. That is what we are, though somehow we imagine that we are the body! You, the Self, take one body after another - the body takes birth and dies, just as you make a new suit and throw it away when it is worn out. That Self or God cannot die.

Birth, disease, old age, and death; beauty and ugliness; weakness and strength; manhood and womanhood - all these belong to the body, not to the Self, which is as subtle - let us say - as the air around us. The body itself is a mere piece of flesh, active and intelligent, only so long as the soul is in it, and otherwise worth nothing. What to say of other things we associate with it, like birth, etc. mentioned above? They have no real and permanent value at all. Do not grieve!

When a man scolds you, he does nothing more than look at your body - this piece of flesh, and say some words with his body - another piece of flesh. The words are nothing but air passing through a little membrane called 'vocal chord'. Think of it; you will at once begin to laugh at your foolishness in getting upset about it. You can, in the same way, apply this formula to all the situations that worry you in your life. Do not grieve!

When even disease and death - which seem to be tangible, real experiences - are passing dreams, what are success and failure, honour and dishonour - which are mere imaginations? Everything related to the body is to be ignored or at best taken lightly. This body itself is fleeting. We should, on the contrary, seriously consider what it is in us that makes us think and act, that leaves the body when it dies. That something is the Self or God. Sri Krishna wants us to know it, just as clearly as you know the paper you are now reading, not merely to believe that It is, on the basis of what we read or hear.

Sri Krishna gives us an excellent method for knowing Him. This is Yoga.

Now we have got two things before us: we shall not analyse more. One is the Self or God. The other is the body. These are not two, because God is omnipresent. We do not know why the body is born; we need not know. Nothing can cancel this birth which has already taken place. But, we know this much - it goes on functioning, working. Breathing, circulation of blood, digestion, elimination, thinking, feeling - all these things are going on, whether we like it or not. We see also that everything in this world is active. Our own vital organs and the whole of

Nature seem to function at somebody's command, and to work ceaselessly.

God, when He came into the earth as Lord Rama, Sri Krishna, Lord Jesus, Lord Buddha, Prophet Muhammed, etc. was also active. He lived, as we live.

Great saints who have seen God are active. They, too, eat, sleep, talk, and work, though they have nothing to work for.

It is obviously God's Will that every living being here should be active, just as the sun and the moon are ever active, shedding their light on this world.

If God is within us, and if it is His Will that we should be active, why are some people miserable and others happy in the course of such activity life?

Does God want you to be miserable? No. He merely wills that you should be active; and that others, too, should be active. But, you forget that you and others are carrying out His Will. When you do something, do you know God is doing it through you? No. You say: "I have done this". You say, too, "I want to get that, so I am doing this." When you do not get it, you are miserable; when you get it, you are happy. How is God responsible for it? It is your own desire, your own motive, that is responsible.

He wills that you and others, too, should be active. When something happens, therefore, do you feel 'it is God's Will?' No. You want everything and everybody to do as you please! You take a train to reach your home, and you want to be there at a certain hour. You do not know what His Will is. He wills it that an accident should occur. You are delayed; you are miserable. Supposing you had known His Will? You would not have desired against it. You will not be unhappy. You can know His Will only when you know Him.

What shall we do till then? Do not desire anything. Do not expect anything to happen. But, be not idle, either. To work is your duty; you can and should work joyously.

karmany eva 'dhikaras to ma phalesu kadacana ma karmaphalahetur bhur ma to sango 'stv akarmani

Thy right is to work only, but never to its fruits, let not the fruit of action be thy motive, nor let thy attachment be for inaction. (II:47)

yogathah kuru karmani sangam tyaktva dhanamjaya siddhyasiddhyoh samo bhutva samatvam yoga ucyate

Perform action, O Arjuna, being steadfast in yoga, abandoning attachment and balanced in success and failure. Evenness of mind is called yoga. (II:48)

Do not expect anything to happen. Feel always that God is working through your body, and also through others'. Work is inevitable. Everything in this world is active. So are you, too. But there is nothing worth boasting about in this. You are active and you work only because it is His Will that you should be so active and do your duty. It is your duty to get into the train; when it will reach the destination, God knows. You have no need to know; His Will be done. If you do not desire anything, if you do not expect anything, there can be no failure, no

disappointment, no unhappiness, for you will accept everything as His Will. You will always enjoy happiness and pleasure. This does not mean we are to make no appointments or programmes. But, having made them, as part of our duty, we should inwardly feel, 'His Will be done', and be ever prepared for anything. We shall not grieve.

Some people imagine that man should be ambitious; that he should always be eager to achieve this or that. This foolish idea is so widespread now that a policeman does not even do his duty if he is not sure of a special reward, that only the temptation of getting a title, or getting his name published in the newspapers, can make a man do his duty, or else he neglects his duty. Now-a-days, you hear a lot of hue and cry about the 'Bill of Rights'. In common with many others, this word 'right' too has lost its real meaning. What is right? To do one's duty is right! But do you know what people now mean by 'right'? Privilege! Hence, 'Bill of Rights' becomes 'Bill of Greed', and causes a lot of havoc.

That is why people are miserable. One man's duty is another man's privilege. When you neglect your duty, you make your neighbour miserable, and, in his turn, when he neglects his duty, you become miserable! Ambition has come to mean selfishness - selfishness demands privileges - privileges kill the sense of duty - when the sense of duty is dead, happiness is buried with it. We should resurrect the sense of duty. Then, we shall not grieve. We shall be happy.

You sit for your examination, work hard, and try your best to answer well, only because you desire to pass with credit. If you pass creditably you say: "Do you know how thoroughly I had prepare for the examination?" If you fail or get low marks, you throw the blame on this person or that: "The teacher did not coach us well" or "The examiner is a partial man". Some people blame all their failures on God! And, the ambition takes a crooked turn: the next time they adopt some dishonest means to get through.

If you had understood Sri Krishna's teaching, how will you act. You will take the examination as His Will. "I must study well and sit for the examination, because it is His Will". Well, it is God's Will; and, will you not put your heart and soul in doing a job which God wills you to do? You should! For, thus will you come nearer God. When you do His Will efficiently, He will be pleased. That is all! You may pass or fail; that again is His Will. But, you must work to the best of your ability. So far as you are concerned, it is success always; and either way you wanted to do His Will, and you have done it! You will be happy, merely by doing your duty. Your happiness will not depend on others. That is when we can really be happy. The ambitious worldly man's happiness is in somebody else's pocket.

There is something more in this way of life. When you adopt this attitude, you have a cool, clear brain always. You are not worried. Anxiety clouds the brain; remember this. It shatters your nerves. Over-anxiety is the best qualification for failure. If you are not anxious about the outcome of the examination, your brain will be cool; you will be able to think and remember better. You will naturally be

more efficient, and you will come out with flying colours. Therefore it is that Sri Krishna says that a man who follows His teaching is highly efficient.

Be ambitious by all means; but have this ambition alone: to do His Will. Have this one desire alone: take an intense delight in the work you do, not because you are going to get something out of it - then you will grow anxious, but because it is God's Will, and your reward is doing it. You can never be unhappy - this is Sri Krishna's definite promise. You will be constantly thinking of God, at the same time. Soon, you will realize Him, and directly know His Will and do it. This is the greatest yoga.

People call a desireless man 'a lifeless man'. But, our dear friend Sri Krishna emphatically declares that he who is swayed by desires is a brainless fool! For, he has not the faintest idea of the Great Power that rules the world. Therefore, he suffers.

It is desire that makes you forget God and His Will. When you forget Him, when you ignore His Will, when you desire something and do not get it, you suffer. If you desire only God and do your duty, you will not be restless, you will not suffer.

When you have an intense desire for something, your mind is literally filled with that thing, as it were. You forget your body, your home, your position - everything. When, by God's Will, you do not achieve that desire, you get a shock. If the desire is most intense, you may get heart-failure; if it is less, you go mad; if it is slight, you may feel depression. Turn all desires Godward; you are safe. He will reveal Himself to you, and you will know His Will.

When thus a man desires only God and nothing else, he is called a desireless man, a great saint. He expects nothing; he is never disappointed. He has no special liking for anything therefore. His happiness does not depend on what others say or do; so, he is never unhappy. He takes things as they come, as God gives them. He is ever peaceful. He is ever contented. His mind is free from tormenting worries. It is sharp. He is active and efficient.

It is only nowadays that our doctors and psychologists tell us that worry may cause diabetes, violent fits of anger may raise our blood pressure, sudden grief may cause heart-failure, and continuous anxiety may result in insomnia, peptic ulcer, and indigestion, and thus ruin us. Sri Krishna hinted at this centuries ago!

dhyayato visayan pumsah sangas tesu 'pajayate sangat samjayate kamah kamat krodho 'bhijayate krodhad bhavati sammohah sammohat smrtivibhramah smrtibhramsad buddhinaso buddhinasat prat asyati

When a man thinks of objects of pleasure, attachment for them arises; from attachment desire is born; from desire anger arises; from anger comes delusion; from delusion loss of memory; from loss of memory the destruction of discrimination; from destruction of discrimination he perishes. (II:62-63)

Sri Krishna does not want us to think of any object of pleasure intensely. The moment you think of an object, there is contact between the mind and object. You

want it. This gives rise to desire and anger-intensified desire if you get it, or anger, if you do not get it. These violent emotions cloud the mind and intellect. You are confused. You commit sin. Here is the door to ruin. Beware. Think ever of God. Let not the mind wander wildly and aimlessly.

This may be a bit difficult in the beginning. For, we are born with many cravings. Make positive efforts. Practise. You will develop the habit of thinking of God during the intervals of your daily work. Then your mind will constantly think of God alone. This is done with the help of His Name - a Mantra, even as you think of your friend, associating the thought with his name. When you constantly think of God, your mind is filled with God. You will know Him. You will ever enjoy peace and bliss.

Sri Krishna assures you. Try it!

Chapter Three

The engineer who makes a motor-car knows how it works, how it should be maintained, and where it may go wrong. You do not doubt him. You accept his verdict about the car. You should. God, Who made the world, tells us on what principle He has made it. We should accept it.

yajnarthat karmano 'nyatra loko 'yam karmabandhanah tadartham karma kaunteya muktasangah samacara

Work for the sake of sacrifice; otherwise, the action is binding in this world. Do thou, therefore, O Arjuna, perform action for that sake - for the sake of yajna or sacrifice, free from attachment. (III:9)

The world is based on mutual service. Yajna - a big and high sounding word - means nothing more than unselfish service and charity. You can very easily understand this. A man earns money, provides the house with foodstuff. His wife runs the house, and gives him food at the proper time, and enables him to do his work. If both do their duties and serve each other well and eagerly, there is happiness. If either shirks duty, there is misery. Duty performed unselfishly - that is without demanding privileges or reward - is yoga. It does not mean that father who provides mother with the money will not want to eat in the house, nor will mother who cooks the food go to a restaurant and eat! The motive will not be profit or privilege, but pure, and loving service of others. There is love and eagerness at heart. With this spirit, even day-to-day toil can be converted into pleasure and eventually, yoga. This rule of unselfishness applies to everything.

This spirit of selflessness is not something foreign to human nature. It is inherent in the human heart. What pains and privations do parents undergo in order to protect their children now and 'later'. How self-forgetfully the social worker serves the masses. Does not a patriot willingly lay down his life for his country? But these are all limited, because they do not grasp the spirit behind these feelings.

This universe has been built on the law of interdependence. Gods or angels - the subtle power behind nature's forces, humanity, animals, and plants, are all subject to this law. Because we do not see the devas - gods or angels - who control rain, wind, and the fertility of the earth, we ignore them. It does not help us. Fire will burn, whether you recognise its power or not! These gods give us rain, air, and sunshine, and expect us to do something in our turn - to do our duty and to serve one another and be charitable. They tell us "Share with others what you have." Mother Earth yields food. You sow one seed, and Earth multiplies it a hundredfold. You could not have done that without her help. She gives it in abundance, not to be stored by anybody, but to be eaten or shared by all. These gods watch our mind, and our heart. That is why they are so difficult to please. We cannot cheat them! And, it is easy to please them, too. They do not want us to conduct great festivals and spend a lot of money. They want us to be generous, charitable, and hospitable. They want that the wealth that they give us should be shared by all people. They are impartial to all. Rain falls on all. The sun shines on all. The earth yields fruit and vegetables to all. They have no sense of ownership

or private property! But, it is man who has invented this! A piece of land - not his, but which belongs to Earth - he declares to be his, and puts a fence around it! In the Himalayas, we have a number of warm springs. There is one in the famous Badrinath and another near Kedarnath. The wise people there have built a nice bathing pool around it, but made it available to all. This is what Sri Krishna wants us to do. But, in other places, you find people claiming such springs their 'property', and demanding money from you if you want to have a bath. This is selfishness. It deprives us of humanity, our greatest privilege.

Suppose mother places a plate of sweets before five of her children. If all of them nicely share the sweets among themselves, she happily looks on and gives them more. If one boy snatches all the sweets away, depriving others of their share, then the mother gives a slap on his cheek and takes away the sweets. When they quarrel over the sweets, she puts the sweets away in the cupboard and locks it, saying: "You do not deserve the sweets". That is exactly what is happening in the world today. It is because people do not have this unselfish, charitable disposition, that there is famine and suffering.

Sri Krishna condemns the selfish man, and calls him a thief. There are two types of thieves. One steals your coat from your room. The other - we call him a gentleman - takes it away from the shop when he does not need it and when you need it. Both of them are thieves, because both of them deprive the needy. Sri Krishna wants us to be very active, and at the same time to remain unselfish. Often we deceive ourselves and others by thinking and saying: "I have worked to earn this wealth". The 'work' is often tainted by dishonesty. Does not the thief also work for his booty? Who on earth works as hard and as silently as Earth herself, and how little she claims from us! Unselfishness is the Divine Law, which enables us to realise God. But, our 'prophets', the scientists, tell us that it is only selfishness that makes man work, earn, and remain active. They sanction selfishness as human nature. No: it is the devil's nature. Human nature should be very near divine nature. God bestows His gifts equally upon all. He wants us to be broad-minded and generous-hearted.

There is a proverb in Tamil which means, "My wife is generous with other people's possessions." But even this is not true in our case! The Earth and her products belong to Him, the Creator. But, we are not generous even there! On the contrary, we claim that they are ours and hoard them. In fact, we have made nothing! No one can create the sun, and yet, without the sun we cannot live. No scientist can create wind. No scientist can produce a mango. Nowadays, scientists manufacture synthetic vitamins; but, do not forget that the raw materials for even these were created by God. The only thing that the scientist donates is his intelligence; but, then, even that is God's creation and gift. All these are given to us by God. God does everything. Always remember this well. Then you will always remember God. You will always do His Will. You will enjoy peace and happiness.

Arjuna asks a very interesting question at this stage in the Bhagavad Gita: "If everything is done here by the Will of God, then why do we say that a man has

committed sin?" Beloved Sri Krishna gives a direct answer.

kama esa krodha esa rajogunasamudbhavah mahasano mahapapma viddhy enam iha vairinam
It is desire, it is anger born of the Rajaguna, all-devouring, all-sinful; know this as
the foe here in this world. (III:37)

No doubt, even a dry leaf cannot fall without His Will. But, man has so many desires. Desires lead him to commit sin. This desire itself is sin, because it makes him forget God. There is no sin greater than desire and selfishness. Always remember this. Avoid desire and shun selfishness. You will become divine.

Chapter Four

Have you not heard, 'There is nothing new under the sun?' The sun knew all this philosophy from the time He was born. For God taught this yoga of selflessness to the Sun-God. We do not know how long the sun has been shining. But, we know that people, plants, and animals, live only because of the sun. He gives us energy. He gives us light. He has put into practice what God taught him. He is thoroughly selfless. Does he expect anything from us? No. Does he deny his energy to anyone, however wicked he may be? No. You may scold him. You may say: "The sun is not a divine being but a mere mass of fire." He cares not; he blesses you with energy all the same. Silently, and at the same time efficiently and punctually, he does what God willed him, commanded him, to do.

For the purpose of instructing human beings, the Sun-God taught this yoga to Manu. You might have heard of Manu, the first law-giver. It was he who first formulated our code of conduct. Manu gave the knowledge to Ishvaku, Rama's forefather. From father to son, from Guru to disciple, this knowledge has been passed on in theory, as a set of words, but not always as a Living Gospel. The Sun-God took to the serious practice of yoga. But we, human beings, do not care to do so. We only talk. We do not practise. Because we do not practise, we do not know. We only understand; that, too, not well! Literally, perhaps, we stand under this yoga which is far, far above us. If we put it into practice, then we will know what is meant. If we do not, we cannot correctly understand what is taught us. We cannot know. But, we imagine we do. We teach others! What we teach is not what we learnt; there is always some mutilation, defect, and shortcoming. Gradually, the knowledge of yoga is lost.

What does this mean? It means, people do not practise selflessness. Selfishness grows in society. Greed rules man. Gradually, man falls from the human standard to the animal standard. There is adharma - opposite of dharma - or unrighteousness in the world. All this because the yoga which God taught to the Sun-God has been forgotten, and its practice neglected.

God is merciful. He does not get annoyed with us. Patiently, He comes into our midst again, in some form or other, either as an Avatara, or in the form of great saints and teachers, and once again teaches us the yoga of selflessness. Many people learn this yoga from Him. Once again, they practise selflessness. Dharma is revived. There is peace, happiness, and prosperity on earth. Paradise is regained.

yada-yada hi dharmasya glanir bhavati bhārata abhyutthanam adharmasya tads 'tmanam
srjamy aham paritrānaya sadhunam vinasaya ca duskṛtam dharmasafisthapanarthaya sambhavami
yuge-yuge

Whenever there is decline of righteousness, O Arjuna, and rise of unrighteousness, then I manifest Myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked, and for the establishment of righteousness, I am born in every age. (IV:7-8)

People are often confused when we talk about God taking birth here. They think either that He will have to empty His throne somewhere else, or that He, being

omnipresent, will make Himself small and limited by incarnating here in some form. No such fears. Wind is dispersed all over, sometimes it gets 'concentrated' and blown from one place to another. Sometimes there is a cyclone, a big mass of wind, which you can almost see! But all this does not affect the total amount of air around the earth, nor its all-pervasiveness.

Water - which is visible - may become vapour - invisible, and cloud - visible - may pour down as rain - visible; but the quantity of water on our planet remains the same. Even so, God is omnipresent, even if He takes on forms and reveals Himself in a thousand places all over the world. He is still omnipresent.

There are others who believe that God Himself does not 'come down', but that He sends His Son or a messenger. They forget the simple logic: the son of man is man, and the Son of God is God. God is One, and the Messenger He sends also must be God - essentially of the same nature as Himself - a candle lighted from another.

There are yet others who feel that, when God manifests Himself in our midst, there must be something special about Him. If you read the story of the nativity of Lord Jesus or Sri Krishna, you will understand this. But, Sri Krishna Himself asks you not to look for these. God, when He comes into manifestation, promotes goodness, destroys wickedness, and thus revives dharma. In our case, it is the Guru who does these. Hence, we regard the Guru himself as God! He enables us to see and destroy the wickedness in us, helps us to grow in goodness and righteousness. One who actually practises yoga, understands the glory of the Guru-spiritual preceptor.

Talk less. Practise more. If you learn something good, you must at once practise it. Only then will you know what it is. If it is merely in your brain, you will soon forget it. When you have practised it well, teach it to others. It is your duty. Sri Krishna considers this as the greatest form of charity.

sreyan dravyamayad yajna jnanayajnah paramtapa sarvam karma 'khilam partha jnane
parisamapyate
Superior is sacrifice with knowledge - dissemination of spiritual knowledge - to the
sacrifice with objects, O Arjuna. All actions in their entirety culminate in knowledge.
(IV:33)

There is nothing in this world as precious and as valuable as knowledge. With the raft of knowledge, even the worst sinner will reach holiness. We sin only because of ignorance. Remove this ignorance by right knowledge. The past habits might persist for some time. Practise yoga. They will all be removed, and you will become divine.

Sri Krishna guarantees this.

Chapter Five

We saw that Sri Krishna had declared knowledge to be supreme. All right, thinks a clever man, "I will read and write a lot-what more?" Sri Krishna laughs at this perversion: how can that knowledge, if it is real, fail to act? Knowledge and action are two sides of a coin or paper - you can never have one alone. A correct knowledge of yoga does not make you run away from the world, but helps you take your place in it, without desire or hatred. That is Sri Krishna's definition of a Sanyasi.

jneyah sa nityasamnyasi yo na dvesti na kanksati nirdvandvo hi mahabaho sukham bandhat pramucyate

He should be known as a perpetual Sanyasi who neither hates nor desires; for, free from the pairs of opposites, O Arjuna, he is easily set free from bondage. (V:3)

Everyone can - and should - live the life of a Sanyasi, not necessarily by wearing a particular robe, but by living a life free from desire and hatred, and doing one's duty in the spirit of the Bhagavad Gita.

Sri Krishna gives detailed and clear instructions on our duty. Do not shirk your duty: Sri Krishna regards this as so important that He repeats this several times in the Bhagavad Gita. Do not be a coward. Face life. Overcome your problems by solving them, not by escaping from them - you soon find out that you cannot. You will have a sturdy heart, a strong mind, and a powerful will. You will shine as a mighty force on earth. You will become a superman.

The weak man crumbles before imaginary fears. The strong man - Bhagavad Gita-man - pounces upon even real ones, and crushes them. Have you heard of the famous Dhurva who, even when he was a mere boy, worshipped and saw God? When the time came for him to leave this world, by His Grace, he put his foot on the head of the god of death and ascended to heaven. That is the spirit. The strong man is not afraid of even death - that is the meaning of this episode. He knows that real strength comes from God. He knows that God is the director of his body and mind. He does everything, as an instrument in the hands of God, for the love of God. Only when you feel "I have to do this", you become nervous and weak! Feel, "It is God's Power that does this". There is no limit to His Power.

Why do we ever become cowards? Because of our silly desires. We always want an easy-going pleasant life. We dread difficulties. We do not have the spirit of bold adventure. Therefore, we are always surrounded and assailed by the difficulties we fear; that is a psychological law. But the real man is not like that. He is bold. He is fond of climbing peaks and fathoming oceans. That is because he is not held back by petty desires. You can be desireless and daring only if you are a yogi, with your heart united with God. Such a desireless man desires only God. In our Master's words, he knows how 'to detach the mind from the world and attach it to God.' The two are simultaneous and form a single act.

na prahrasyet priyam prapya no 'dvijet prapya ca 'priyam sthirabuddhir

asammudho brahmavid brahmani sthitah

Resting in Brahman or God, with steady intellect and undeluded, the knower of God neither rejoiceth on obtaining what is pleasant, nor grieveth on obtaining what is unpleasant. (V:20)

To such a man, everything is pleasure. That is what is meant by 'treating pleasure and pain as equal' or 'remaining the same, tranquil, in pleasure and pain', and such other pairs of opposite experiences. Sri Krishna is so fond of this idea that He repeats it several times in the Gita. As you treat pleasure, so too treat pain. Sri Krishna tells us a wonderful truth. Supposing you are unaffected by pain, supposing you welcome pain or at least you are prepared for it; then it is no pain at all. Anything that you like is pleasure. If you like pain, it is no longer pain, but pleasure. This is the most intelligent way of converting pain into pleasure, and of being always joyful and peaceful.

This is not impracticable; it is easy, and you will be able to do it after a little initial struggle and intelligent practice. It only demands a change of mental attitude, re-adjustment of values. It is important to keep in mind always: sweetness is not in sugar, but in your tongue and mind. Why does sugar taste bitter when you have bilious fever? Disease has altered the taste. You can do this without getting diseased.

The Everest expeditioner does it. If you are to go without food for a month, to live in such cold regions and to climb a mountain where there is no other human being, risking your very life at every step, you think it is torture.

If accidentally your hand is injured and there is a deep wound, you cry; even long afterwards, you look at the scar, and the very thought of the injury makes you shudder. But a brave warrior displays the scars of wounds he received during a great fight with pride. "Do you know what this is?" he will ask. "I had a most wonderful hand-to-hand fight with the enemy. I won a medal for killing him." The memory delights him. He has altered the taste.

Christian martyrs have done this, too. They were eager to suffer, in the name of Lord Jesus, for his cause! They used to sing their way to the gallows or to the fire. They had changed the scale of values.

This spirit can completely alter our daily life. If we let this spirit govern our life, we have no difficulties, no troubles, no pain, no dishonour, no failure, no suffering. You will take a delightful interest in your duties. You will do more with less fatigue. When duty becomes a toil, it tires you. When duty is its own reward - because, in doing it, you have obeyed His Will, you are unconcerned about the consequences. Even if the person you serve abuses you, ill-treats you, you still serve him with genuine interest and joy; just as the mountaineer climbs with joy the ice-clad peak that makes him slip down at every step, in spite of great hardships. What you do is your concern; how the other man reacts is his concern. Always love and serve all, never allowing their reaction to affect you. This is the

essence of the yoga of the Bhagavad Gita.

"Why should we do so?", you may ask. Because God dwells in all, and serving all is the only way to see Him! You are serving not merely this man or that man, but the God Who is in them all. God in you gives you the power to serve. God in them accepts that service. This should be your constant thought. The man of real knowledge is constantly devoted to the good of all. That is what real knowledge demands. To know God, you must become like God - compassionate towards all.

God is our father and mother. Sri Krishna sweetly adds, "I am the friend of all." How lovingly! And, what strength flows from the feeling. "God is my friend" - perhaps the only real friend. He can never get us into trouble. Even when you are ill-treated by the person you serve - or anyone else, feel: "This must be for my good only. For, the God who is in him, and whom I serve and love, cannot harm me." We are often treated like this by our own earthly parents: do they hate us, their own children? No. For our own good, they tell us certain truths, which we may not like at the time. Later, we feel grateful to them for all their scolding, and for all that they did to us. All those have made us men. Remember always: God dwells in all. You serve God in all. And it is God Himself from within you, Who makes you think, speak and work.

bhoktaram yajnatapasam sarvalokamahesvaram suhrdam sarvabhutanam jnatva mam santim
rcchati

Knowing Me as the enjoyer of all selfless actions and austerities, the great Lord of all worlds, the friend of all beings - he attains peace. (V:29)

If you are firm in this faith, you never hate anybody, even the person who abuses you, who hates you. For, God dwells in all. You never think, "this man is great, or that man is a fool", for God dwells in all. You respect all. You mentally worship all. God, hidden in all, will bless you in every way.

Chapter Six

In all this work, in the practice of this yoga, you may get some help and inspiration from scriptures and great men, but actually you have to do everything yourself. It is not a load to be carried from one place to another which someone else can do for you. It is a discipline of the mind. Who can do this for you?

This is the only difficulty in Sri Krishna's yoga. He does not ask you to stand on one leg and repeat a mantra. Or, to do a lot of charity or to build a temple. All this is easy. He wants you to discipline your mind. No one can do that for you and, if you are determined to do it, no one can prevent you from doing it.

uddhared armana 'tmanam na 'tmanam avasadayet atmai 'va by atmano bandhur atmai'va ripur
atmanah

Let a man elevate himself by his own Self alone; let him not lower himself; for one is one's own friend, and one is one's own enemy. (VI:5)

bandhur atma 'tmanas tasya yena 'tmai 'va 'tmanajitah anatmanas tu satrutve varteta
'tmai 'va satruvat

One is the friend of oneself when he has conquered himself; but to the unconquered self, this self stands in the position of an enemy like any external foe. (VI:6)

Your mind is the greatest friend and the worst enemy. If it obeys your will, if it is pure, if it is divine, it serves you in the practice of this yoga. If it is disobedient, if it is impure, full of all sorts of desires, it prevents you from practising yoga.

It is wrong to think that certain countries, are good and others are not, for the practice of yoga. It is wrong to blame other people, and think that they are your obstacles. Nobody can make you think well. Nobody can prevent you from thinking well, either. Father can take you to the temple, but he cannot make you think of God there, nor not to think of the cinema. You may be employed as the manager of a big modern hotel; but no one can prevent you from praying to God, even there!

Your mind can do anything for you. You must train it. Sri Krishna gives a practical daily exercise for training the mind. Choose a clean, quiet place. There is nothing mysterious about this. If you go to a broadcasting station, you understand it. They want only the voice of the songster to be broadcast. Therefore, they have made the studios sound-proof. No outside noise is heard there. Similarly, in this exercise, you wish to hear the one voice of God within you. It is better to go to a place where no outside noise disturbs you. That is why, again, the early morning is considered the best period for this exercise. The world is not active and noisy then. You can concentrate your mind on the voice of God within.

Here is the exercise, described in great detail by Sri Krishna. Sit erect in a comfortable posture. Do not think of anything but God. Now, you find that your mind begins to think of so many things. All your hidden desires come up. Make a mental note of them. Give up those desires and habits. Practise. Practise. When the mind runs here and there, gently and tactfully bring it back to God. You will soon become perfect. Your mind will not think of anything.

At the same time, see that you give up those habits of life and thinking that trouble you during meditation. Real pleasure is in God only. He alone can make you happy for ever. Everything else comes and goes. When you get a nice job, you are happy; when you lose it, you are unhappy. But, God is ever with you. He is immortal, eternal. If you think of Him always, you are naturally happy. Be firm in this belief. Your mind will gradually become purer and purer. It will be steady when you practise the above exercise. It will be peaceful during the rest of the day, too. Besides this, if you want to get quick success in, and derive the maximum benefit from this exercise, be moderate in sleeping, eating, and work.

Even this meditation is an exercise to discipline, to purify the mind. Krishna does not allow us to forget that God is not only in our heart, but is all-pervading. You cannot be a yogi for a day in a week, or an hour a day, and a worldly man during the rest. During the morning meditation exercise, you know that there is a mighty power, God, within you. You must realize that, similarly, this power is in everyone, everything. God is in an ant, God is in a dog, God is in a wicked man, God is in a saint, God is in a poor man, God is in a sick man, God is in all. When you are established in this conviction, your life will be godly. You will be a God-on-earth. This is the goal.

yam labdhva ca param labham manyate na 'dhikam tatah yasmin sthito na duhkkena guruna vicalyate 'pi vicalyate

Which, having obtained, he thinks there is no other gain superior to it; wherein established, he is not moved even by heavy sorrows. (VI:22)

This yoga or God-realization is the greatest achievement, the greatest prize. When you have it, you want nothing else. You are established in God. Nothing in the world, no misery, shakes you, or means anything to you. Once for all, you are freed from misery.

A weak man blames others. He cannot or will not do what he is told to do. But he does not admit that. He always says: "I would have done it, but Mr.... prevented me from doing it." "But for this bad weather, I would have attained God-realization." Arjuna was not like that. He wisely complained: "Oh Lord! my mind which is full of desires, is always running here and there. How am I to control it?" Sri Krishna says: "Practise! At the same time you must develop an indifference to worldly pleasures. You can easily control the mind."

asamsayam mahabaho mano durnigraham calam abhyasena to kaunteya vairagyena ca grhyate
Undoubtedly, O Arjuna, the mind is difficult to control, and is restless; but, by practice, and by dispassion, it may be restrained. (VI:35)

This dispassion is something which is generally misunderstood. It is only for worldly pleasures, and not for the world - which, as we saw, we are asked to see as indwelt by God. It is not the world that disturbs us, but desire for worldly enjoyments. Even in the enjoyment, the disturbance is not outside but inside. Therefore, we are asked not to crave for them; this craving for enjoyment is our greatest enemy. And, as we have already seen, Sri Krishna warns us against

excesses in anything. This is called vairagya. Vairagya lessens the disturbance during meditation. Practice brings your mind under control.

Again, a weak man despairs. Before he does anything, he says: "It is difficult. I may fail. I may not complete this work". Especially in the practice of yoga, when he has to renounce the pleasures of the world, he feels: "I am throwing away worldly pleasures. If I will surely get the vision of God, it is all right. But, supposing I die before that. Supposing I am unsuccessful. Then, I would be a fool. I would have lost both!" Dhurva did not think like this. He boldly left his home in search of God. He saw God. We are drowning in this river of ignorance of God. This is not the time to think of our capacity or the consequences. Make up your mind and swim. There is no other way. Think over it, and act quickly. And, Sri Krishna assures us that, even if we do not see God in this birth, we shall not lose anything. We will get a very good birth next time. We shall then continue our practice. And, so we will attain God. Here, Sri Krishna signs a divine covenant: "You cannot have an evil destiny, if you do good." The original words are full of Sri Krishna's divine spirit - na hi kalyanakrt kascid durgatim tata gacchati. Again, the characteristic supreme assurance of the Lord: "Do not fear, do not grieve. When you do good, you will realize God."

Chapter Seven

A very important idea with which Sri Krishna concluded the previous chapter is repeated again in this. Attaining perfection is not like taking a degree in the university - if you study for six years, you get the master's degree, and if you present a thesis, you will receive a doctorate. Self-purification is gradual. Striving and striving again, one attains perfection after many births! But, there is no alternative, you have got to do it.

manusyanath sahasresu kascid yatati siddhaye yatatam api siddhanam kascin mam vetti tattvatah

Among thousands of men, one perchance strives for perfection; even among those successful strivers, only one perchance knows Me in essence. (VII:3)

One in a thousand desires to practise yoga. One in a thousand of those who practise, attains God. To see God and God alone in all - this wisdom is attained after several births of persistent practice.

Why is it so? As we noticed in the last chapter, the only obstacle is the mind, the enemy within us. Desire keeps you away from God. The impure mind, the sinful heart - your enemy within - is full of all kinds of desires. The saint sees only God everywhere. But the wicked man sees some as objects of pleasure, and others as sources of pain. It is because of this inner enemy - desire.

You have no room for despair. In Sri Krishna's yoga, despair has no meaning at all. He holds out the highest hope to - in his own words - "the worst of all sinners." Yoga only demands a change of heart, and if this is effected, you immediately become good, according to Him. If the mind is purified, it is our friend. With its help, we can always think of God. If our heart is pure, we can serve all with joy. A saint is a man of perfectly pure mind. He has, therefore, no enemy on earth.

We can run away from an outside enemy. But, wherever we go, our mind comes with us. We cannot escape it. We must purify it. How? Divert all your desires also Godward. Sri Krishna says:

caturvidha bhajante math janah sukrino 'rjuna arto jijnasur artharthi jnani ca bharatarsabha tesam jnani nityayukta ekabhaktir visisyate priyo hi jnanino 'tyartham aham sa ca mama priyah

Four kinds of virtuous men worship Me, O Arjuna - the distressed, the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of wealth and the wise; of them, the wise, ever steadfast and devoted to the One, excels; for I am exceedingly dear to the wise, and he is dear to Me.

In other words, "Four kinds of people seek Me - the one who wants relief from suffering, the one who wants riches, the one who seeks knowledge, and, of course, one who knows and therefore wants only Me." Even if you entertain worldly desires, turn them to Him. Not that we should pray to God for our pocket money! But it is better than fighting with father for it, or pinching from his pocket. The pocket money will come; but, with it, also opportunities for thinking of Him. In course of time, the desires will drop away, and devotion remain. You will learn to

think of God and thank Him, for what you get, even without your asking, for you know now that it is He Who gives.

Secondly, prevent the mind from thinking evil thoughts. Think always of God. Sri Krishna gives a beautiful method. He says: "I am the saintliness of the saint, and I am the wisdom of the wise man. I am the strength of the strong." When you see a good man, do not feel envious; this envy often leads to several sins - instead of even recognising the goodness, you endeavour to imagine evil.

And you try to scandalise the good man, so that people may lose their respect for him, thus you infect even others with your vicious thoughts. No; think, "His goodness is God's manifestation." In everyone you thus discover some manifestation or other of God. This leads to two wonderful results - you constantly remember God, and you begin to admire, love, and respect all. In everyone's heart dwells the Lord. Everyone thinks, feels, speaks, and acts, because of the Power of the Lord. Therefore, respect all. Love all. Bow down before all. Thus, when you think more and more of God, and God alone, you grow in saintliness, wisdom, and strength - for they are His manifestation. Meditation on God promotes these manifestations in our heart; it should!

This Power of the Lord has three forms in this world. Every man has three qualities. Every man is subject to three thought currents. The first and one nearest to godliness is called satva. It makes the man feel happy and do noble deeds. The second is rajas. It makes the mind active, and the man is full of desires under its sway. The third is tamas. Man loses manliness under its grip; he becomes lethargic, he sleeps, he is a walking corpse, and he does all kinds of stupid actions. Perhaps the expression 'doubting Thomas' is also from tamas, as also the hindi word 'tamasha', which means 'idle, useless, and wasteful pastime'.

But, do not forget that all three - together called maya - belong to God. They cannot exist without Him. Nothing exists here except God. Understand this well. You will hate no one. You will not think low of anyone. You will not show contempt or disrespect to anyone. However low, wicked, vile, ignorant, and wretched a man may be, he, too, has the Lord in him. Do not forget this.

Poor man, he is under the sway of rajas and tamas. God's Grace will descend on him in time, and will lift him up. But your business is not even to pity him, but straightaway to see God in him. He is under one aspect of God's Power - the saint is under another aspect of God's Power. To you, both are the same. This should not encourage you to justify evil within you. Unless your own heart is absolutely pure, you cannot understand this teaching. What is the effect of this? You always think of God. Your mind is filled with God-thought. This is what Sri Krishna wants of you "If you always think of Me, you will not be affected by maya."

daivi hy esa gunamayi mama maya duratyaya mam eva ye prapadyante mayam etam taranti to
Verily, this divine illusion of Mine, made up of the qualities of Nature, is difficult
to cross over; those who take refuge in Me alone, cross over this illusion. (VII:14)

How shall we think of God? What does he look like? We noticed that He says: "I am the strength of the strong", etc. That is abstract. When you see a strong man, you can for a moment feel that God is in him. But, it is difficult for all at once to jump to abstract contemplation of God. Sri Krishna is supremely compassionate. He is our Friend. He loves us. So, He says: "Never mind. Think of Me in whichever form you like. Have faith. I shall have your faith strengthened, and give you what you like, and devotion, too, through that form." How wonderful is our Sri Krishna! He is not joking, it is literally true that we can worship Him in any form, for He is omnipresent, present in everything!

yo-yo yam-yam tanum bhaktah sraddhaya 'rcitum icchati tasya-tasya 'calam sraddham tam
eva vidadhamy aham

Whatsoever form a devotee desires to worship with faith - that same faith of his I make
firm and unflinching. (VII:21)

Lord Krishna! You have made Your yoga very easy. Thank you!

Chapter Eight

May God bless you with a long life. May you enjoy robust health. May you see God even in your youth. Then, may you lead others to God. If there is one certainty here, it is that everyone who is born must die one day. If there is one uncertainty - to us - here, it is when we shall leave this body.

In the second chapter, Sri Krishna asked us not to dread death. It is merely like changing clothes. Now He tells us that if, at the time of death, we think of God, then He will take us to His feet. In the Bhagavatham is told the story of a Brahmin, named Ajamila, who uttered the Lord's Name with the last breath and went to heaven. That is why in our houses, parents call the children by the Lord's Names. Out of sheer necessity, we are made to repeat His Names. And, although it is true that the spirit is very important in devotion, even this mechanical repetition of His Names has its own reward.

But, if we take His Name with all our heart with the last breath, and commit ourselves to Him, we shall reach Him, and we shall never be born again. Isn't that wonderful? We shall never again suffer in this world. We shall always drink nectar in His Palace.

We do not know when death will come to us. Therefore, Sri Krishna asks us to remember Him always.

*tasmat sarvesu kalesu mam anusmara yudhya ca mayy arpitamanobuddhir mam evai 'syasy
asamsayah*

*Therefore, at all times remember, Me only and fight - do your duty. With mind and
intellect fixed or absorbed in Me, thou shalt doubtless come to Me alone. (VIII:7)*

He has already given us wonderful instructions how to do it. He will give more in the following chapters. When a man dies, his soul is tied to his desires. These desires take the soul to another body, which may fulfil those desires. Desire for God alone. Then your desire itself will take you to Him. He will not allow your return to earth. Krishna, the Prophet of practical wisdom, gives us a method by which the soul departing from the body will reach God. Control the senses and the mind. By the practice of pranayama - regulated breathing, withdraw the vital force to the top of the head. Leave the body, meditating upon God, and chanting His Holy Name. You will reach God.

But this is more easily said than done. It demands long and intense practice. You must start practising yoga now!

Chapter Nine

Oh, the beginning of this chapter itself is grand. Like the posters outside a cinema hall, the first verses tempt you to read this chapter carefully. In this has Sri Krishna given us a great secret. It is one which, like a piece of sugar-candy, compels our belief by its immediate sweetness. Sri Krishna was a first-class salesman and propagandist. He says:

rajavidya rajaguhyam pavitram idam uttamam pratyaksavagamam dharmyam susukham kartum avyayam

Kingly science, kingly secret, the supreme purifier is this, realisable by direct intuitional knowledge, according to righteousness, very easy to perform, imperishable. (IX:2)

"This yoga is not only a great secret, but you will enjoy its fruits the moment you take up the practice, and it is very easy and pleasant also." He also warns us, "Those who do not know this, come again and again to this world of pain and death."

Do you know what it is? In a few words, Sri Krishna has given out the entire secret. "The world is nothing but My own manifestation," He says. Not the world as we see it, but the world as it really is. There is a peculiar rosary - japa-mala - used by orthodox sanyasins and punjabis. It is a fine piece of knit-work. The beads are also made of the woollen thread, and, of course, the beads are cleverly strung together with the same thread. It is all one thread. Yet, you see a hundred and eight beads, and the thread! This is what God is in this world. Everything that you see, everyone you meet, the table, the chairs, trees, and buildings - are all God only. Such is the infinite cleverness of God that He - the divine thread - has shaped Himself into so many things and also their connecting link.

We do not know how many worlds there are in His creation. We need not bother our little heads about these. For, even if there are millions of more wondrous worlds, beyond that in which we live, yet the truth remains that it is all He, and He alone, even as liquid water and solid ice are nothing but a combination of the gases oxygen and hydrogen! This itself is the greatest wonder, wonder of wonders, and it is enough to make us cry out in wonderment: "Beloved Krishna! How great You are."

In the ocean, there are many currents and whirls. If you look at some navigational charts, it appears as though these currents are like rivers on earth, where the rivers are of water, and the land is earth. No, the current and whirls in the ocean are of water, and they are all in the water, and yet they appear to be distinct and different from the surrounding waters for a little while, till they lose themselves in the depths of the ocean again! The huge universe or creation is like that. It is all God and God alone; in it, our worlds are like the currents and whirls.

Even though all these - creation, preservation, and destruction - take place in Him, He is not affected. The ocean is not affected by the currents, the storms.

The ships plough through the ocean and get sunk during the war. Down in its depth, the ocean is perfectly peaceful. Air exists in space, and it blows where it will; but the space is entirely unaffected. Hundreds of worlds may be born, hundreds may be destroyed - all these may take place in Him, but they do not affect Him. That is why He says that he who realises Him, and becomes one with Him, is peaceful, and is not affected by anything. We become like Him.

Sri Krishna has introduced a riddle here! "Fools disregard Me, when I put on the garb of human beings", He says. This may refer to the special manifestations of God-Avatars, like Rama, Krishna, Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha. Foolish people do not recognise the divinity in Them, and treat Them as ordinary mortals. This may also mean that it is He Who dwells in and as all these beings, and we, fools, are unable to see Him, but imagine this man is good, that man is wicked, and so on. Ignorant men do not understand the Omnipresence of God. Therefore, they commit sins. What are sins? When we forget this truth that God exists in and as everything, it is sin.

One step above these foolish people, there are the good men. They do what the scriptures say. They lead a good, pious life. They do a lot of charity. They also recognise good and evil, and do not recognise the Omnipresence of God; but their actions are not like the ignorant ones. These are the pious people. Our Indian villages used to be full of them. By their virtuous actions and charity, they obtained a holiday in heaven. The fools went to hell. The former enjoyed in heaven, and the latter suffered in hell till their merit or demerit lasted! When it was exhausted, they returned to this world. What have we to do with heaven or with hell? One often leads to the other. The charitable man goes to heaven, enjoys there, returns to the earth as a wealthy man, loses his head, and becomes vicious and cruel, and goes to hell. We are after real wisdom, which will put an end to this nuisance of coming and going.

The wise man knows that God is omnipresent. It really means that He is everything. It is not easy to understand this truly. We say it a thousand times a day, but not once have we thought about the real meaning! Therefore, they say, that prayers like "Lord, Thou art omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent" should not come from the lips, but from the heart. Omnipresent means: He is in you, in your friend, in your enemy - and so you can have no friend and no enemy - and even in the very space between all of you. Words and expressions are imperfect. Think about it. He is everything.

But, we 'see' different things, you say. It is His magic. In India, we used to have numerous magicians performing on the roadside in the villages. A magician covers bare ground with an empty basket: and when he removes the basket, you see a wonderful mango plant, with fruits hanging from its branches. The tree, the leaves, and the fruits, are not different things; they are all the performer's magic. Sometimes, he would, by his magic, create a snake and a mongoose, and you would actually see them fighting. Nothing but magic. Sri Krishna tells us that the

world is like this. In those days, people used to perform havans daily - pouring ghee and other oblations into the sacred fire. So, He uses that analogy. "I am the performer of this havan; I am the sacred fire which receives the oblation; I am the oblation itself; and I am the hymns with which these oblations are offered."

brahma 'rpanam brahma havir brahmagnau brahmana hutam brahmai 'va tena gantavyam
brahmakarmasamadhina

God is the oblation; God is the clarified butter which is poured into the fire; by God is the oblation poured into the fire of God; God verily shall be reached by Him who always sees God in action. (IV:24)

In short, God is everything - all the actors and actions in this whole drama. This is not easy to understand. Think about it as often as you can.

We are bound by a mysterious power called maya. We now live in ignorance; but just as the people witnessing the magic feel it is all real. Only the magician himself knows the secret; that it is all magic. Even so, the Lord knows, and has plainly revealed the truth in the Bhagavad Gita.

I told you about the rosary. There is a small knot in the centre of the rosary. If you cut this knot and pull the string, the beads and the connecting thread disappear, and you have one long thread. Even so, if you cut the knot of His magic - maya, and if you are firm in the belief that God is everything, all these things disappear, and you see the One God everywhere. Then, you truly say, "The Lord is omnipresent." This is our goal, brother, which we should reach.

What is the good of knowing this? You remember, Sri Krishna told us that this yoga produces immediate good results? What? When you know that everything is God, you can never forget God. Whatever you see, you think of God only. God, Who is our father, mother, and protector. God Who makes the breath flow through our nostrils, and the blood course through our veins. God Who digests the food eaten by us, and converts it into bone, tissue, and blood. God Who, through His own manifestation, as our earthly father, mother, servant, teacher, friends, and relatives, helps us, serves us, feeds us, and protects us that God is ever present with us. When we are thinking of Him, we become His pet brother or friends, as it were. Everyone becomes kind to us: for, everyone is God. Everyone helps us. Everyone loves us. We have no fear. Whom shall we fear, when all are God? Whatever we need is at once supplied by Him: nay, long before the need arises, He has provided for it. Knowing this supreme law of His Love, we shall have no desires or cravings or wants, to which, of course, there can be no limit nor end, and which are harmful. What shall we desire in this world, when we know that God is within us; that He is the soul of our soul, and we are all manifestations of God? He knows what He needs in us. He will certainly look after Himself well:

ananyas cintayanto mam ye janah paryupasate tesam nityabhiyuktanam yogaksemam vahamy
aham

To those men who worship Me alone, thinking of no other, to those ever-united, I secure which is not already possessed by them and preserve what they already possess. (IX:22)

You see how easy and joyous this yoga is. You will never know sorrow. You will never be upset at all. You will enjoy peace, which even an emperor does not get. You will be happier than the richest man in the world. God is with you.

Will such a man who knows this remain idle? Will he say then, "God Who is in the sick man, knows what to do with Himself. God Who is in the poor man will look after Himself," and live a cruelly indifferent life? No, now that he knows that it is only God that breathes through him and lives in him, he does His Will incessantly. He feels, "O Lord! You are in the beggar, to do charity through me. You are in the sick to serve through me. You are in the suffering to bring relief through me. There is a positive meaning to the negative side of life. There is supreme good hidden in apparent evil." Knowing this, he does not rest. He is busier than the business executive. He toils more than the farmer. He is more vigilant than the soldier. But as he, during rest-less - though not restless - days and sleep-less nights, lays brick after brick to build this mansion of God-realisation, which means directly knowing the living Omnipresence of God, which, again, means lovingly serving even the least of His creatures, he yet feels and realises, and says: "Lord! Not I, but You have done all this! I am but an instrument in Thy hands. All glory to You."

This surrender of the fruits of actions - which Sri Krishna is very fond of - at once frees you from many sorrows. Over ninety per cent of our miseries are caused by ourselves, because we do not know this secret. We do a little service; we have our own motives; we expect some return. If we do not get that and more, we are disappointed and miserable. If, on the contrary, we serve feeling that we are only His instruments, and in any case we are only serving the Lord Himself in all, which is indeed the greatest blessing in itself, we shall not desire anything else, and whatever we get in return for the service will, therefore, be more than we expect! The less we expect, the more the joy; the more we expect, the less the happiness. Sri Krishna says: "Do not expect anything at all, so that even the least you receive will delight you." You only serve the Lord in all. You only love the Lord in all. You are attached to Him. Therefore, you do not suffer the pangs of separation, nor the disappointment of unrequited love, nor does ingratitude hurt you.

What does one who practises this yoga care for death? He is always ready for it. He may die of heart-failure suddenly; but even at that moment he will be thinking only of God. As promised by Him in the previous chapter, He will take this devotee to Himself. The devotee will never be born again here.

Who can be a devotee of the Lord? All, literally all, without any distinctions of caste, creed, religion, colour, or sex.

In the days of Sri Krishna, certain traditions were current, according to which certain classes of people were not permitted to perform some religious rites. Sri Krishna throws the doors of devotion specifically open to them, thus hinting that literally all can be His devotees and realise Him. To emphasise this still further

only, in our scriptures there are stories describing how even some animals became His devotees and He appeared before them.

What does it cost to be His devotee? Devotion is the only price you have to pay. You know there is a custom in all religions of 'love-offerings'. In India also, people always offered something or other as a token of their love of God. But, Sri Krishna generously declares that it is not what you offer that matters, but it is the devotion with which it is offered, which pleases Him. Even if you offer nothing but a leaf, flower, fruit, or a little water, offer it with devotion, as a token of your love of God. You will be considered as His devotee. The very essence of the whole chapter, nay the whole of the Bhagavad Gita, is contained in the last verse of this chapter.

manmana bhava madbhakto madyaji mam namaskuru mam evai 'syasi yuktvai 'vam atmanam
matparayanah

Fix thy mind on Me; be devoted to Me; sacrifice to or worship Me; bow down to Me; having thus united thy whole self to Me, taking Me as the Supreme Goal, thou shalt come unto Me.
(IX:34)

"Always think of Me. Be My devotee. Work for My sake. Prostrate to Me. Bow to all, for all are My manifestations - I dwell in all. Live for Me. You will surely attain Me." That is Sri Krishna's firm assurance.

Chapter Ten

If this grand truth is told to children, they at once grasp it firmly. But, when older people learn this, they find a difficulty. For years they have been thinking: 'This man is good' and 'that man is bad', 'this is beautiful' and 'that is ugly', and so on. As a consequence of this, their minds are full of desire and hatred. How can they all of a sudden get the idea that everyone is God?

Sri Krishna is kind to them also. Spiritually, they are also His children, entitled to His mercy. So, He suggests a method. He gives them a ladder by which to ascend. Many ignorant people do not understand this secret, and criticise our scriptures, saying, "See, the Bhagavad Gita says that God is an animal, a plant, the sun, the moon, and a river Ganges. It is absurd. God is One and Infinite - how can He be these little things?" They stand on the groundfloor and want to find themselves on the 100th floor, without using the steps or the elevator. They are children in the kindergarten school, who want to write a thesis on philosophy with the tail of a toy-elephant. In fact, they are not interested in yoga or God. They are like the idle fools who stand around the sportsground, judging the athletes. They themselves never do a thing in their life. But they who strive, they who are on the field - and they alone - know the problems involved, and they appreciate this ladder as a great help.

I need not repeat all that, here in this chapter, Sri Krishna has given a long list of His special manifestations. The aim is gradually to see God in all; not only in the people we honour, but all; not only in human beings, but in animals, too; not only in loving beings, but in plants; not only in these, but in everything on earth; not only in these, but in everything, everywhere in the universe. This will take a long time and patient practice.

"I am the sun, the moon, the wind, the ocean, the Himalayas, the river Ganges, the peepul tree," and so on - He describes Himself as so many good things that we come across in our daily life. Here you see Sri Krishna's genius. When we see these things, we at once remember: "Sri Krishna said that He is specially manifest in this." First, occasionally, and then frequently, we think of Him. Gradually, we know how to see Him in everything. That is why He tells us: "Don't think that I am only what you consider as good. I am the gambling of the cheat. I am all! I am! There is no good and bad in Me."

Now, you understand! If the wicked, sinful man, tries immediately to say, "There is nothing good or bad - everything is the same God", he will fall into great error. He has not arrived at that stage inwardly. He has not ascended the ladder. His heart is not pure. He does not even want to remove that wickedness in himself and will, therefore, never realise God. He will turn out to be a devil's disciple, quoting the scripture.

We should carefully ascend the ladder, step by step, gradually purifying our heart and vision. You can truly see God in a wicked man only when you see God

in a lion. Till then, behave towards him, as you behave towards a lion - keep to your path, and be completely indifferent. As in the case of the lions of the National Park, the rule is: 'Neither feed him, nor tease him - leave him alone, and go your way.' This should not be mistaken to mean that if a wicked man is hungry, we shall not feed him, and that if he is in pain, we shall neglect him. We should not actively encourage - feed - the evil in him, nor condemn him for it.

If you continue to think, "Oh, he is a wicked man, and so I should not befriend him," you will be thinking of wickedness, and not of God. If you think "Oh, though he is a wicked man, even he is God, says Sri Krishna," I should befriend him, then you may be tempted away from the path of yoga. Refuse to think of the wicked man, either way, and ascend the ladder.

Do not forget that the ladder is not the roof. You need the ladder to climb to the roof, But, then, you should not cling to the ladder. In order to help the little mind expand, Sri Krishna has given these as His special manifestations. They remind us of God. Sometimes we stop there and say, "This is God", and forget to climb on to the roof. Even your intelligence is His creation. Even the gods, angels, sages, and the great wise men, were created by Him. He was prior to everyone and everything. So, none of these, our intelligence, our laboratories, and all the best equipment contained in them - nothing, can point out and say: "This is God." But, if we faithfully and intelligently ascend the ladder He has given, then we shall realise Him as the omnipresent subtle spirit.

Because you grip the ladder, and it provides you a sure foothold, you can never slip from this ascent to God. Hence, Sri Krishna describes this as avikampa yoga - unshakable yoga.

Chapter Eleven

Arjuna was naturally tempted! When Sri Krishna told him: "These are only a few of My manifestations, described by Me to help you; by just one small part of Myself, I pervade the entire creation," he thought, "let me see His real form." The vision of God is His gift. We, little human beings, cannot have it when we like it, but only when He gives it. We can purify the heart, develop devotion to Him, and prepare ourselves - and then wait on His Grace. The most essential thing is egolessness, and we cannot know when we are truly egoless, and therefore truly fit to behold Him. The man who says, "I am fit" is unfit; just as the man who says, "I am humble", is not, and is a hypocrite besides.

Anyhow, Arjuna thought Sri Krishna was his friend and would oblige him. So, he prayed: "If you think I can see, please reveal your real form to me."

manyase yadi tac chakyam maya drastum iti prabho yogesvara tato me tvam darsaya 'tmanam avyayam

If thou, O Lord, thinkest it possible for me to see the Cosmic Form, do Thou, then, O Lord of Yogis, show me Thy imperishable Self. (XI:4)

Our eyes cannot see Him. What to speak of God; our eyes cannot see even the mosquito's legs, and they cannot see more than what is immediately in front of us. So, Sri Krishna gave Arjuna the 'divine eye,' through which he was able to see His Cosmic Form.

Arjuna was wonderstruck. He saw everything within Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna was right in describing Himself as everything. Sometimes, people, especially the educated modern young men, laugh at our scripture's description of the Cosmic Form of God. It is no doubt difficult for our small mind to understand. But, what we do not understand, we should not blindly condemn - as it is also true that we should not blindly believe. Let us try to understand. Even as, when we buy our school texts at the beginning of school-year, we try to look into them and discover that they are beyond our comprehension. We do not throw them away, but we approach the teacher and study those very texts under his guidance - and soon we begin to comprehend. Similarly, if we approach the wise ones, they will teach us what we do not understand in regard to our scriptures. The 'Life' magazine published in 1963 a series of wonderful articles on 'The Human Body.' The paintings were revealing; the body had been proportionately enlarged to include whole landscapes, factories, etc., which were painted as parts of this human body. I wondered: perhaps, this was the vision of Arjuna. However, let us not ignore this lesson that the Cosmic Form teaches us: that we are all parts of one God, we are all one in God - and should therefore live in love and unity.

When Arjuna saw this Cosmic Form, he was frightened and confused. He asked Sri Krishna, "O great Being. Who are You?" Sri Krishna said: "I am the Great Time, the Destroyer of everything. I have come here to destroy these wicked people. I have already killed them, by My Will. Be a mere instrument in My hands, fight and win fame."

tasmāt tvam uttistha yaso labhasva jitva satrun bhukṣva rajyam samrddham mayai 'vai 'te
nihatah purvam eva nimittamatram bhava savyasacin

Therefore, stand up and obtain fame. Conquer the enemies and enjoy the unrivalled kingdom. Verily by Myself they have been already slain: be thou a mere instrument, O Arjuna. (XI:33)

Arjuna actually saw all the Kauravas and other warriors enter Sri Krishna's Great Mouth. Here is a wonderful truth. We have no power of our own. We do nothing by ourselves. We only do His Will. We should know this first and foremost. Some people say: "There is no harm in killing people we do not like or whom we regard as wicked; for, even Sri Krishna asked Arjuna to fight and kill." No, no. Sri Krishna did not ask Arjuna to fight and kill. He only said: "Be thou my instrument. Do My Will." How can we know His Will, unless we know Him? How can we know Him, unless we see Him in all, and love Him in all? How can we harm anybody if we see Him in all? Think over this deeply.

Arjuna was happy that he was granted this Great Vision of God. But he was oppressed by terrible fear also. After praising the Lord, Arjuna said: "I am frightened, Oh Lord, please assume Your usual sweet form." Brother, this is a wonderful lesson for us. We should learn to leave everything to His Will and pleasure. He knows when to give us what. We worry ourselves, we crave for so many things. And, suppose God, in His mercy, grants us what we demand, we often do not know what to do with them. This happens frequently in our life. Young people want to get married; after marriage, they regret. They pray for children; when they arrive, the parents undergo endless sufferings. A man prays for wealth, and if it is given to him, he spends sleepless nights guarding it and multiplying it. In all cases you find that, when prayer is granted, we naturally cease to pray; and thus His gifts make us forget Him. We should beware of this. All our great saints only prayed for God-love, so that they might never forget Him. They always let Him take charge of their life here, giving them what He would, when He would. They did not pray for worldly things; and, even when they came, they only reminded them of God. That is wisdom. This applies even to spiritual experiences.

If you want to see God, pray to Him: "O Lord, show Yourself to me, if You think I am fit for it, and if it is Thy will." Leave it at that. He knows when to permit you to see Him. Leave everything in the hands of the best judge - God. Do not demand anything; let Him give you what He likes, when He thinks fit.

After re-assuming the form of Sweet Krishna, the Lord nursed Arjuna. When Arjuna regained his normal mood, Sri Krishna told him in two words how it was possible for man to know Him. Ananya bhakti - this is the secret. It means: "Think of God and nothing else." Then you will know Him. The method, as He has already told us, is to see God in everything. He explains it again succinctly.

matkarmakrñ matparamo madbhaktah sangavarjitah nirvairah sarvabhutesu yah sa mam eti
pandava

He who does actions for Me, who looks upon Me as the Supreme, who is devoted to Me, who is free from attachment, who bears enmity towards no creature, he comes to Me, O Arjuna.

This is the only way for us to think of Him always.

Silently and joyously to do His Will for His sake, and to think of Him always - that is the essence of the Gita. The teaching had already been given. In the beginning of the eleventh chapter itself, Arjuna had declared: "My delusion is gone." The climax of the Bhagavad Gita had been reached with Arjuna seeing God in His Cosmic Form. The following seven chapters only clarify the teaching. They contain useful hints to enable us to practise this yoga.

Chapter Twelve

In the twelfth chapter, Sri Krishna gives us a nice ladder, to enable us to ascend from where we are to where God is. God loves us so much that He descends and condescends to help us ascend to His Feet. Krishna repeats again and again: "My devotee is dear to Me", and in this chapter He shows how all of us can be His devotees. We are already surrounded by His love, His Light, His Living Presence. He calls us in a thousand ways. Let us not turn a deaf ear, but ascend the ladder and reach Him. He describes it from the top-rung.

The steps are:

1. Always think of Him, and nothing else.
2. If you cannot do this, then, by frequent practice, desire to see him. The mind is then not always thinking of Him, but you want it to, and so, it often thinks of Him. Mahatma Gandhi included yoga asanas, pranayama, etc., under this head.
3. If you cannot do this, then work for His sake. In this, you may not always feel that you are doing His Will as His instrument, but you will work because you know by such work - service - you will please Him. You will be a good man and do good deeds.
4. If you cannot do even this, i.e. if you do not work even consciously for His sake, then do not expect any reward for your actions; work for work's sake.

Now, we ascend it from below:

There is a worldly man. He works for himself, his family, and for society. God gives him such experiences as will awaken him. Through alternate success and failure, honour and dishonour, pain and pleasure, God makes this man realise that he cannot get what he wants. He learns to work or do his duty, without anticipating results. This is the first step. This purifies his heart, steadies his mind, and by and by he realises that there is a higher power - God - who controls his destiny. He therefore endeavours to do good without a selfish motive, in order that God may be pleased with him. This is the second step: do good deeds in order to please God. Gradually you begin to feel, "I am nothing but an instrument in His hands. It is He Who protects all creatures here. What can I, poor man, do? He alone creates and preserves millions and millions of creatures. Oh, I should see Him." This feeling comes and goes. Add your own self-effort to this. Practise. Persevere in reviving this desire. This is the third step. A keen desire to see God must be had. As a result of this desire, you try to think of Him always. Soon you become perfect in this. Even when your eyes see various things, your mind is thinking of God. Slowly the veil that covers the things is lifted. You see God in all, always, and nothing else. This is the best sadhana or spiritual practice in this age.

mayy avesya mano ye mam nityayukta upasate sraddhaya parayo 'petas to me yuktatama matah
Those who, fixing their minds on Me, worship Me, ever steadfast and endowed with supreme
faith, these in My opinion are the best in yoga. (XII:2)

How will such a man behave, who always thinks of Him, who has developed ananya bhakti - think of God and naught else? A description is given here. You notice that almost the same terms are used in several places in the Bhagavad

Gita. The greatest yogi, the wisest sage, the foremost devotee - all these have common characteristics. They all behave alike. This is only to show us that, though there are different paths, the goal is one. You may like rice and curry, a European may like bread and butter; but all these have a common purpose, a common goal - to appease hunger.

Here is a wonderful ideal for us to bear in mind:

yasman no 'dvijate loko lokan no 'dvijate ca yah harsamarsabhayodvegair mukto yah sa ca me priyah

He by whom the world is not agitated and who cannot be agitated by the world, who is free from vulgar mirth, envy, fear, and anxiety - he is dear to Me. (XII:15)

The devotee is not afraid of anyone; no one is afraid of him, either. He is devoted to the welfare of all beings. He lives and works for His sake. He has no desires. He is indifferent to everything. He knows that God's Will is done here. He is not given to hilarity. He hates none. He desires nothing. He does not grieve. He is never sorry. He does not feel, 'This is good' or 'this is evil'. He has no enemy at all. He is equal to all. He is unconscious of honour or dishonour, heat or cold. He is not attached to anybody.

Moreover,

samah satrau ca mitre ca tatha manapamanayoh sitosnasukhaduhkhesu samah sangavivarjitah

He who is the same to foe and friend, and also in honour and dishonour, who is the same in cold and heat, and in pleasure and pain, who is free from attachment - he is dear to Me. (XII:18)

He remains the same whether he is praised or censured. He is satisfied with whatever he gets. He has no home. He is firm in his belief in God. Such is the nature of His devotee. This description is given by Sri Krishna, so that, in our progress in yoga, we may verify how many of these virtues we have cultivated, and how far we are from God, or how near.

Like a creative artist, inspired poet, or intuitive philosopher, or a mystic who has had a vision, Sri Krishna is in love with this wonderful teaching of His. The last eight verses of this chapter together are called 'amritashtakam' - eight nectarine verses. Sri Krishna assures us that 'He is My supreme devotee who faithfully lives up to this teaching.'

Let us. For, says Krishna:

ye to dharmyamrtam idam yathoktam paryupasate sraddadhana matparama bhaktas te 'tiva me priyah

They who, following this Immortal Dharma endowed with faith, regarding Me as their supreme goal, they, devotees, are exceedingly dear to Me. (XII:20)

Chapter Thirteen

Next, Sri Krishna tells us what real wisdom is. As I hinted previously, the difference between the yoga of Sri Krishna and yoga as was understood before Him is this: Sri Krishna's yoga is buddhi-yoga, or yoga which concerns primarily our intelligence. Others stressed austerities, and other physical practices.

Sri Krishna wants us to understand everything. This means: do not either accept a thing blindly, or reject anything blindly. We often indulge in the latter. What we do not understand immediately, we reject! No. We should try to understand. That way lies wisdom.

Sri Krishna does not tell us, "The world does not exist," and ask us to understand the nature of God alone, nor does He tell us, "The world alone exists and there is nothing beyond this," and allow us to get lost in it.

He tells us that there are two entities; and we should understand both.

One is nature. Nature includes all that we see, all the worlds, suns, moons, and stars, earth, water, fire, air, and space. What is more, nature includes our body and mind! All this is God's nature, ultimately. When we forget nature is really God's Nature, we begin to light a fire sitting on the whale's back, mistaking it for an island; and the consequence is misery. The nature of the whale is different from the nature of an island. If we realise that nature is God's nature, we will try to put ourselves in tune with God and His will, and enjoy the blessings of His nature. That is real 'conquest of nature.' When our scientists declare, "We have conquered nature", it is like a mad man shouting, "See, I am carrying an elephant on my back," when the elephant is trampling him! Every 'conquest of nature' has so far produced remedies worse than the disease - the atomic power is a wonderful example. One who realises nature is God's nature, what it is, and what it is capable of yielding and how to obtain it, is the real conqueror of nature.

The other is God. God dwells in every bit of nature. The difference between God and His nature is academic. It is like saying, 'My body is covered with skin' - the skin is part of the body! The difference here is: God is not confined to nature. We cannot understand the real nature of God. Our mind is a small vessel; you cannot put God into it. But, when you travel a thousand miles to Rishikesh and your mother asks you to bring Ganges-water, and on reaching the bank of the river, you find millions of gallons of water, do you refuse to fill the small vessel with Ganges-water? You understand its limitation and the limitlessness of Ganges-water, and still take a small quantity home. This is true understanding, which leads to the next stage-realisation. There is a state called samadhi, in which our ego stops thinking. This you can understand; it is like sound sleep. The difference is: in sleep you know nothing, but in samadhi you know - realise - God.

Nature is called by Sri Krishna "kshetra", and God is called "kshetrajna."

idam sariram kaunteya ksetram ity abhidhtyate etad yo vetti tam prahuh kshetrajna iti tadvidah

This body, O Arjuna, is called the field. He who knows it, is called the kshetrajna, by those who know of them. (XIII:1)

'Kshetra' means 'field', an object in which we live. 'Kshetrajna' means 'one who knows the field.' God alone can completely understand nature. The greatest scientist or philosopher is still ignorant of the reality of God. He goes on guessing. We give him titles and a big name, and follow him. We cram text-books written by him. And we stop thinking, and meditation - a process which alone will lead us to understanding and knowing.

If you study the scientific texts written a hundred years ago, you find that those scientists who were considered the greatest in those days, could not even imagine what is found today in the elementary text-books. Similarly, the things that amaze us today, would be nothing compared to what scientists might discover a hundred years hence. Quite likely, those scientists might call the scientists of our day people of no sense at all. God alone knows His nature.

God is the creator of nature. He alone knows what is in nature. The best way to understand nature is then to resort to Him, because He alone is the real knower of nature. Like the man who went to Rishikesh, fill your mind-vessel with God, understand that God cannot be filled into - understood by - the mind, the ego will stop thinking and in a moment of intuition, you realise or know Him.

Supposing a man has understood nature and God, what will be the characteristics of his wisdom? Sri Krishna gives us a startling description of this wisdom. He does not define wisdom or knowledge of God, but He gives us the marks by which we can know one who has understood or known God and nature. And, it naturally follows that if we wish to understand God and nature, we should grow in these qualifications.

What are they? The wise man is not proud. He does not boast of his actions. He harms none in word, deed, or thought. He is truthful. He serves his teacher. He is pure; he keeps his dress, body and mind clean. He is steadfast; he does not waver. He is self-controlled. He has no cravings; his mind does not think of objects of enjoyment. He is egoless. He is always conscious that life on earth is subject to birth, death, disease, and old age; he does not waste his time merely in maintaining his life, but utilises it in the best way he can, to attain God. He is not attached to his wife, children, and property. Whether he gets what he wants or gets what he dislikes, he is calm, and peaceful; he is not upset. Such a man, naturally, dislikes nothing. He is devoted to God; he has ananya bhakti - devotion to God alone. He always wants to remain in a pure, secluded place. He does not like to waste his time in worldly people's company. He is conscious of the reality of the Self, or God, and the greatness of God-realisation. "This is wisdom," says Sri Krishna; "ignorance is the opposite of all these."

When you reflect upon this, you understand a beautiful truth. Do we not call

that man wise who has learnt the greatest number of sanskrit verses by heart? Do we not call that man wise who can deliver beautiful lectures for hours? Do we not call that man wise who can earn a lot of money by methods fair or foul? But, Sri Krishna does not. His standard is entirely different! Unless the qualities He has given above are present, that man is useless, is ignorant. If these qualities are present, that man is wise, a jnani, even though he may be an illiterate pauper.

God is so subtle that even our mind cannot grasp Him. Even the air is so subtle that we cannot see or grasp it. Our mind is so subtle that we cannot even feel it, as we feel the air. God is subtler than the mind, so that even our mind cannot grasp or understand Him. Therefore, our intellectual knowledge is of no use. But, he who cultivates the good qualities enumerated above, develops that subtle vision through which he comes 'fact to face' with God, Who dwells in the hearts of all. We shall 'know' that -

avibhaktam ca bhutesu vibhaktam iva ca sthitam bhutabhartr ca tai jneyam grasnisnu
prabhavisnu ca

And, undivided, yet He exists as if divided in beings; That is to be known as the supporter of beings; He devours and He generates. (XIII:16)

jyotisam api taj jyotis tamasah param ucyaate jnanam jneyam jnanagamyam hrdis sarvasya
dhisthitam

That, the light of all lights, is said to be beyond darkness; knowledge, the knowable, the goal of knowledge, seated in the hearts of all. (XIII:17)

Better than to worry your little head with voluminous texts, is to cultivate a few good qualities, then! We shall thus share His nature, and become one with Him. We shall not be born again in this world of pain and death, but enjoy perennial peace and bliss.

ya evam veti purusam prakrtim ca gunaih saha sarvatha vartamano 'pi na sa bhuyo
'bhijayate

He who thus knows the Lord and His nature together with the qualities of nature, in whatever condition he may be, is not born again. (XIII:23)

Chapter Fourteen

What prevents a man from cultivating these good qualities? This problem was dealt with in passing in chapter seven. Sri Krishna elaborates it here.

Nature is composed of three qualities - gunas. That is to say: there are three subtle currents always flowing in this world. They are called satva, rajas, and tamas. The unwise man is caught in these. He is therefore a man of changing moods.

When he is filled with satva, he gets glimpses of real knowledge; but they pass away. When he is overpowered by rajas, he is greedy and active and restless. When he is overwhelmed by tamas, he sleeps, or he is lethargic or stupid.

There is a grave warning here, too - if a man dies when satva predominates in him, he goes to the higher regions - the heaven; when rajas predominates, he takes birth in this active world; when tamas predominates, he is born as dull or insentient things. Therefore, it is essential that we should always keep up a satvic current flowing within us, or float on the satvic current.

There is another advantage also. When our mind is satvic, we are happy. When our mind is rajasic, we are busily active. When our mind is tamasic, we are stupid. Therefore, become satvic. The method is given in the seventeenth chapter.

Even a satvic man is within maya - illusion. He can at best go to heaven. He will have to come back to this earth, after enjoying for some time in heaven. That is not our goal. We want God. We want to be ever one with Him.

For this, we should go beyond even satva. To go beyond satva, the road lies through satva. This we should clearly understand. First, become perfectly satvic. Become good in thought, word, and deed. Then you know how to transcend or go beyond satva also. Then you realize God.

This is simple arithmetic. Good - o = God. (Good minus o is God). 'o' here represents 'nothing' or 'naught'. That means good and God are identical. You do not have to subtract anything from good in order to make it God. Or, the 'o' may mean 'negativity'. In other words, good minus negative thoughts, words, and deeds, is God. It is not enough always to say, "You should not do this, nor do that," but you should be good and also positively "Be good and do good," in the words of our Master, Sri Swami Sivananda. This is a mistake we often commit: we try to be good and then fill ourselves with all sorts of 'don'ts', so that all the time the mind is conscious only of them - the evils we are anxious to avoid. That itself becomes evil.

Another vital factor - the path to God lies through goodness. Though satva, too, is within maya, we cannot go beyond maya, except through satva. Do you remember the ladder? Sri Krishna makes everything easy for us, but does not let

us escape the process altogether. The law of transcendence leads us through that which we transcend. One day, you will grow taller than the friend who is five feet and now looks tall to you - but remember, you cannot grow to be five feet six inches without first growing to be five feet. A dull tamasic man must become active - rajasic - though this involves selfish activity. A rajasic man must strive to become good and saintly - satvic), and not say "Why bother about worship, service, prayer, and other yoga practices? I must go beyond all the three qualities, and become God. That is my goal." That is my goal, no doubt. But, it is not possible to get there before first becoming satvic. Again, the ladder, easy to ascend, but foolish to ignore.

You should know the characteristics of satva, rajas, and tamas. Then you see that all the activities in this world fall into one or other of these three categories of God's nature, and that your Self is not involved in them.

na nyam gunebhyah kartaram yada drasta 'nupasyati gunebhyas ca param vetti madbhavam so 'dhigacchati

When the seer beholds no agent other than the qualities of nature, and knows that which is higher than the qualities, he attains to My being. (XIV:19)

gunan etan atitya trin dehi dehasamudbhavan janmamrtyujaraduhkhair vimukto 'mrtam asnute
The embodied one, having crossed beyond these three qualities out of which the body is evolved, is freed from birth, death, decay, and pain, and attains to immortality.
(XIV:20)

Arjuna wanted to know how to recognise a man who had gone beyond the three qualities of nature. Sri Krishna gives a description; here, too, you find more or less the same qualities that have been associated with a perfect devotee, a sage or a yogi. He is not attached to anything. He is indifferent. He does not care whether he gets what is good for him or what is not good for him; for, now everything is good for him. He knows that even intelligence and dullness are both useless. This is true only when you have spiritually become a sage of Self-realisation. I will give you an example. For us on earth, there is a vast difference between a dark cloud and a thin white cloud. The dark cloud creates darkness, and turns day into night. The white cloud does not, and often gives us the idea that it is luminous. A child may even say that the light comes from the cloud. But you know that a cloud always veils the sun. If you fly in an aircraft above the clouds, you know what real sunshine is, and also that both the dark and the white clouds were veils. Even so, to us ordinarily, a pure mind and intelligence are good - they are like the white cloud; and we feel that dullness or stupidity is evil, like the dark cloud. But the yogi or the sage knows that both of them veil God - from the aircraft of yoga, he directly experiences the sun of God. He is unaffected by praise and censure, by honour and dishonour, and he is equal towards those who consider themselves his friends, and those who consider themselves his enemies. He regards none as his special friend or as his enemy - all are manifestations of God to him.

Now you see the beauty of transcendence. The tamasic - dull or stupid - man does not even know how to tell right from wrong; he is sunk in ignorance - the worst evil. Sometimes these stupid people appear to be good! They may not tell lies, nor steal, nor harm anybody; but not because they realize what they are doing, and why; they are like the lower animals. They cannot do anything

positively good either. They are like the sleeping murderer. All evils are dormant in them - they will wake up sometime later. But the yogi has eradicated them. The rajasic man sanctions evil as necessary; he himself is full of desires and selfishness - and so he thinks that they are good! The satvic man avoids - not hates - evil, and seeks the good. The man who has gone beyond the gunas or qualities of nature, regards good and evil with equal eye; he has the eyes, heart, and hands, of God Himself, Who is the Self of all beings. The tamasic man cannot even visualise this state; and the rajasic man cannot reach it except through satva.

He who is established in this state, feels that he is beyond the reach of satva, rajas, and tamas. He identifies his Self with God. He knows that these three qualities are part of, and can affect only the world. These qualities function among the objects of the world. But, he has nothing to do with them. When he passes away from the body, he becomes forever one with God.

But, how to get there? Sri Krishna returns to His favourite theme. He again and again tells us that no man can ever complain that he has no time, nor facility, nor opportunity to think of Him. What greater help in thinking of Him can we have than the truth that He and He alone is present everywhere, always?

mam ca yo 'vyabhicarena bhaktiyogera sevate sa gunan samatityai 'tan brahmabhoyaya kalpate

And he who serves Me with an unswerving devotion, he, crossing beyond the qualities of nature, is qualified for becoming Brahman or the **Supreme** Being. (XIV:26)

brahmano hi pratisthaham amrtasya 'vyayasya ca sasvatasya ca dharmasya sukhasyai 'kantikasya ca

For, I am the abode of the reality, the Immortal and the unchanging, of ever-lasting dharma and of absolute bliss. (XIV:27)

We should be devoted to this immortal and eternal God. We shall naturally enjoy peace and bliss, and shall also shine as men of unimpeachable goodness.

Chapter Fifteen

The twelfth and fifteenth are the smallest and the most delightful chapters of the Bhagavad Gita. In the fifteenth, Sri Krishna gives in a nutshell the method by which we are to go beyond the world, maya or illusion, and find Him. Hence, in North India, Swamis recite it at mealtimes every day.

urdhvamulam adhahsakham asvattham prahur avyayam chandamsi yasya parnani yas tam veda sa vedavit

They speak of the indestructible peepul tree, having its root above and branches below, whose leaves are the hymns; he who knows this, knows the Vedas. (XV:1)

Imagine an inverted tree. This is the world. The root - God - is above. The branches are the qualities of nature. From these, innumerable objects have come into being, like the leaves of the tree. How picturesque is His description.

Through one's own actions and thoughts, man is bound to this tree: what does this mean? It means: God has not bound us to the world, nor does the world stick to our body and mind, but of our own choice, we hang on to it! Therefore, if we will, we can get rid of this bondage. By remaining unattached to the actions and, by constantly thinking of the root - God, man can cut this tree and become one with God. As you think, so you become. If you think you cannot live without the world, without earthly relations, you are bound to the world and its miseries. If you think you live only in God and God lives in you, you are liberated from the world and its miseries. This detachment is important to understand. Lotus-leaf remains in water, but is not affected by it. Water lies on the lotus-leaf, but without attachment. When you shake the leaf, the water droplets fall off. But we do not live like that in this world.

We identify ourselves and our happiness with the things and people of this world. We get attached to them, like cloth or plaster gets stuck in a fresh wound; and you know how painful it is when the doctor tries to remove it! Nothing is constant in this world; objects and persons come into, and go out of our life. If we cling to them, they will have to be torn away from us - and that is extremely painful. Adopt the 'open door' policy with these things. Say to the world, "Come when you come, and go when you go - the door is open." Then you really practise detachment; you are not unduly elated when you get something pleasant, for you know it will go; and you are not depressed when something unpleasant happens, for you know it will go, too! In due course, these words 'pleasant' and 'unpleasant' lose their meaning for you; that is what Sri Krishna means by 'even-mindedness'. You have to be extremely careful. This state is not hard-hearted, cold-blooded indifference. Far, far from it. That is tamasic; and you know, from tamas, one cannot even become satvic at once, and cannot dream of becoming a yogi! This state of detachment should come from an understanding of God and the nature of the world - of this inverted tree! In the words of our Master Swami Sivananda: "Detach the mind from the world, and attach it to the Lord." The two go together.

The life of man's life - which is called jiva - is a spark of God. But this spark is

enclosed within the body and the mind; not in the sense that the jewel is enclosed in a casket, but that a lamp is enclosed in the transparent dome. The body and mind are always drawn towards the objects of enjoyment. By the craving to enjoy, this jiva is bound. Desires bind him hand and foot, and take him from one body to another. They drag him even after the death of the body, just as wind wafts the fragrance of incense.

But, the truth remains that without the jiva, the mind and the senses are powerless. It is through His power that we eat, get up, and sit down. The wise man understands this: but the fools do not care to think of this. It is with His power that we are able to lift our hand, to read this page. If you bear this in mind, you find that your daily work is no hindrance, but actually a help to make you think always of God.

From the region of God, man does not return to this world of pain and sorrow. Who goes to that region?

nirmanamoha jitasangadosa adhyatmanitya vinivrttakamah dvandvair vimuktah sukhaduhkhasam
jnair gacchanty amudhah padam avyayam tat
Free from pride and delusion, victorious over the evil of attachment, dwelling
constantly in God, their desires having completely turned away or subdued, freed from the
pairs of opposites known as pleasure and pain, the undeluded reach that eternal goal,
God. (XV:5)

Again we have the same description, as we have had in earlier chapters - he who is devoid of vanity and attachment; he who has conquered the sins that arise out of contact with human beings or objects here; he who is always conscious of God; he who is desireless: he who is not affected by praise and censure, honour and dishonour, heat and cold, success and failure, pleasure and pain, etc. - enters this wondrous realm of God.

The sun, the moon, the stars, and the fire - all these shine only with the light borrowed from Him. Do you remember that in the tenth chapter, Sri Krishna described them all as His special manifestations? That was only to help us remember Him. But, sometimes we foolishly think: "Well, this is God, and nothing else is God". That is ignorance. So, Sri Krishna here declares: "The sun, the moon, the stars, and the fire, do not even illumine God." They shine in the light borrowed from Him. Will this not make you think of Him day and night?

Now comes the vitamin-theory of Sri Krishna. He maintains us all here through His Power in us - Ojas-Shakti. This is the supreme creative energy in us. We generally waste this precious energy in useless talks, in unnecessary activity, in lust, in base thoughts, in worries, fears, and anger. If we conserve this energy, we can, through the Ojas-Shakti, which is nothing but His power in us, reach Him. A similar power in plants is called by us vitamin: Sri Krishna calls it soma. This soma or vitamin is He - His own Power. And, on top of all,

aham vaisvanaro bhotva praninam deham asritah pranapanasamayuktah pacamy annam
caturvidham
I, having become the gastric fire, abide in the body of living beings, and associated

with the life-forces, digest food. (XV:14)

He Himself, in the form of vaishvanara - gastric fire or the power of digestion - in us, digests the food that we eat, and with the vitamin - which is His own Power, nourishes us, and builds up Ojas - again His own Power. The entire process is divine. God is seated in the hearts of all beings. The body that covers this divine spark in man, is perishable. Let us not see it at all. Let us see God in every man, for He is the essence in us. Then, we shall always remember Him. Then, we go beyond maya or illusion. Then, we will be able to cut the tree of samsara - birth and death, and become one with Him.

Chapter Sixteen

One who forever lives in God, and has enthroned God in his heart, is full of divine virtuous qualities, even as an open pot immersed in water is full of water. He is divine by nature, even as fuel thrown into fire takes on the nature of fire, and becomes fire. To the virtues given earlier, Sri Krishna adds a supplementary list: fearlessness, a mind filled with satva - purity, keeping the flame of knowledge ever bright, charity, self-control, self-sacrifice, study of scriptures and repetition of God's Name, straightforwardness, love, truthfulness, absence of anger, renunciation - of desires for worldly pleasures, peacefulness, compassion to all beings, forbearance, firmness - in virtue and spiritual aspiration - these are all virtues which are found in a man of God. And, we should deliberately cultivate them.

So far, Sri Krishna told us what we should do. Now He tells us what we should not do, what we should avoid. He told us what divine virtues should be cultivated. He now tells us what devilish qualities we should avoid; and eradicate, if by past ignorant misbehaviour, we have already come to possess them. If you think over this, you will learn another lesson. Virtues come first. We should think more of virtue than of vice. Sometimes people dwell too much on vice, negatively - "Oh, I must never do this!" They know that evil thoughts disturb them when they sit for prayer. They are anxious to avoid them. As soon as they sit for prayer, they 'remember to forget the evil thoughts' - you see the trouble here? The first thoughts they actually think are the evil ones. Then they struggle to drive them away. Keep the mind always positive. Think of God. Then the evil thought will have no opportunity to enter the mind. This is the wiser, and Sri Krishna's method. In order, however, not to neglect the evil tendencies which might persist in us, Sri Krishna gives us their catalogue after dealing elaborately with positive, good, aspects of yoga.

Fundamentally, pride, arrogance, attachment, anger, violence, and ignorance, characterise the Asuras among men. Asuras are people with devilish, cruel nature. These qualities bind men to this world. The converse is true, and it is also true to say that because they love the world, and its pleasures, they are full of evil qualities. These men do not think of God, blinded by these evils. They do not attain Him, till they effect a self-transformation.

These Asuras do not know what they like. They are impure in thought, word and deed. They always tell lies. All their actions are guided by their vain desires. Their actions are violent. Their motive is destruction. Vanity and a craving for honour and applause characterise their actions. They have absolutely no idea of a life beyond this, a region beyond this world. Therefore, they are eager to enjoy life here to the best of their capacity. They are full of desires. And, they try to fulfil those desires by all means, mostly foul.

In order that we may not fail to recognise them, Sri Krishna gives their favourite expression. Their very words - which, by the way, shall never taint our lips - "I

have got this now! I will get that also presently, I will get more wealth shortly. This, my enemy is killed; I will kill others also. I am the Lord of lords, I am a great Siddha - perfect man or man of psychic powers. I am strong and powerful. Who is equal to me?" Such thoughts constantly dwell in their minds. Brother, read this paragraph carefully. You will at once understand that this devilish nature might possess a man of wealth, position in society, political power, or a man who is held in high esteem for piety, apparent or superficial virtues, or even the so-called yogic or psychic powers. The ego takes many forms. We should very carefully detect its mischief. Sri Krishna's yoga demands keen intelligence and robust commonsense.

The highest goal of the Asuras is name and fame. They hate God's humble devotee and, thereby, God Himself.

Do you know what happens to them? The Lord is fond of teaching them a lesson. He even gives them the pleasant things of this world. They get wealth, motor-cars and bungalows. Like the poison of cobra-bite, the virus of evil quality in them spreads and fills them. When they die, they go down into lower births, by the weight of their own, evil deeds - and they are born of beasts. Thousands of years of the worst suffering in these births teaches them a lesson. Then they come to the divine path. Do not make a mistake here: even they must be redeemed by God one day or the other - there is no such thing as eternal damnation.

trividham narakasye 'dam dvaram nasanam atmanah kamah krodhas tatha lobhas tasmad etat trayam tyajet
Triple is the gate of this hell destructive of the Self, viz., lust, anger and greed; therefore, one should abandon these three. (XVI:21)

The life of these wicked people is life in naraka - desire, anger, and greed. Therefore, avoid them.

Evil does not easily give up. To reform a criminal, the Magistrate sends him to a reformatory; but, very often, you find a criminal returning to crime. The next time, he tries to be more clever, i.e. a worse criminal. This goes on till he reaches the depth of wickedness, before deciding to be good and to do good. For, evil first robs you of your will power; only good company and study of good books can help you reform yourself in time.

Therefore, Krishna says:

tasmac chastram pramanam te karyakaryavyavasthitau jnatva sastravidhanoktam karma kartum iha 'rhasi
Therefore, let the scriptures be thy authority in determining what ought to be done, or what ought not to be done. Having known what is said in the ordinance of the scriptures, thou shouldst act here in this world. (XVI:24)

If we stick to the rules of the scriptures, we shall not commit any sin. But do not make the mistake of letting the letter kill the spirit of the rule. You must know what the scripture says - the spirit, the idea behind scriptural injunctions - and act upon the letter, without losing the spirit, but with its correct knowledge. What

scripture can be better for us than the Bhagavad Gita? Who can be a greater guide for us than our beloved friend and divine brother, Sri Krishna? Let us follow Him. We shall not err. We shall be protected by Him. We shall attain Him.

Chapter Seventeen

The man who wishes to cultivate divine qualities, and to eradicate whatever devilish qualities are in him, is vigilant. He has faith in and devotion to God and scriptures. This faith intensifies his practice. Devotion leads him to God.

We found that nature, maya or illusion has three qualities - satva, rajas, and tamas. The thoughts that we think, the pleasures that we get here, the service that we render - everything has this three-fold division. The man who wishes to develop divine qualities always chooses the satvic in everything. He eats satvic food, performs satvic worship, and thinks satvic thoughts.

Sri Krishna gives us a catalogue of satvic virtues, along with their sajasic and tamasic counterparts. He has made it easy for us to know what is satvic and so, good for us. How kind He is! We have absolutely no difficulty at all. We have only to stick to His advice.

The satvic man worships Devas or Gods, who are aspects of the Supreme God - whom the yogi, who has transcended the qualities, meditates upon. The rajasic man worships rakshasas - nature-spirits. The tamasic man worships the disembodied evil spirits - pishachas.

Healthy, wholesome, nutritious are the satvic foods. Rajasic foods have too much of salt, tamarind or bitterness; they are too hot, and produce much thirst; they produce diseases. Filthy, putrid foods, and refuse, are tamasic.

That ritual is satvic which is performed according to the scriptures and as a duty, without any expectation of reward, and with a correct knowledge of the rite. The rajasic ritual is performed with an eye to the reward, and for the sake of name and fame. In the tamasic ritual, there are neither mantras - prayers - nor scriptures, neither charity nor devotion to God.

The best - satvic - charity is that which is done because the donor feels that he must give; he does not feel proud that he is doing great charity, but he feels "It is my duty to do charity, and I am grateful to the man who accepts my charity, and thus enables me to perform my duty." He does not expect any reward, appreciation or 'thanks'. Rajasic charity expects a return or reward. Charity to the undeserving, at the wrong time and place, is tamasic.

A word of caution is necessary here. Who is "undeserving"? If a poor, hungry man is not living as you expect him to - e.g. if he smokes - you refuse to feed him, saying he does not deserve charity. Our Master never did so; he fed such people, and guided them out of the evil habits. If you attend 'parties' given by the rich to the rich, you will see who the 'undeserving' are. A generous man sends a big 'birthday' present to a rich man - who is 'undeserving'; it is tamasic.

Tapas - penance, austerity - has been much misunderstood. Standing on one

leg, sitting in a place surrounded by fire, and such other spectacular practices, were once considered tapas. Sri Krishna says that they are all devilish practices, which torture the body and the spark of God within man. He does not want us to do such things.

Tapas, according to Sri Krishna, has a very beautiful significance. Here again, you find that Sri Krishna's yoga is the yoga of intelligence, not of some routine, dull, and unthinking physical practices.

Worship of God, Brahmins or the knowers of God, the spiritual preceptor, and the wise men, purity, continence, straight-forwardness in behaviour, and harmlessness - all these constitute tapas of the body.

Sweet words that do not excite anybody, truthfulness, loving words, and words that are calculated to do good to all, study of scriptures, and repetition of His Names - these constitute tapas of speech.

A cheerful mind, good nature, silence or, in other words, absence of turbulent thoughts, selfcontrol or control of mind, purity of motives - these constitute tapas of the mind.

This is the tapas that Sri Krishna wants us to perform. It needs nothing but right understanding, a strong will and a great desire to see God. You need not run away to a forest. You need not go to any special place to do this tapas. You may live wherever you are. No one may even notice that you are practising tapas. Silently you will be growing in yoga. The power of your tapas will attract people to you, just as a magnet attracts iron-filings.

In tapas, too, there are three divisions. Satvic tapas is performed without any motive other than God-realization. You do not expect any reward from it. Rajasic tapas is done for gaining name and fame. Tamasic tapas is aimed at harming others.

In everything, choose the satvic. You will grow pure. Go beyond even that to the region of God. That is the goal. But this does not mean that at one stage, you will cease to be pure and good. No. At that stage, purity would have become part of your very nature. You go beyond even goodness in the sense that you will be unconscious of your purity and conscious only of God.

In these practices, faith is most important. Faith alone will open the gates of the kingdom of God for you. What is man but an embodiment of faith? You live as you live, and do what you do, only because of your faith. This is true of your life at home, at school, on the sports-ground, all your work-everywhere. Your life is governed by faith.

sattvanurupa sarvasya sraddha bhavati bharata sraddhamayo 'yam puruso yo yacchraddhah sa eva sah

The faith of each is in accordance with his nature, O Arjuna. The man consists of his

faith; as is man's faith, so he is. (XVII:3)

All these satvic practices will be fruitful to fullest degree, if you have the faith that you are doing them for God. In order not to let his faith slip from your heart, Sri Krishna asks you to think of Him and repeat "Om Tat Sat" - a supreme, universal, and impersonal description or Name of God - while commencing and concluding any work. Sri Krishna is thoroughly practical! Arguing about the efficacy of these practices is waste of time. Practise and realise for yourself.

Chapter Eighteen

Another popular misconception is set at rest in the opening verses of this chapter. All men of God have unmistakably and unambiguously declared that we can attain God-realisation only through renunciation - sanyasa.

But, what is sanyasa? Is it, as is popularly misunderstood, running away from the world - our duties? Sanyasa in Sri Krishna's days - among deluded people even today - meant something very different from what it means today, among those who have truly understood the Bhagavad Gita. People in those days thought that to do anything was to invite rebirth - action involved reaction, sowing meant harvesting, and to reap the harvest one had to take birth again. A sanyasi or a monk, therefore 'renounced the world', i.e. gave up all work, and merely vegetated, whether he meditated or not.

Atma does not work; for, It is not in need of anything; therefore, we who want to realize the atma should not work - that was their idea.

The world is unreal; therefore, we should have nothing to do with it - that was their idea.

But these philosophers momentarily forgot that it was always the unreal body and the unreal mind that worked in this unreal world - not the atma! Then, why prevent them from working! When you study philosophy, you will be amused to find time and again that philosophers do not pursue their own logic to its logical conclusion. They say everybody else is wrong, without visualising that they might be wrong too! Everybody includes my body, too! I condemn your idea of God, but my own idea seems to be right. That is maya, and all reasoning or argument; all our troubles and problems, are within maya only. We should listen to God.

Sri Krishna is emphatic. He says:

yajnanadanatapahkarma na tyajyam karyam eve tat yajno danam tapas cai 'va pavanani
manisinam

Acts of sacrifice, gift, and austerity, should not be abandoned, but should be performed; sacrifice, gift, and also austerity, are the purifiers of the wise. (XVIII:5)

In other words, do not give up self-sacrificing service. Do not give up charity. Do not give up tapas. We saw in the last chapter what He meant by tapas. We know that charity is extolled by all scriptures, prophets, and religions. Charity is not only gift of money, clothes, or food; even a kind word, or an encouraging smile, constitutes charity. Love and compassion, even towards those who misbehave towards us, is charity. A prayer for the sick, a word of consolation to the bereaved, an expression of sympathy for the poor - even if you are not able to offer material aid, will go a long way towards reviving their 'spirit'. Nobody is too poor to afford to give something away! But, then, the wicked man has twisted the meaning of the proverb 'charity begins at home' to mean that one should do charity to oneself first! How terribly wrong; the proverb means 'Before you

preach charity to others, begin to practise it in your own home'. Charity is a purifier. It will lead you to God.

It is only work which is done with a selfish motive that hinders our spiritual progress. When you desire for something, you have to take birth again to enjoy that desire - or, suffer on account of it. If you have no desire, why will you be reborn?

On the contrary, selfless service, performed without any desire or expectation, purifies us. It exhausts our karma. Karma is like water running down a hill. When it comes near your house, it is foolish to stop it altogether, in order to save your house. It will break the dam and wash the house away. A man of wisdom properly directs its course, so that its own momentum is properly utilised; the house is saved and possibly the water is also utilised in irrigating a field. That is karma yoga. There is stored energy in your body and mind; it is the fruit of past karma - in past births. This karma brings you in contact with various people and situations. It is like the stream running down the hill of your life. You do not want it to destroy the spiritual mansions you have built. But it is foolish to stop the body and mind acting, altogether; the energy in them will burst the dam, and destroy the mansion in the twinkling of an eye. Wisdom lies in canalising this energy - by doing your duties, but, without selfish motives or desires. Then, the force will be spent, or rather properly utilised, and your house - spiritual wisdom - also will be safe. This is karma yoga.

Moreover, we work not because we wish to gain anything, but because work is inevitable in God's scheme of things. God wills it. We do His Will. It is not only foolish but the height of arrogance - don't forget it is devilish nature - to refuse to do His Will, even if it were possible.

What we get in this world now is the effect of our past desires and our past actions - karma. Our good fortunes and our misfortunes are actually what I would call God's gifts to us. They are all blessings. They wash away our past karma. They exhaust the momentum of past desires. We should not be worried over them at all. Joyously greet whatever comes to you. Never ask for anything. Always feel, "This is my last birth on this earth. I desire nothing but God. I will do His Will. I will receive whatever He gives - pleasure or pain, success or failure - with joy and peace. I will get my release, no doubt." Vasudevah Sarvam - all this is God. Sri Krishnaarpanamastu - I offer this work or action at the feet of the Lord, Sri Krishna.

But we should know what to renounce, too. Selfishness should be renounced. Egoism should be renounced. Attachment should be renounced. Evil qualities should be renounced. But to renounce service, charity, and tapas, is sin, is foolishness.

Then there is another kind of renunciation. We give up performance of our duty out of cowardice. We think that the duty is painful or difficult. We are afraid of

doing our duty. Therefore, we 'bravely' renounce it. Suffering or pain should not make us give up anything. I will cite an instance; it is a real-life story, though it was so sad that at first I refused to believe it.

In Calcutta there was a poor young man. After suffering an impoverished existence, in his fortieth year he married a young girl: for, only then was he in a position to support a family. He was very, very poor. As ill-luck would have it, six years after the marriage, he lost his job and could not get another. He was a mild, effeminate sort of man, and not of a pushing nature; you can visualise what happens to such a man in this twentieth century world! He was living on charity. Gradually, his wife lost all respect for him. One day, during a violent argument, she actually beat him with shoes! Poor man, he wept. He thought of renouncing the world and becoming a monk - sanyasi. He was persuaded by elderly sanyasis not to do so. If this man had renounced the world, it would have been rajasic renunciation - renunciation of the world out of fear, or unwillingness to face the music or to play one's part. He would not get the full benefit of renunciation. For, it was out of fear of family life, out of disappointment, that he wanted to renounce it!

If, however, that incident had awakened discrimination and dispassion in him, if he had regarded it as a divine call to enter the monastic order, it would be proper for him to do so.

Remember this: you must renounce the world, and not allow the world to renounce you.

Otherwise, the world will still exist in your mind. Suppose our friend had actually become a sanyasi. If, after some years, another woman was sympathetic towards him and respected him, he would marry her.

Therefore, Sri Krishna warns us against this outward renunciation, without first acquiring the spirit of renunciation. Only when sanyasa itself becomes your duty, can you become a sanyasi. The Lord will guide you, and tell you when it becomes your duty to become a monk. Then, and only then, will your mind be strong, by His Grace. Your mind will not waver. You will never regret. You will never be tempted back.

Till then? Do your duty. Renounce desire for any reward for what you do. Slowly, cut off all attachments. This will prepare the ground for the greater renunciation. Such a renunciation alone is satvic and fruitful. At every step, you will actually experience His Grace and the working of His Will. Even when you do not actually desire any reward, great rewards will seek you. The world which, to a worldly man, is full of competitors and rivals, enemies and evil-doers, will be transformed into a friendly world full of love, compassion, and co-operation for you. You will actually experience the mysterious ways in which God helps those who depend upon Him, and which are willfully ignored by those who depend upon 'their own' wealth, family, and friends. These experiences will spur you on

to greater intensity in selfless service. From moment to moment, you will not only grow in selflessness, but also in dynamism. Every single moment of your life, you will be active for the good of all beings.

na hi dehabhrta sakyam tyaktum karmany ahesatah yas tu karmaphalatyagi sa tyagt 'ty abhidhiyate

Verily, it is not possible for an embodied being to abandon actions entirely; but he who relinquishes the fruits of actions, is verily called a man of renunciation. (XVIII:11)

Never will any man be able to give up work, service, entirely. He who does his duty, without caring for any reward, he is a sanyasi - a man of renunciation. To him, the work is its own reward; for, he serves God. He asks for nothing else from God. When you grow in the love of God, you pray to Him: "Lord, give me more and more opportunities of serving you." You consider your life itself as His Service. Service enables you to do His Will, which will enable you to draw closer to Him, which will enable you to know Him and ultimately realize Him, the goal of life.

In all this service, there will not be for you one moment of unhappiness or depression. It is only for the man who does not do his duty, as His Will, that actions have good, bad, and indifferent results. For a sanyasi all are good results only.

To illustrate this - a good doctor treats a patient with the idea 'He is a rich patient and will pay me well.' If the patient pays well, the doctor is pleased. If he pays moderately, it is an 'indifferent' fortune to the doctor. If he pays less than the doctor expected, the latter is disappointed - it is bad luck. But, a sanyasi treats the patient, thinking 'Here is my God. He has given me a chance to serve Him. I am blessed.' He has already reaped the richest reward. His heart is purified. His mind has turned towards God. If the patient gives the sanyasi even a little food, the sanyasi has received more than he expected. He is extremely happy. There is no disappointment at all in his life. He is always happy.

To help us in this wonderful yoga, Sri Krishna gives us a picture. All are the children of God - everybody has been created by Him. And, God dwells in all. Now, therefore, visualise the whole world and everyone in it as an altar of God. Visualise that every one of your actions is a flower. You are a devotee of God. You take this flower into both of your hands and offer it at the feet of the all-pervading God, Who dwells in all, and Whom you are serving in and through all. Is this not a wonderful picture?

yatah pravrttir bhutanam yena sarvam idam tatam svakarmana tam abhyarcya siddhim vindati manavah

He from Whom all beings have originated, and by Whom all this is pervaded - worshipping Him with his own duty, man attains perfection. (XVIII:46)

This is the very cream of the Bhagavad Gita. This one teaching alone will do for us. Our whole life and every moment of it will be dynamic meditation of God.

Every action involves five elements:

- (1) the basis for the action - in the case given above, the patient,
- (2) the person who performs the action - the doctor,
- (3) the instruments with which it is done,
- (4) the various details of the action, and
- (5) God.

The wise man sees that the action itself is nothing but a play of nature for the satisfaction of the Lord. How will he expect a reward for it? God is in him, in the instruments, in the patient, and in the service. How will he expect a reward for doing His Will as His instrument? When there is no egoism - "I have done this" - or attachment, there is no bondage, no misery no worry, no disappointment. This is the secret of Sri Krishna's yoga. Practise it, and see if Sri Krishna is right.

That action which is performed in this manner, is satvic and virtuous action. Actions performed with desire by a restless man are rajasic. Tamasic actions are actions which are sinful and improper; they are done by tamasic people, who are lazy, deluded, and who do such actions only for bringing trouble to others.

But the intelligent man's right understanding enables him to see which is good and which is evil, what he should do and what he should not do. It is only desire - rajas - that binds and blinds man, and tamas makes him feel that the sinful actions are good.

If you always bear in mind that good actions may not often be pleasant, but will lead to grand results, you will never be tempted by pleasures to do what is not good. What is pleasant on the outside - the sugar-coated quinine - may be bitter within. Beware of it. Do your duty. Even there, adopt the satvic attitude. Let your intelligence be ever bright. Let your actions be satvic. Then gradually, you will understand what is beyond even satva - the Sat or God. You will then be unshakably rooted in God. You will regain your peace and perfect happiness. You will get that God-vision which will make you fearless. Then, even the greatest misfortune will not shake you, will not exist for you as misfortune at all.

This in essence is the Buddhi Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita. It enables you always to remember Him. By this constant remembrance, you go beyond all grief and misery. There are no obstacles for you on your path. God's Grace crushes them, and makes them steps for you to ascend the ladder of yoga.

The Gita-teaching has virtually ended here. Then, Sri Krishna gives a stern warning to Arjuna: "If, out of arrogance, you think you will not do your duty, you are foolish. But remember, Nature - God's Power - will force you to do your duty." No one can flout His Will. He dwells in everyone's heart. He is the Soul of the world. By His Will, He makes all people dance to his tunes.

isvarah sarvabhutanam hrddese 'rjuna tisthati bhramayan sarvabhutani yantrarudhani mayaya

The Lord dwells in the heart of all beings, O Arjuna, causing all beings, by His illusive power, to revolve as if mounted on a machine. (XVIII:61)

Those who realize this, will joyously play their part. Those who do not, shed vales of tears, suffer, and grieve. But even they cannot escape His Will.

Therefore, and here Sri Krishna repeats what He has already said before: "Always think of Me, be devoted to Me, do My Will - i.e. do all your duties feeling that it is My Will. You will attain Me - I promise."

'Always think of Me' suggests to the vain philosopher another 'thought' and he pertinently asks: "What is the use of sitting there and thinking about what you think God is? It is after all another thought!" Similarly, 'be devoted to Me' is again regarded as of doubtful spiritual value. Love of God and desire for God realization have all been decried as self-deceptions, and as psychological 'transferences'.

Theoretically, our friends seem to be quite right. But, in the spiritual realm, the psychologist is a novice. We should turn to the yogis and sages for light. They tell us that the thought of God, the love of God, and the desire for God-realisation, act as catalysts. They enable you to burn all worldly thoughts, selfish and physical love, and undivine desires. The catalyst of thoughts of God does not need to undergo any change; for, when all other thoughts cease and there is only this thought of God, it is thought no more, but actual vision of God. Desire for God-realisation is like fire. Fire burns everything else, but does not need something to burn it. Desire for God-realisation takes away all other worldly desires; and when this work is done, itself dies in God. Only God is left behind. Then comes the grand culmination of the Bhagavad Gita: "Do not worry about anything. Place the burdens on Me. Take refuge in Me. I will save you from all sins. I will free you."

sarvadharmāṇāṃ parityajya mām ekaṃ śaraṇam vraja ahaṃ tva sarvāpāpēbhyo mokṣayisyāmi ma
sucah

Abandoning all duties, take refuge in Me alone; I will liberate thee from all sins.
Grieve not. (XVIII:66)

After having said all this, Sri Krishna could well have commanded Arjuna: "You fool; stand up and fight. I command you. I am God." No, He says, "Arjuna, think over this, and do what you like. What kindness. What compassion. What consideration."

Arjuna, the faithful disciple, falls at Sri Krishna's feet, and utters a great and inspiring verse. I fervently pray to Sri Krishna that He might enlighten your intellect, that He might teach you the Bhagavad Gita from within you, and that you might follow His teachings in actual practice, and cry out, in the words of Arjuna:

nāsto mohah smṛtir labdhā tvatprasādan mayā 'cyuta sthito 'smi gatasamdehah karisye
vacanam tava

My delusion has vanished. My ignorance is gone. I have got back my intelligence. It is all due to Your Grace. Oh Lord! All doubts have vanished. I will do Thy Will. (XVIII:73)

Sri Krishna, knowing full well that the knowledge of the Bhagavad Gita would be handed down for a considerable time after He taught it to Arjuna, instituted the

form of worship that is dearest to Him - the jnana yajna, viz., dissemination of the knowledge of the Bhagavad Gita. Other gifts have short-lived utility, but the gift of knowledge endures forever. If you have reached the goal set before you by the Bhagavad Gita, and you enjoy the bliss of God, you will naturally want to share it with others - that is the nature of saints. But, even when you are but a struggling spiritual aspirant, take this upon yourself as a sacred duty, another aspect of your spiritual practice.

ya idam paramam guhyam madbhaktesv abhidhasyati bhaktim mayi param krtva mam evai 'syaty
asamsayah

He who, with supreme devotion to Me, will teach this supreme secret to my devotees,
shall doubtless come to Me. (XVIII:68)

For, it is of incalculable benefit. We saw in our chapter four that, when practice is neglected, yoga is lost. Sri Krishna does not want us to stop with the practice either. Without neglecting it, but as part of it, we should spread this knowledge. In the tenth chapter itself Sri Krishna characterises the nature and habit of His devotees. "They will always talk about Me, and rejoice in Me." This talking is the best preventative to idle gossiping. It will act as a fortress against bad company; those who are not interested in such talk, will not disturb you! The knowledge will be bright in your own mind, and your own mind will prove to be an eternal fountain of inspiration in your spiritual life.

Sri Krishna does not want that we should disturb anyone's faith! Take one from where he is, and just increase his faith and show him the next step. Choose kindred souls, and talk to them about the Bhagavad Gita knowledge. Your own conduct, your life, and the peace you enjoy, will attract others. Then, share your knowledge with them, too.

This will take you closer to God, and bring others there, too.

Appendix

Go to the Saints

You may be a breathing library. But you know nothing till you have met, lived with, and followed a Saint. Only then will you realize that all literary-knowledge is an intellectual burden. The road to real wisdom lies farther ahead. I admit that it is not given to all to live with a real Saint. But, still fewer recognise one when they come into contact with him - and only a microscopic minority really follow Him. If you are humble and earnest, you will find your Guru. For, it is the mercy of the Lord that appears before you as the human guide or Guru.

Till then, humbly walk along the path as best as you can. Emulate the example of Ekalavya - a hunter who made a clay-model of his Guru and learnt archery from 'Him'. Choose a Saint. Read about Him. Enliven Him within yourself, by practising His teachings. But, never, never pretend to have attained perfection. Be humble till you find God. Even the sublimest scriptural knowledge is nothing more than a glorious intellectual burden, so long as it remains in the realm of ideas, and it is not translated into action and actual experience.

If the Lord leads you to the Feet of a Saint, surrender yourself completely to Him. When you go to the Guru, behave like a wise tailor - take His - the Guru's - measurements. Do not bring a coat and ask him to fit into it! Keep all your own notions about the Guru, about spiritual life and God at the door before you enter His presence.

If you have to unlearn what you have previously learnt, it is a blessing - do so joyously. Cling to the Guru like a leach. Keep your eyes and ears, heart and mind, open; and your mouth shut. A real Guru will teach you more in silence than in oration. I have my own Master as the supreme example of this. Watch Him. Hear Him; every word that falls from His lips is gospel-truth. He will direct you along the path. You will find illumined in front of you, rung after rung of the spiritual ladder, and you will soon reach the goal.

Keep the Body and Mind Healthy

Lord Krishna says in the 13th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita: "This body is the field - for the play of the Divine". Therefore, He discourages violent austerities that torture the body 'and Me who live within the body'. The body houses the divine spark. For its unfoldment, the body is necessary. If you are to achieve this efficiently and rapidly, the body must be kept in good health.

Therefore, my Guru H.H. Sri Swami Sivananda emphasises at every turn that everyone should daily practise yoga asanas and pranayama. Suryanamaskara is an ideal all-round exercise. These yoga asanas are a set of such wonderful exercises that will confer their benefits upon you immediately and miraculously,

even if you do not accept their spiritual value. But, they have a marvellous spiritual benefit, which you will soon realize through practice. They exert a powerful influence on the nerves, by calming them, and on the mind. The asanas clarify your intellect, and enhance your mental and intellectual powers. Pranayama - regulation of breath - enables you to enjoy perennial youthfulness, agility, and keenness of intellect.

The All-Powerful Names of the Lord

My Master has given us the master-key to God-realisation: it is the Lord's Name. The repetition of a mantra - Name of God, which is called japa, or the singing of His Names, which is called kirtan, will enable you to attain knowledge and wisdom that centuries of study may not. There is some mysterious power in mantras which embody some Name or attribute of God.

Start your day with a few minutes silent repetition of any Name you like, and with a few minutes kirtan. Conclude your day in a similar manner. Volumes that you may read on the benefits of this method are nothing compared to what you will yourself feel after a few days practice.

Below some Mantras; choose one you like best:

1. Om Namah Shivaya
2. Om Namo Narayanaya
3. Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya
4. Om Sri Ram Jaya Ram Jaya Jaya Ram.
5. Hari Om.
6. Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare - Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare.
7. Kyrie Eleison Christe Eleison.
8. Om Jesus.
9. Ya Allah.
10. Allah-u Akbar.
- 11 Ya Haiyo Ya Kaiyyum.
12. Adonai Elehaino Adonai Ekhad.
13. Soham.
14. Om.
15. Om tat sat.

Existence of God Explained

Question: Even if God exists, why should I believe in Him?

Answer: Well, then I don't see anything you call electricity.

