

FREEDOM FROM SORROW

SUMMARY OF LECTURES ON THE BHAGAVAD GITA

DELIVERED AT THE DURBAN HINDU TEMPLE,
DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA,
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by
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1. Gita in practice

Knowing and doing are two different things - often one runs counter to the other. We are breathing libraries, but we do not know and do not want to know what to do with this intellectual burden.

I once met a very good spiritual aspirant who was highly devoted to a Yogi philosopher, an intellectual giant. He was eager to read an extremely simple book on Yoga by our Master, Swami Sivananda. I asked him why. His reply was revealing. 'I like the other Yogi's works, no doubt. They always elevate me. I read a few pages every night. But, when I wake up in the morning I do not know what to do. He does not give me any practical hint or guidance here, as Swami Sivananda does. Gurudev is all practical. He brings knowledge down to our daily life. His is 'Yoga in Daily Life.' He has no use for a Yoga. That adorns your bookshelf, occasionally descending into your head, making it swell or ache.

That is the characteristic of the Bhagavad Gita also. The theory in the Gita is but an introduction to the practice. Knowledge must bring about an inner transformation. And, that inner transformation must, in its turn, express itself in our daily life. Else, like the many good people of the world, we shall also delude ourselves, saying, 'I love all and see my own self in all, but when it comes to what I have, it is enough only for me, and how can I share that with others?' That is sheer hypocrisy, if it does not mean that we are cheating even ourselves, too.

Arjuna asks a very specific question of the Lord: 'If your insistence is on right understanding of the nature of the immortal Soul, and of the perishable world, and of our duty here, why do you goad me to engage myself in this terrible task of war?' The ancient seers too had emphatically declared: Rite jnanaan na muktih - one cannot attain moksha or final liberation without wisdom. Then, let us all go to the forest. Incidentally, if all people go to the forest, without the initial preparation, they will only cut the forest down and sow the seeds of disharmony there. For, we should not forget that the modern cities were forests once.

Krishna gently reminds Arjuna:

Sankhya yogau prithak balah pravadanti na panditah

Only children, not wise men, will say that knowledge and yoga or the practical application of that knowledge are two different things, and that

Ekam sankhyam cha yogam cha yah pasyati sa pasyati

He sees the truth who sees that knowledge and its practical application constitute one whole - the two sides of the same coin.

Krishna and, in our own times, Gurudev, called for a synthesis of knowledge and action. Buddhi - intelligence, discrimination, wisdom - should be linked to our life itself. That is buddhi yoga. Our actions should be enlightened with wisdom -

that is buddhi yoga. Who is able to do this, is a Siddha or Perfected Person.

Mankind today can be roughly classified into four strata of evolution:

(1) The lowest is the one where the man has not yet fully emerged from the bestial orders of creation. He wears the human body as a performing monkey in a circus might wear a suit and a hat. His nature is no better than the animals. He shares their instincts and life, though he speaks a different language. The animal hunts for food - the man in this category does so too - only the venue is different. He calls it his office. This hunting is paraphrased into the decent expression - earning the daily bread. He is concerned only with himself and perhaps his wife and children, bound to them, too by animal instincts.

(2) Slightly higher than this man is he who has transcended this animal nature and feels for the community. He does not live for himself and his family alone and he does not live by bread alone, either. The social workers and the humanitarian and philanthropic men and women belong to this class. They are human beings. They have humanity at heart. But, whilst serving humanity, they do not neglect their own material welfare.

(3) When the human heart is thus purified by a life of service, there descends into it a ray of Divine Light. In that Light man sees a distant vision - a faint glimmer, a hazy heaven, a fleeting phantasm. He is still very much an individual, with all human weaknesses and limitations. But he sees as in a dream or vision that things are really not what they appear to be. He has a glimpse of that 'paradise'. He would very much wish to bring it down to the earth. He works for it, too. And this involves a lot of unselfish service of humanity. It gives him pleasure now - all this service. He is striving for That Light to burst upon all the world. He wants all beings to be happy and prosperous. But he would, of course, have his share. He is human but he is also a seeker, he seeks and strives for perfection. Manushyanam sahasreshu kasehit yatati siddhaye, says Lord Krishna - one in thousands strives for perfection.

(4) The lure of that Divine Light leads him along the path of Gurudev's Integral Yoga, Lord Krishna's Buddhi Yoga. His gaze is fixed on the light. His heart longs for it. He is irresistibly drawn towards it. Perception of multiplicity and duality yields to perception of unity, as the scales of darkness fall from his eyes. He visualised that he was going towards that Light. But soon he realises that the Light has burst upon him, that he has for ever been filled and enveloped by, that Light. The fire of spiritual aspiration has burnt all animal instincts in him, sublimated even his human nature, and transformed him into a divinity, by shedding a flood of light on his essential divine nature. He looks around for the humanity he has been serving, but is amazed to discover that the illusion has vanished, and with it humanity, leaving the Reality alone - God alone. In the words of the Isavasya Upanishad: Isavasyam idam sarvam - All this is pervaded by God.

He is a Siddha or a Man of Perfection, a God on earth. He has reached the goal of all life. By his very presence he illumines. In his very proximity people lose their miseries, worries, and sufferings - all problems are dissolved. As in the case of Lord Dakshinarnurti

Chitram vatataror mule vridhassishyah gurur yuva
Gurostu maunam vyakhyanam sishyastu chinna samsayah

This is the scene: the youthful Guru is seated beneath a tree, and there are four aged disciples.

The Guru teaches by silence, and the doubts of the disciples are dispelled.

How to express the Inexpressible Truth which is beyond speech and mind? How to measure the immeasurable Infinite. There is duality when the lips are parted to utter a sound. Truth is reflected in the eyes of the Guru. He radiates It. When you stand before him, you feel It. The Guru is the perfect master - the Siddha.

To become perfect is the goal of all. It is reached by stages. At each stage, there is a synthesis of knowledge and action. That is the yoga of our Gurudev. His is a call of synthesis - synthesis of science and religion, of spiritual outlook and secular activities, of matter and spirit, of east and west. Gurudev's message has already achieved this miraculous synthesis. East and West have united under his banner of Divine Life. Together we reap a very rich harvest of material and spiritual blessings, which would otherwise have been impossible.

Two beggars, one lame and the other blind, were sitting at a street corner. People took very little notice of them. In this mad rush in the modern world, where is the hope that someone would stop and drop a coin in their bowls? The lame man decided to befriend the able-bodied blind man, and he said, 'Friend, please carry me on your shoulders. I will direct you. Together we shall be able to pursue the people and go round the streets and earn a living.' They did so.

Without the religious spirit, matter is 'blind' - without translation into physical activity, spirit is 'lame' and ineffective. When the two are synthesised, the goal is easy to reach.

The goal has got to be reached: Kalenatma-i vindati - Man reaches the Self, in due time. The disease of samsara or birth-and-death has got to be cured, now or later. There are two ways open to us, as there are two ways of healing a physical ailment. One is the physician's prescription - the Master's Call. We can heed to it and get healed. If we do not, the second is inevitable: the surgeon's knife, and pain and suffering - the knocks and blows in life. If we awaken ourselves in time, we shall save ourselves the miseries of birth and death, repeated suffering and torture.

Let us listen to His Call - Buddhi Yoga. It is summed up in that amazingly simple half-verse in the Gita: Swa karmana tamabhyarchya siddhim vindati manavah -

by worshipping that Omnipresent God with the flowers of everyone of his actions, man attains Perfection. In his eyes, he himself is transformed into a humble instrument of God, and the person whom he serves is transformed into God, and the action into a flower of worship. Thus treating life itself as Sadhana or Yoga, we shall soon attain Perfection. In the words of my divine Master:

Serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realise.
Be good, do good, be kind, be compassionate.
Enquire, 'Who am I?', know the self and be free.

That is the message of the Gita. My Master was a living commentary on the Gita. What I offer at your feet, at the feet of the Lord who dwells in all, is just a few flowers I have gathered in Gurudev's Garden. The wisdom is His and His alone. I have only acted as a postman, as a loudspeaker, as an empty reed. May Gurudev's Blessings guide us all.

2. Lord Krishna and The Bhagavad Gita

Salutations to Lord Sri Krishna, the perfect Incarnation of the Supreme Being Itself.

The 'why' and 'wherefore' of the world are shrouded in divine mystery. Even as an intelligent layman does not burden himself with such fruitless enquiry, but, on the other hand, busies himself with activity intended to promote his welfare on earth, the spiritual aspirant attends to his spiritual needs, so that he may attain spiritual enlightenment. He does see that in this world there is an almost ceaseless conflict between good and evil. He is too much of a realist to close his eyes to this conflict. He knows, too, that though evil is inherent in creation, it is not divine, and hence he who would want to liberate himself from this cycle of transmigration ought to release himself from evil and ultimately go beyond even the good, to merge himself in the Ultimate Truth.

In this conflict between good and evil, there frequently arise situations in which it looks as though the divine powers might collapse before the ruthless, lawless, and callous diabolical forces. Yet, this situation only serves the Divine Purpose, paradoxical as it may sound. The good man who has so long been battling with the evil one on his own strength, with all good intention, has to be made to turn to God - that is indeed the Divine Purpose - and the good man's reward for all his labours is God-realisation. Unaided conquest of the evil might lead him to complacency and keep him away from God. Hence, the Play builds up to the climax. When there is imminent danger of the evil ones wiping out the good unwittingly, they, the evil ones, trigger the manifestation of God on earth. The good man turns to Him in prayer and prayer draws Divine Grace down to the earth, manifests the Unmanifest, and unveils the veiled Godhead. 'For the destruction of the evil forces and the protection of the good, and for the re-establishment of dharma on earth, the Lord manifests Himself in this world of Man.' That is the Divine Promise, re-stated by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita.

Paritranaya sadhoonam vinaasaya cha dushkritaam
Dharmasamsthaapanaarthaya sambhavaami yuge yuge
For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked, and for the
establishment of righteousness, I am born in every age.

'Yuge, yuge' does not mean once in an epoch or era or an arbitrary period of astronomical time, but 'a juncture', when the conflict between Good and Evil reaches the moment at which Divine Intervention is imperative for the threefold purpose of putting the evil down, protecting - liberating, illuminating, or giving the experience of God-realisation to - the good and restoring the balance of righteousness on earth. Hence, we find that there are many incarnations in every astronomical age or historical epoch, and at many parts of the world simultaneously.

This is possible, too. God can incarnate Himself in several places at the same time.

In fact, it is good to bear in mind that His Incarnation on earth does not vacate His Seat in Heaven or cancel His Omnipresence. An analogy will make this clear. The water in the ocean rises up in the form of vapour, forms as cloud, rains on the earth or snows on hill-tops, and flows down as rivers. It is not exhausted in this process. As water it is visible, as vapour it is invisible, and as snow or rain it is again visible; but it is there all the time. That is the meaning of the Shanti Mantra which we often recite:

Purnamadah purnamidam pnrnaat purnamudachyate
Purnasya purnamadaya purnamevaavasishyate
That - God - is Full. This - the manifestation - is full. From That this has come. Even after this has come out of That, That remains full.

In other words, Infinity minus Infinity remains Infinity. Infinity can appear in infinite forms and it still remains infinite.

God is present everywhere at all times when there is need. He manifests Himself where the need is felt This does not exhaust Him, and therefore He is still present everywhere in all His glory. Hence we find in our Puranas stories of two incarnations of God existing at the same time - Lord Rama and Lord Parasurama, for instance.

The distinguishing mark of an Avatara has been clearly laid down in the Gita: Dharmasamsthapanarthaya - establishment of Dharma. This needs reflection. An Avatara need not exhibit any superhuman signs externally. The Ramayana actually warns us against looking for such signs. If these signs were the criteria for determining an Avatara or incarnation of God, we should be worshipping Ravana, who had ten heads, twenty hands, and had power over even the celestials as an incarnation, rather than Lord Rama who was to all intents and purposes a mere man. But, we do not. Why? Because Lord Rama established Dharma here and Ravana was incarnate evil. Again even more goodness, however exalted it may be, does not warrant one's elevation to the status of an incarnation of God. Harischandra, for instance, was noted for his adherence to speaking truth even at the risk of his life. He was a good man far above others. But he was no more than that. He was not regarded as an incarnation of God. But Lord Krishna is an incarnation of God because, in addition to actually doing away with many wicked beings, the Lord had proclaimed the Truth in the Bhagavad Gita, a universal scripture for all time to come, to guide man away from wickedness towards the path of righteousness. He had surely fulfilled His own definition of an Avatara - the establishment of righteousness on earth.

Dharma which is generally translated righteousness means a lot more than that. It is that which ensures the salvation of the individual and which holds the society together. It is one of the four purusharthas - goals of human life. It forms the foundation and the basis, as it were, of the other three - artha - wealth, kama - pleasure, and moksha - liberation.

It is good to reflect over the order in which these four are described - dharma,

artha, kama and moksha. It has a very deep significance. It reveals that the ancient seer of wisdom, contrary to the accusation of the ignorant modern materialist, was not blind to the social and biological needs of the human race, and did not preach a philosophy of world-and-life-negation. The acquisition of wealth is necessary. Enjoyment of the pleasures of life is necessary. But they are to be based on dharma and they should lead to moksha. They should be within the bounds of dharma and moksha. A river which flows between the two banks can bestow incalculable blessings on the community of man. You can drink of its waters, it can irrigate your fields and produce food, it can help you generate electric power to illumine your houses and to run your factories. But the same river, when it breaks its bounds, will wash your houses away, ruin the crops on your farms, and kill men and cattle. Even so, wealth and pleasure, if they flow within the 'banks' of dharma and moksha, can promote the welfare of the community, but if they break these banks, they will only destroy the community itself. Hence, Lord Krishna while describing Himself as prosperity, warns us that they who earn wealth by unrighteous means are the diabolical. Again, He describes Himself as 'desire for pleasure in beings who are not opposed to dharma.'

Dharma is that code of conduct which guides man to the goal of Self-realisation or liberation from samsara. He who establishes such a code of conduct in this world, is an incarnation of God Himself. It is in this light that the devout Indian regards Great Beings like Lord Buddha, Lord Jesus, our master Swami Sivananda, and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, as incarnations of the Lord. It is in the same light that the spiritual aspirant is asked to look upon his Guru - whoever he is - as an incarnation of God, for it is He who manifests Himself as the guiding light to the aspirant, at a critical juncture when the conflict of the good and evil within the latter has reached the climax. Even the earnest Christian seeker after Truth adopted this attitude, as is evident from the following injunction in the 'philokalia'. 'Having found such a man - a spiritual teacher, cleave to him with body and spirit, like a devoted son to his father, and from then onwards obey all his commands implicitly, accord with him in everything, and see him not as a mere man, but as Christ Himself'.

3. Guru and Scripture - Our Two Eyes

To one who walks the path of righteousness, and even more so to the spiritual aspirant, these two, then are indispensable: the Guru or the spiritual teacher and scriptural sanction. These two restrain the mind which is otherwise impelled to unrighteous activity by various desires. Such activity, therefore, does not lead him to ultimate peace or happiness, as is declared by the Lord in the Gita - vide Ch XVI-23. Hence, Krishna asserts:

Tasmaat saastram pramaanam tey kaaryaakaarya vyavasthithau
Jnaatwaa saastravidhaanoktarn karma kartum ihaarhasi
Therefore, let the scriptures be thy authority in determining what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Having known what is said in the ordinance of the scriptures, thou shouldst act here.

Even patently good actions as tapas - austerity may be totally diabolical if they are not in accordance with the scriptural injunctions, and hence they should be avoided by the wise man as Lord Krishna makes abundantly clear in Gita Ch XVII-5,6. Sastras or scriptures are unnecessarily regarded by the modern man as tools of priestcraft, designed to delude and cheat the credulous, to subserve the selfish ends of the priests or Brahmins. This is utterly wrong. The scriptures are like the maps and charts that guide the pilot of a plane or captain of a ship. They guide the faithful seeker away from the rocks and whirlpool, safely towards the harbour of God-realisation.

Even these scriptures often need someone to explain them to us. They can be correctly interpreted only by the seer who has verified them in his own practice and reached the goal. That is the Guru for us. Without a Guru, it is impossible for the vast majority of us to reach the goal, or even to make any spiritual progress. The sincere aspirant will understand this and will not cite the examples of great sages like Dattatreya and Ramana Maharshi to support the view that no external Guru is necessary and that he is his own Guru. These arguments are the camouflage under which the insincere and arrogant let their wickedness thrive. Even if a sadhaka or spiritual aspirant is highly advanced, he will assume that he still needs guidance and resort to a Guru - at least to verify and confirm the validity of his experience and progress.

Lord Krishna Himself sets wonderful example in this respect, by going to Sandipini for instruction. Our divine Master Swami Sivananda is another modern example. Clairvoyants tell us that Gurudev had had Lord Krishna's Darshan even before He had formally renounced the world in 1923. Yet, as soon as he reached Rishikesh, Gurudev sought a Guru and found one in Swami Viswananda Maharaj from whom He received initiation. Following in Gurudev's footsteps, the glorious and radiant saint Swami Chidananda, too, sought a Guru in our Master even though our Master has often referred to Swami Chidananda as his own Guru. Such is the attitude of, the truly great. Yet the half baked aspirant would delude himself and the world by saying that an external Guru is unnecessary, and that he had found the inner Guru.

The seeker after Truth regards his Guru as God, for it is when he adopts that attitude that the knowledge that the Guru imparts to him becomes fruitful. The Svetasvetara upanishad emphatically declares:

Yasya deve para bhaktir yathaa deve tathaa gurau
Tasyaite kathithaahyarthaah prakaashantey mahaatmanah
Who has supreme devotion to God and equally supreme devotion to the Guru, unto that high-souled one will these spiritual truths be revealed.

Yet, the modern intellectual questions the adoration of the Guru as a sign of primitive 'personality cult'. Little does he know that there is no other way of effectively dealing with the little human ego. It has to be completely surrendered to the Master who alone knows how to subdue it and ultimately annihilate it. Moreover, the Guru who has realised God or Brahman is no longer a human-being, but God Himself. Take a few pieces of black, cold, coal and add them to the fire. Instantly they become one with the fire and they can no longer be regarded as mere pieces of coal. Even so, the man in the Guru, when he came into contact with the Divinity of God, was entirely transfigured into God, and so deserves the adoration due to a Divinity. I have already shown how this procedure has been adopted all over the world by the faithful, sincere spiritual aspirant, and that it is not a sign of the oriental slave-mentality. These spiritual practices can be understood in their true light only by the earnest seeker after Truth and not by the idle curiosity-monger.

Even in the field of our worldly activity, if we are to tread the path of righteousness, we ought to have a Guru to guide us on this path. You cannot say that your own inner voice will guide you in finding what is right and what is wrong. When you are yourself engaged in the daily battle of life, this is not possible, and it will take a considerable time and training to distinguish the Inner Voice from the clamour of the impure mind. This is quite obvious; and the appointment of a referee to guide the players in a cricket, foot-ball, or a tennis match is an instance in point. Could the players themselves not act as their own referees. They are no doubt honest and abide by the referee's decision; but in the heat of the play they would not be able to discover their own foul-play. The referee is the Guru on the spiritual path and the path of righteous activity and the 'rules of the game' are found in the Scripture.

The spiritual aspirant dare not abandon Guru and scripture at any stage - they are like his two eyes. As long as he exists as an individual in this world, so long is there the danger of the lurking evils in his heart assuming great proportions and leading him astray. Only when he has merged in the Supreme and is not even conscious of his existence as an individual can he discard them - but then he himself is not there to discard anything.

'Anyathaa paatitya sankhayaa' - otherwise there is danger of a downfall, warns Sage Narada in his Bhakti Sutras. A moments carelessness might cost a life-time's effort.

Bhagavad Gita - The Hidden Treasure

Salutations to Lord Sri Krishna, the Master Yogi, the Indweller of all of us.

Two men shared a room in a hotel. One of them had a lot of money, on which the other had an eye. Every night, after the rich man went to bed, the other man would search for the money, but without success. At last, he made bold to ask the other, 'Where have you hidden your wealth?' To his astonishment, he was told, 'Friend, it is underneath your own pillow. I knew that you would not search for it there, and hence I decided that that was the safest place to hide it.'

What we seek for, what we need, is within ourselves. In it, we can find our rest, our peace, our happiness, and our satisfaction. Till it is rediscovered, we shall not know any of these, however vigorous may be our search.

This hidden treasure is revealed to us in that Holy Universal scripture - the Bhagavad Gita, which is gaining ever increasing recognition among the people all over the world, as a Book which contains solutions to the basic problems that beset the path of Man.

The devout Indian regards Lord Krishna as the Purna Avatara or Full Incarnation of God. That is not only because Lord Krishna was fully conscious that He was God Himself, but also because Krishna represents in His own earthly life all-round perfection. The scripture that He gave mankind also shares this integral perfection that was characteristic of His life.

The hall-mark of the Gita is that it excludes no one from its loving embrace. It addresses itself to 'Man', without any distinction whatsoever. 'Man' includes 'woman' and this, too, is specifically made clear when Lord Krishna declares, 'Women, businessmen and Sudra - the unlettered servant-class of ancient days, also can attain the Supreme State.' He goes even farther than this and invites the sinner to enter the Kingdom of God, by turning away from sin and devoting himself to God; and his past sinful life would not then be able to keep him away from God. It is this catholicity of outlook that has, in recent years, given the Bhagavad Gita the status of a universal scripture, with an irresistible appeal to people of all religions and nationalities.

In fact, my Master Sri Swami Sivananda, has often declared, 'Mankind is One, God is One, and Religion is One'. The whole world is our home. We are all children of that One God. In our home there are many rooms and apartments. All that is in that house belongs to all of us. In that house, India may be likened to one of the prayer rooms. The Gita and some other scriptures like the Upanishads have been preserved in that room. But it does not mean that these scriptures are the monopoly of Indians. They belong to you, all of you all over the world. This is one of the first lessons that we learn from the Gita itself - no one has the monopoly of spiritual Truth.

Secondly, the Gita is important to us, because it promises freedom from misery, here and now. It is not an 'other-worldly' or pessimistic doctrine, nor was Krishna an advocate of escapism. 'Fight the battle of life,' is His commandment, never to shirk it. A bold departure from the philosophy of world-and-life-negation which had somehow crept into the mind of the Indian who had been taught to regard God as the goal of life. That goal was not to be sought away from life, by running away from the world, but in and through life and the world. Hence, the Gita is truly for us, for you and me, who do not want to run away from the world, nor to suffer the agonies of misunderstood values. Krishna assures us that God created the world and Man created misery. By a wise approach to life itself, by understanding the meaning of life, it is possible for man here and now to snap the chain or misery that shackles him to the wheel of transmigration and, while ensuring Final Liberation later, he can enjoy the Bliss of God-realisation here and now.

Ihaiva tairjtiyah sargo yesham saamyeh sthitam manah
Nirdosham hi samam brahma tasmaat brahmani te sthitah
Even here, rebirth is overcome by those whose mind rests in quiescence. Brahman is spotless and quiescent; therefore, they are established in Brahman.

Lord Krishna illustrated this by living such a life and He did not fail to point out that this was the goal, by exalting King Janaka who lived a life of intense activity, while being God conscious all the time.

Thirdly, the Bhagavad Gita offers man a solution to all his problems, not only concerning his spiritual life or inner life, but also concerning his life in this world of matter and his relationship with the world and other individuals here. Hence, Mahatma Gandhi regarded the Gita as the Mother to whom the child ran, whatever be the problem. Here again it is because Lord Krishna's approach to life itself is extremely practical, and His commandments are unambiguous, that it is possible for us to derive inspiration from His Words to solve our every-day problems. 'The whole world is a big battlefield,' says my Master. 'The battle of Mahabharata is still raging within you. Ignorance or Avidya is Dhritarashtra, the individual soul is Arjuna. The Indweller Who dwells in your heart is Lord Krishna, the Charioteer.' The Gita has, therefore, a message, for you, in your every-day life.

The Bhagavad Gita is regarded as even superior to the Upanishads, the great source-books of Indian philosophy, which treat of Brahma Vidya or Knowledge of the Infinite. The Upanishads are regarded as the Breath of Brahma the Creator, whereas the Bhagavad Gita was taught by the Lord himself, the 'Father' of the creator.

Lord Krishna has given the distilled essence of the Upanishads in the Gita. Hence, at the conclusion of each chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, we assert that Bhagavad Gita is an Upanishad - Bhagavad Gitaa-soo-panishadsu.

The Gita is also a Yoga Sastra. Whereas most of the principal Upanishads treat of

the Supreme Being, leaving later Masters to evolve paths to that Supreme Being, the Gita deals both with Brahma Vidya and with the method of attaining it. Hence it is Yoga Sastra, too, as we assert in the formula with which we conclude the study of every chapter.

Meditation on The Gita

Before we undertake the study of a scripture, it is most essential that we should attune our mind to it. Unless we are in the proper frame of mind, the study will not be fruitful and we shall not be able to absorb the knowledge. This was almost indispensable in olden days, when there were no books. The keenest attention to what the Master had to say was the only way in which the student could assure that not a single idea was lost. We find this in practice even nowadays. For example, when we want to do some 'solid' reading like the study of text books, we ask that there be no distraction, so that we could be allowed to concentrate our entire mind on the text

This concentration is greatly aided by faith. If we actually believe that the scripture itself is holy, then the mind is ready to accept what is contained in it. In reverencing the scripture, the mind focuses itself entirely on the teaching, keeping the 'doubting Thomas' at bay.

The idea of regarding the scripture itself as capable of conferring great blessings on us, and warding off evils, is not blind faith of the Hindus. All true seekers after Truth all over the world have shared this. I was wonder-struck to find in the 'Philokalia' - a marvelous book of the teachings of several Christian mystics, clear enunciation of similar faith. Like the pious Hindu, they believed that the Devil dared not enter the place where the scripture was kept. The Sikhs similarly venerate the Guru Granth Saheb. And the Moslems worship the Holy Quran with intense faith and devotion.

Often, faith can achieve what reason cannot. We can arrive at understanding via reason. But, during the process of reasoning, the intellect is often in a state of commotion, making it difficult for it to see the Truth. Faith is the function of the inner soul. When the light of faith shines on the intellect, this commotion ceases, and the truth is perceived with clarity. A simple analogy will make this clear. If there is some dirt suspended in water, and if the water is contained in a porcelain vessel, the dirt can be located if you go on stirring the water in the vessel; some time or other it will show up. But, if you pour the water into transparent glass vessel, and see through the glass vessel, the dirt will be immediately visible, for the water is undisturbed and the glass jar permits you to look into it from all angles. The former is the intellectual approach; the latter is the way of faith.

Hence, it is customary for the faithful to worship the Gita - the Book - itself before commencing its study. The first of the nine Dhyana Slokas or Invocatory Hymns does this:

Om Paarthaaya pratibodhitaam bhagavataa Naaraayanena swayam
Vyaasena grathitaam puraanamuninaa madhe mahabhaaratam
Adwaitaamrita varshineem bhagavateem ashtaada saadhyaayineem
Amba twaam anusandadhaami Bhagavadgeete bhavadveshineem
Om, O Bhagavad Gita, with which Arjuna was illumined by the Lord Narayana Himself, and which was composed in the Mahabharata by the ancient sage Vyasa, the divine Mother, the destroyer of rebirth, the showerer of the nectar, of non duality and consisting of eighteen chapters - upon Thee, O Bhagavad Gita, O affectionate Mother, I meditate.

The word 'Gita' is regarded as feminine. And the whole verse refers to the Gita in the feminine gender, 'Amba'- Mother, is how we address the scripture. Nature has endowed only the Mother with the care of the young ones. Mother, therefore, symbolises one who cares for us, nourishes us, protects us, and patiently brings us up. The Upanishads might be compared, in this context, to a stern disciplinarian father. But, Gita, our Mother - feeds us with the milk of wisdom, lovingly and unfailingly.

'Parthaya Pratibodhitham' - Arjuna was awakened and illumined by the Gita when he was on the horns of a dilemma. Indian scriptures refer to the dilemma as 'Dharma Sankata'. It is not a situation which demands a choice between good and-evil - that is no problem at all. and the good has definitely and unhesitatingly to be chosen. Dharma Sankata is a situation where the man standing at the cross roads finds that both the roads in front lead either to good or both of them to evil. Two courses of action are possible. Both of them seem to be good or both of them seem to be unrighteous. It is then that the Light of the Bhagavad Gita can be used to find and walk the path paved with the Divine Will.

Sri Gurudev's renunciation of the world and the medical career in Malaya is an example. If he had asked Himself the question 'Is it right to continue to serve the sick or is it right to renounce the world and embrace Sanyasa?', the answer would have been: 'Both are right.' If he had framed His question in another way, 'Is it right to give up this wonderful service of the sick? On the other hand, may it not be that I am getting attached to this service and am, therefore, clothing this attachment with the cover of justification?', then both the courses open to Him might have proved to contain an undesirable element in them. Here, only God's Light can guide us to His will, human intelligence fails, and reason stands baffled.

When Arjuna was on the horns of such a dilemma, the Bhagavad Gita enabled him to see his path clearly illumined. To fight seemed to be right - it was his duty as a warrior. Not to fight seemed to be right too - it saved him from the sin of killing his own kith and kin. To fight seemed to be wrong - it involved killing. Not to fight seemed to be wrong - it involved shirking his duty. It is here Lord Krishna's message has its unique field for application. Moreover, if we do not bear in mind that the Gita was taught to Arjuna, and if we forget the context, then we begin to wonder why Krishna sanctioned war and violence. But, if we remember that the Gita was first revealed for Arjuna's enlightenment, then we realise that Krishna's is the Gospel of Duty worshipfully performed, that Arjuna's problem is often our own and the Message of the Gita the best solution.

'Bhagavata Narayanena Swayam' - by the Lord Narayana Himself, 'Vyasena Grathitham' - chronicled by Vyasa, 'Adwaitamrita Varshineem' - showers the nectar of Oneness, these three assure us that the scripture is worth our devout study. When we want to study a book, we take these three into account. By whom was the truth revealed, by whom was the truth recorded, and what is the subject-matter of the book. The subject-matter should be what we seek to know. We do

not study a book on history. If we are interested in physics, the author should be a competent authority, neither an impostor nor a man of half-knowledge. And, the recorder, if he is himself not the author, should be faithful and competent. In the case of the Bhagavad Gita, we are assured that the scripture deals with Holy Brahma Vidya or Adwaita, that Lord Narajana Himself is the author, and that it recorded by Vyasa, a sage who had ample previous experience in narrating the Puranas, and who was himself a manifestation of Divinity.

When we realise Oneness, we go beyond fear. 'Dwi teeyad vaz Bhayam Bhavata' - say the Upanishads. Fear is always related to another person. If you realise your Oneness with all, you will never fear anything anywhere. Bhagavad Gita showers the nectar of this Cosmic Consciousness on you, and thereby liberates you from fear.

'Bhagavateem' - Gita itself is deified here. Hinduism, which has been accused of idolatry and polytheism, rises to a wonderful height in this deification of Knowledge of Truth. For the sake of that Knowledge, even its Abode, the Book, is deified. In pre-printing days, scriptures were sculptured, both in the form of inscriptions and in the form of pictorial representations - the idols. Our temples today stand as monuments to the selfless determination of their authors to preserve the Eternal Scripture, and to their faith in it. Later, palm leaves were used. Copies could be made only with great difficulty. Hence even these were reverently adored and preserved.

To the seeker, the scripture is not palm leaf or paper, but the Light that illumines his soul, and is therefore Divine. What is the Bhagavad Gita? It is the word of God. It is the Revelation of Truth. It is something which is of God - so, God Himself, since He is One and Indivisible. God is with form and without form, and beyond both - i.e., indefinable. That Indefinable God is delicately described in this scripture by His own manifestation. But the description is not in the word. He transcends Thought and Speech. One who meditates on the Word thus revealed through the Gita, intuitively realises the indescribable Truth. The Word that thus reveals God the Ultimate Truth is Itself regarded as Divine - Bhagavateem, and referred to as a Goddess, Mother. The Mother reveals the Father to the child. Gita - the Mother, reveals the true nature of God - the Father, to us, seekers after Truth. The devout Hindu believes that even this is an irreversible process. It is always the mother who reveals the identity of the father; no one else truly knows. This truth, again, is beautifully brought out in the story of the Yaksha in the Kenopanishad, where Uma, the Divine Mother, reveals to the celestials the identity of the unknown being and says, 'It was God.' Because the Gita thus enlightens the individual soul as to the true nature of God, the Gita is regarded as Divine Mother Bhagavatee.

'Ashtadashadhyayineem' - the Gita comprises of 18 chapters. There are 18 Puranas, 18 adds up to 9 - 1 plus 8. This digit 9 is an unchanging number. All the digits viz, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, add up to 9, when you reduce them all to a single digit. Multiply 9 by any other number and then reduce the result to a single digit,

and you will get 9. It is a constant. It denotes God who is changeless, eternal, and constant. The Gita leads us to Him. 9 is the symbol of fullness and finality - all of which denote God. It is the 'Last Word' as it were, and the restatement of the Eternal Truth, which, while not precluding further restatement or interpretation, does represent the Last Word, the Truth.

'Bhavadweshineem' - Gita is a scripture of Cosmic Love. Again and again, the Lord exhorts us to love all, and exalts hatredlessness as a divine quality - 'Adweshta Sarvabhutanam.' We are not to exclude anything or anyone from our heart. But, and here is a stern word of caution against letting this serve as cover for worldliness, the Gita is, it as it were, an enemy of Samsara, of worldliness, of the wheel of transmigration. The implication is quite clear. One who resorts to the Gita will reflect this quality in him - he will be free from worldliness, as that is precisely what the Bhagavad Gita will do for him.

Meditation on Vyasa

Namastute Vyaasa visaalabuddhe phullaaravindaayata patranetra
Yenatvayaa bhaarata taila poornah praj vaalito jnaanamaya pradeepah
Salutations unto thee, O Vyasa of broad intellect and with eyes large like the petals of
fullblown lotuses, by whom the lamp of knowledge, filed with the oil of the Mahabharata,
has been lighted.

After worshipping the Holy Book itself, we adore the one who gave it to us in its present form. But, for sage Vyasa, the great knowledge would have been lost to us. The great sage dictated it. Lord Ganesha wrote it down with His own tusk. This divine scribe had a condition: that He should not be made to sit idle for a moment. Vyasa, who was full with the revelation, readily consented, but stipulated his own condition. Ganesha should not proceed unless he understood what he had written. Occasionally, we come across very difficult verses in the Mahabharata - obviously, Vyasa wanted to take a breath, and so compelled Ganesha to think.

'Vishala Buddhe' - Vyasa is extolled as one who has Cosmic Intellect, Cosmic Vision. There is no narrow mindedness or sectarianism in his teachings. The Mahabharata and the Bhagavad Gita are truly universal in their application.

'Phullaravindayatapatranetra' - The expression 'Lotus Eyed ' is generally applied to divinities in our scriptures. Its application to Sage Vyasa here is to remind us that Vyasa himself was a manifestation of God, and not a mere human being. No one but God Himself could have produced such a marvelous scripture as the Mahabharata.

'Jnamaya Pradeepah' - The Gita is the Light of Wisdom. It springs from the oil - the Mahabharata. It has been said of the Mahabharata that the wisdom that is contained in all other scriptures is contained in it, and that what the Mahabharata does not contain is not worth knowing. It is regarded as the fifth Veda. The four Vedas - Rig, Yajur, Sam, and Atharvan, were difficult of comprehension, and hence had been prescribed only for the Brahmanas who had the required time, leisure and training for it. For the men of other occupations, who were busy day and night in the service of society in various other fields, and who, therefore, had neither the time nor the training to understand the Vedas, the Mahabharata was given by Vyasa, and it contains all knowledge essential to life.

The Mahabharata, and the Gita in particular, contain Jnana or the highest wisdom. Only Jnana is necessary to ennoble and enrich our life, and make it fruitful. Only Jnana will be able to guide us when we are on the horns of a dilemma. Virtue without wisdom defeats itself, as one of the stories in the Mahabharata illustrates. A man had vowed to speak the truth alone. One day, he saw a Brahmana running in one direction. A few minutes later, a dacoit with a dagger drawn, approached him and asked him in which direction the Brahmana had gone. The truthful man pointed out the direction in which he had seen the Brahmana run. This resulted in the Brahmana being killed. When the good man

died, he was taken to hell. When he protested, he was told that the truth which he had uttered resulted in the killing of Brahmana and had, therefore, lost all its merit.

Virtue has all the time to be guided by Jnana, wisdom. Else, under cover of ignorance, vice and evil will masquerade as virtue. If we walk in the light of Jnana provided by the Gita, we shall unerringly choose the path of righteousness. To the great Vyasa, who gave us this lamp of wisdom, our humble prostrations.

Meditation on Krishna

Prapanna paarijaataaya tottravetraika paanaye
Jnaanamudraaya Krishnaaya geetamrita duhe namah
Salutations to Krishna, the Parijata or the Kalpataru, the bestower of desires for those
who take refuge in Him, the holder of the whip in one hand, the holder of the Symbol of
Wisdom, the milker of the Gita-nectar.

Parijata or the Kalpataru was the wish-fulfilling tree which was born of the Ocean of Milk, when the forces of Good and Evil churned it. Lord Krishna is here extolled as that Kalpataru, to those who surrender themselves to Him. God, however, is not only a wish-fulfilling tree, but also an awakener. Draupadi surrendered herself to the Lord and enjoyed His protection. Yet, she did not become a weakling shirking the due performance of her allotted duties. She fought the battle of life boldly all the time, depending upon God. The wise man remembers God, but also remembers that God has given him the eye of wisdom to solve his problems, the will and the strength to give effect to those solutions. The foolish devotee who 'surrenders' himself to God and expects Him to feed him and to remain for ever at his beck and call, treats Him as a servant. That is the height of unwisdom.

True: the Lord styles Himself as the servant of His devotees. That is His business. We should not treat Him so. His Feet give us refuge. But in one of his Hands, He holds a whip - so as not to let us slumber, forget God. Forgetfulness of God defeats the purpose of surrender and makes it a farce. We cannot say, 'I surrender myself to Thee, Oh Lord', and then go about living in the world, forgetful of God. Such surrender is just a convenient cover for past sins. The real devotee who, realising the worthlessness of wordly life, and repenting sincerely for past sinful life, surrenders himself to the Lord Will, on the contrary, never forget Him.

Even in the case of the hypocritical devotee who fitfully surrenders himself to the Lord and then conveniently forgets Him, the Lord who has now become the real 'owner' of the devotee, keeps him awake to His existence, if necessary with the help of His Whip - suffering, pain, failure and adversity. This Whip keeps the devotee spiritually vigilant. Surrender without spiritual vigilance is sheer mockery.

If we surrender ourselves to Him, and then keep awake to the Reality, we shall see the Jnana Mudra of Krishna, which He shows with the other hand. With the palm open and fingers stretched out, touch the tip of the thumb with the tip of the index finger - this is Jnana Mudra or Chin Mudra. It means renounce the three - represented by the three open fingers, i.e., three states, bodies, worlds, and unite the self with God. In other words, the very picture of Krishna given here says to us: 'Surrender yourself. Keep awake. I shall impart Jnana to you.' That Jnana or spiritual enlightenment He imparts to us through the Bhagavad Gita - the nectar of Gita.

Sarvopanishado gaavo dogdhaa gopaalanandanah
Paartha vatsah sudheer bhoktaa dugdham geetanritam mahat
All the Upanishads are the cows; the milker is the Delighter of Nanda - Krishna. Arjuna

is the calf. Men of purified intellect are the drinkers. The milk is the great nectar of the Gita.

Lord Krishna, as a Boy, used to steal milk, curd and butter from the houses of the Gopis and give them to His friends. Later in life, too, He has 'stolen' the secrets of the Upanishads - the cows, with the help of the calf Arjuna and given to us the Milk of Wisdom, in the form of the Gita. Yet, only the discriminative aspirants will drink this Milk of Wisdom.

There is something amusing in the picture painted by this verse. Milking cow is an art. The cow will yield milk only to one who knows it. Krishna is referred here to as 'Gopalanandanah' - darling of the protector of the cows. You have to be friendly with the cows - the Upanishads, if you want the milk of their wisdom. Otherwise if one approaches the task without equipping himself with the qualification, he may not get milk, but only kicks. Upanishads are difficult of comprehension by the layman. It is easy to understand the reason for this. 'Upanishad' means 'to sit near'. There have always been only very few students who were genuinely interested in Self-realisation, and who were competent to receive the instruction from the Guru. After serving him, earning his grace, he was purifying their heart and preparing the receptive vessel of their mind. They led an extremely austere life and were interested only in Self-knowledge. On account of these circumstances and qualifications, they were able to understand the Upanishads, which are otherwise, difficult of comprehension. The students not only heard but saw their Masters in whose spiritual aura they lived and learnt - they naturally understood more than could be put in words. Everything was clear to them, because of their personal tuition.

I can appreciate this. A word or often a mere smile or gesture from my Master Swami Sivananda was more meaningful than a volume on Yoga. This word or gesture cannot be put in words, even by the ablest of writers. Again, in the case of the scriptures, there is this other difficulty. Words often change their connotation. One gets bewildered when for instance one reads in the Gita itself:

Atmaiva hyatmano Bandhuh
Atmaiva ripuratmanah
Atma alone is the friend of the Atma; Atma alone is the enemy of the Atma.

The literal meaning makes it look as though the 'Atma' or Self can be our enemy, too. It needs a master to explain this, with the help of the next verse, where it is clearly stated that one is one's own friend when self-control has been acquired, and that one is one's enemy when there is no such self-control. When the Master was sitting in front of them, perhaps a gesture was enough to make the meaning clear. In cold print, it is subject to perversion, especially when our heart is impure. Who nowadays is interested in equipping oneself with discrimination, dispassion, virtues, and intense aspiration to realise God? And, yet, in Upanishadic times, the aspirant approached the Guru only after equipping himself with these qualifications, and always studied the scripture with the Master. Hence he was able to understand the Upanishadic truths, which are beyond the intelligence of the modern man, for whose sake Lord Krishna has

given the very essence of the Upanishads in the Bhagavad Gita.

To the discriminative seeker after Truth, the Gita gives newer and newer light everyday. Hence the need to study it daily and religiously and faithfully.

Vasudevasutam devam kamsachaanooramardanam
Devakee paramaandam Krishnam vande jagadgurum
I salute Krishna, the Guru of the world, the God, the son of Vasudva, the destroyer of
Kamsa and Chanura, the supreme bliss of Devaki.

This small verse is an ocean of wisdom in itself. It recalls to our mind the Advent Sri Krishna.

'Vasudeva Sutam, Devaki Paramanandam' - Vasudeva and Devaki had in a previous incarnation asked a boon of the Lord that they should have a son like . The Lord Himself became their son - as Krishna, in answer to this prayer.

Who else could be like Him?

Devaki was Kamsa's sister, cousin. Kamsa was an Asura, a diabolical person. 'Asura' should not confuse us into thinking that he is a special type of being. Ravana was an Asura too, and he was a Brahmin by birth, very highly learned in the scriptures, a master of all the fine arts and of great prowess. Yet, he was a devil at heart.

On the day of Devaki's wedding to Vasudeva, Kamsa was honouring the couple by driving them in his own chariot to their new abode. A celestial voice warned him, 'Fool, the eighth child of the very woman whom you are thus honouring, is your death. The celestial voice was obviously inspired by God. Why did He have to warn Kamsa like this? Could He not have quietly incarnated Himself and done His work? But, He wanted to reveal to us the nature of an Asura.

(1) An Asura is unthinking and impulsive. Kamsa at once jumps down from the chariot and is ready to behead his sister on the most auspicious day of her life - the wedding day. Thoughtless anger born of love of life.

(2) Vasudeva pacifies Him by promising to hand over all the children to him at their birth. He extols Kamsa's valour and chivalry. The pride of Kamsa sheaths his sword.

(3) The Asura hardly ever thinks and reasons. He is ever deluded and impulsive. Kamsa imprisons his sister and her husband. The first child is brought to him and he decides to spare its life, in the knowledge that only the eighth is the killer. But, Narada suggests to him that perhaps the celestials might have a different interpretation for the oracular warning, and that any child might prove to be his killer. Foolish Kamsa at once decides to kill all the children. Delusion. Similarly, when he comes to know that the killer - 8th child, viz., Krishna had somehow escaped and was growing elsewhere, he decides on indiscriminate massacre of all children. Delusion and cruelty are the hall-marks of the demoniacal.

'Devaki Paramanandam' - Devaki rejoices when the Lord is about to be born. The Birth of the Lord is characterised by wonderful phenomena, each one bearing a spiritual lesson for us.

- (1) When the Lord arrives, the fetters of the Parents drop away of their own accord. When the Lord manifests Himself in us, our wordly fetters will drop away, too.
- (2) The prison-doors open. Similarly, we shall find that the prison-door of ego-consciousness will open, allowing us into the realm of Cosmic Consciousness.
- (3) The guards fall into a sleep, allowing Vasudeva to escape with the Lord on his head. The senses which are the guards to this prison house of the ego and which ensure that devotion to God lead us to Self-Knowledge - the senses will be inoperative when He arrives and when we obtain His Grace.
- (4) As Vasudeva wends his way towards Gokula in pouring rain, the divine snake Adishesha shields the Divine Baby with his hoods. The snake represents the smooth gliding Time, in mythology. Even Time, which normally glides away and devours everything, helps us when we have the Lord with us.
- (5) Vasudeva reaches the bank of the Yamuna river. At the Lord's command, the river gives way and Vasudeva, with his precious divine burden easily walks across the river. The Ultimate Void - represented here by the river - which cannot be crossed by human effort alone, will itself give way, and the Lord's Grace will enable us to cross this very easily, and reach the goal.

There is only one condition: like Vasudeva and Devaki we should wish to have Him, from the very bottom of our heart.

'Vasudevasutam' - Vasudeva is supremely blessed, in that in this verse in praise of the Lord, He is referred to as 'the Son of Vasudeva'. In our scriptures, Vasudeva enjoys a unique honour not shared by anyone else. 'Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya' is the only Mantra which glorifies the Father of an Incarnation of God, by implication, 'Salutations to the Son of Vasudeva.' This is because,

- (1) Vasudeva was a great devotee of the Lord in past births.
- (2) When offered a boon by the Lord, he wanted nothing but a son like the Lord, so that he could always remember Him.
- (3) Even after all this he was put to great suffering and torture by Kamsa and yet his faith remained unshaken.

This had conclusively proved that Vasudeva and Devaki had totally surrendered themselves to Him and to them nothing else mattered in the least. Birth after birth this had happened, and they, therefore, shine as the best exemplars of the highest devotee thus described by Sri Krishna in the Gita.

Aneka Janma Samsiddhas-tato Yaati Paraam Gatim
After thus striving for perfection in several births, he attains the supreme state.

That supreme state is, therefore, given to Vasudeva and Devaki in a wonderful, unique and dramatic way by the Lord by incorporating Vasudeva's name in the

holy Mantra which shall live forever, reminding us not only of the Lord, but also of the nature of the foremost devotee, who is prepared to bear any suffering or persecution for God's sake. Suffering purifies the heart, tests one's faith, and intensifies one's devotion to the Lord. Never let us entertain the least doubt about the Lord's Grace when it comes to us as suffering. Kunti knew the value of suffering in the life of a true devotee or seeker after God, and hence actually prayed for it.

Vipadah Santu Nah Saswat, Tatra Tatra Jagad Guro
Bhavato Darshanam Yet-syad-apunarbhava Darshanam
May calamities visit us again and again, O Lord: by which we shall always see You, and thus never again see life in this world of pain and death.

Here is a remarkable aspiration. Suffering reminds us of God. It makes us cling to His Lotus Feet. They liberate us from Samsara. And, wonder of wonders, though we prayed for suffering and more suffering, we find ourselves in the Realm of Eternal Bliss.

The three expressions in this verse - Kamsa Chanura mardanam, Devaki Paramanandam, Jagad Gurum, remind us that the Lord incarnated here for three purposes:

1. Protection of the Good - Paritrana Sadhoonam,
2. Destruction of the wicked - Vinasaya cha dushkritam,
3. Re-establishment of Dharma - Dharma-samsthapa-arthaya,

according to His own Words in the Gita. All the three are alluded to in this single sloka which we are now discussing. He killed Kamsa and Chanura. Not only they, but all the others of their kind, the wicked Asuras. The Lord protected Devaki and gave her supreme joy. Not only Devaki, but all the good people. As Krishna, the Jagad Guru, the Lord, gave mankind the priceless scripture the Gita, and thus once for all removed the darkness of ignorance and Adharma.

It is a scripture for all people for all time to come and as time passes by. It only gains more and more adherents throughout the world. Krishna is the real Jagad Guru. The Gita is the most significant feature in the Krishna Avatara. If the Lord had only killed the wicked people of His time and thus protected the good ones, Dharma would, no doubt, have prevailed then, but time would soon have swallowed it once again and mankind would have been left without a guiding light. By delivering the message of the Gita, the Lord had ensured that this great scripture itself would serve mankind as the guiding light, with which to dispel the darkness of ignorance whenever it threatens to envelop us.

'Vinashaya cha Dushkritam' - in the Gita has a beautiful thought. It is not as though we are going to be destroyed, for the Lord Himself has assured us that the soul that we are is indestructible. It is the evil that is destroyed in us. The sinful tendency - Dushkrita, the evil doer in us - is annihilated. Once this is done we immediately become good:

Api chat suduracharo bhajate mamananya bhak
Sadhurevasa mantanyah samyak vyavasito hi sah
Kshipram Bhavati dharmatma saswat santim nigachchati
Kaunteya pratijaneehi na me bhaktah pranasyati
Even if the most sinful comes to me with one-pointed mind, he should indeed be regarded
as good. Immediately he becomes a man of righteousness, and attains supreme peace. I
promise you: My devotee never perishes.

Hence it is that we are told that even Kamsa attained salvation. Out of mortal fear, he saw Lord Krishna, and Him alone, everywhere during the last hour of his life. He was killed by the Lord Himself. As his life-breath departed, he was looking at His Divine, moon-like face. What doubt could there be that he attained salvation? It has been said that even the wicked people who fought on the side of the Kauravas got salvation because, fighting on 'the opposite side,' they had the supreme blessing of seeing the Lord at the hour of death. Destruction of the wicked only means destruction of wickedness, and redemption of the wicked people.

Bheeshmadronatataa jayadrathajalaa gaandhaara neelotpala
Salya graahavatee kripena vahani karnena velaakulaa
Asvatthaama vikarna ghora makaraa duryodhanaavartini
Sottheernaa khalu paandavai rananade kaivartakah kesaah
With Kesava as the helmsman, verily was crossed by the Pandavas the battle river, whose
banks were Bhishma and Drona, whose water was Jayadratha, whose blue-lotus was the King
of Gandhara, whose crocodile was Salya, whose current was Kripa, whose billows were
Karna, whose terrible alligators were Aswatthaama and Vikarna, whose whirlpool was
Duryodhana.

This verse is the narration of 'Head Line News' in Radio News announcement. It compares the Mahabharata War to a river and gives a dreadful, if colourful, description of all those who were primarily involved in it. It gives a short summary of the war itself. It reminds us that all the great - otherwise invincible - warriors mentioned here could be conquered only by Krishna's stratagems. Here is a very great lesson for us to bear in mind always. Let us always have God on our side - to put it the other way round, let us repose at the Feet of God. Victory is ours. Happiness is ours. How it is brought about, is His concern.

His ways are mysterious. The whole universe is His creation. All the laws that govern the universe are His making; they do not govern Him. He can do and undo things here. Kartum, Akartum, Anyatha-Karthum - to do, not to do, and to undo, are divine prerogatives of the Lord.

Before the actual commencement of the war, the Kauravas cunningly sent a messenger to the Pandava camp, to ascertain from Sahadeva, one of the five brothers, when the Kauravas should start the battle, so that they might win. The good Sahadeva, with a high sense of duty, at once calculated and told the Kauravas that they would win if the war was begun on the New Moon day. He had thus signed his, and his brothers' death-warrant. But Lord Krishna came to the rescue. He began to perform the Tarpana - libation to the manes, on the day previous to the New Moon, whereas it should be done only on the New Moon day. The sun and the Moon, surprised at this curious behaviour on the part of the

Lord, came down and enquired of Him why he was performing the Tarpana on the wrong day. Krishna, smiling mischievously, remarked, 'How can it be the wrong day?' When you two - sun and moon - come together, it is New Moon day or Amavasya. Are you not together now Today is Amavasya.' Thus were the cunning Kauravas defeated in their own game, and they started the battle on the day after the New moon, ensuring their own doom.

Paaraasaryavachah sarojam amalam geetaarthagandho tkatam
Naanaakhyaanakakesaram harikathaa sambodhanaa-bodhitam
Loke sajjanashatpadair aharahah pepeeyamaanam mudaa
Bhooyaat bhaaratapankajam kakimala pradhwamsi nah sreyase
May this lotus of the Mahabharata, born in the lake of the word of Vyasa, sweet with the fragrance of the meaning of the Gita, with many stories I as its stamens, fully opened by the discourses on Hari, the destroyer of the stains of Kali, and drunk joyously by the bees of good men in the world day by day, become the bestower of good to us.

The previous Sloka left us on the bank of the Rana-Nadi or the River of warfare. An ancient maxim that is gloriously reflected in the life, talks, and works of Sri Swami Sivananda, is that we should always keep ourselves in a positive frame of mind, and if negative thoughts are unavoidable - e.g., when a sage reminds us that we are living in a world of pain and death, they should be quickly followed by positive ones - reminding us that a glorious life of Immortal Bliss and Perennial Peace awaits us in God. In accordance with this wonderful tradition, the picture immediately changes to a positive one in this Sloka.

The picture is one of the pure, fragrant and lovely lotus - the Mahabharata, of which the Gita is the most vital part. The good people of this world are the bees that constantly hover round this lotus, drinking the nectar of the Gita.

Mookam Karoti Vaachaalam pangum langhayate girim
Yatkripaa tamaham Vande paramaananda Maadhavam
I salute that Madhava, the supreme bliss, whose grace makes the dumb man eloquent and the cripple cross mountains.

Before we eat food, we glorify God who has given us not only the food itself, but the capacity to eat and digest it. Lord Krishna says in the 15th Chapter of the Gita.

Aham Vaihwanaro Bhootwa Praninam Dehamasritah
Pranapana samayuktah pachamyannam Chaturvidham
I, as Vaishwanara or the gastric fire, am in all beings, digesting the food that they eat.

Incidentally, it is the holy custom in India for the Sadhus and Sanyasins to recite the entire 15th Chapter of Gita before they eat food. They also sing some Kirtans. In our Ashram, we sing the Mahamantra.

Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare.

Similarly, before we study a scripture, we glorify the God who not only gave us the scripture, but who has also given us the power to read it, recite it, and understand it. This is the purport of this verse.

'Mukam Karoti Vaachalam' - makes the dumb eloquent, need not make us feel that miracle-mongering is alluded to here. We were all born 'dumb'. The capacity to speak was latent in us. It was around by His Grace only, not by what others taught us - that was only an instrumental cause. From within, by His Grace, the capacity to speak was unveiled. Though the child is not told how to produce the sound 'ice-cream', it repeats the words immediately you say them. Who told it what to do with the tongue, lips and palate to produce these words? It knew, by His Grace. This is the greatest miracle, but because it is very common, we fail to notice it.

'Pangm Langhyate Girim' - should again not be taken to refer to the miracle of making the lame walk. In a way, we were born lame - we could not walk. It is His Grace alone that has enabled us to walk. Even these two are indicative of the miracle of His Grace, by which alone we live, move, and have our being. They suggest all other senses, talents and activities of man.

Yam Brahma Varunendrarudramarutah stunwanti divyaih stavaih
Vedaih saangapadakramopanishadair gaayanti yam saamagaah
Dhyaanaavasthitha tadgatena manasaa pasyanti yam yogino
Yasyaantam na Viduh suraasura ganaah devaaya tasmai namaha
Salutations to that God whom Brahma, Varuna, Indra, Rudra, and the Maruts praise with
divine hymns, whom the Sama chanters sing by Vedas and their Angas - limbs in the Pada
and Krama methods, and by the Upanishads, whom Yogis see with their minds absorbed in Him
through meditation, and whose end the hosts of gods and demons know not.

Brahma is the Creator of the Universe. Varuna is the God who presides over the rain. Indra is the king of the gods or celestials and also the one who presides over lightning and electricity. Maruth is the wind-god. The Hindus personify them for the purpose of the worship and adoration.

We have it on the authority of the Bhagavad Gita itself - that in and through all these deities, the devotee ignorantly worship the Supreme Being Himself. It is He who accepts such adoration and rewards it.

A gentleman when he is at home is father to his children, husband to his wife, son to his mother. When he is at his post of duty - as, say a judge, he is a judge. Perhaps, he is also a Guru to his spiritual students, a friend to others, and so on. In and through these different roles which the same man plays, he is the Atman, his own Self. It is the same Self that plays the different roles, though they seem almost to contradict each other - e.g. how can a man be husband and son at the same time? But this is understood when we realise that the person who views him as a husband is different from the person who views him as the son. Hence, the Gita demands 'Shraddha' - faith. If there is Achala-Shraddha - unshakable faith, the same one God bestows His blessings upon us through these gods. Personalisation helps us in our prayers, and our prayers are answered.

'Stunvanthi' - all these gods sing His Glories. Here, 'sing' need not be taken literally. Even as in ordinary conversation when we say, 'He sang his Guru's glories', we do not mean it literally, but allude to his speech or action, involving

no music. These gods sing God's glories, by doing their duties and thus carrying out His Will.

In the first three lines of this verse, three types of devotees of God are mentioned - the gods, they who are devoted to Vedic rituals, and the Yogis. The gods sing His glories, by doing His Will. The knowers of the Veda, those who sing the Sama Veda, sing His praises. The Yogi perceives Him in deep meditation, with his mind entered into Him. Yet, none of these three categories, really know Him fully.

The finite cannot fathom the Infinite. The part cannot know the Whole. The salt doll cannot measure the depth of the ocean. It can reach the bottom only after it has been dissolved. The individual can know Him fully, only when he becomes one with Him. At that stage, the individual is individual no longer, but of the nature of God, identical with God himself.

To that Great Being we bow before commencing the devout study of His Song.

The Birth of The Bhagavad Gita

Let us, then, understand the context in which the Gita teaching was given to us.

The Mahabharata, the famous epic, of which the Gita is a part, describes the conflict between cousins - the Kauravas and the Pandavas. The Kauravas were wicked, evil-hearted. The Pandavas were men of goodwill and righteousness. Good and evil are cousins, and we should never forget that they exist in the same world, in the same heart and in the same man, and it is their co-existence that creates this conflict whose resolution will ultimately lead us, through goodness, to the Ultimate Goal which is beyond good and evil - God-realisation.

The Kauravas were hundred in number, the Pandavas were five brothers. Perhaps, even here we are given a lesson. The number of wicked people in the world will always be greater than the number of good people:. Krishna says in the Gita, 'One in thousands strives for perfection.' But, since these divine forces are closer to God, they enjoy qualitative superiority, even though they may be inferior in number. They triumph ultimately, because God is with them.

There is a rather disquieting feature here, which is not very well appreciated by students of Indian mythology. As is natural, the 'brothers' in both camps often discuss ways and means of furthering their respective missions in life. The wicked ones - Kauravas almost always act like one man, often in total obedience to the leader. Whereas, in the case of the good ones - the Pandavas, there is more or less always a difference of opinion as to the proper course of action. Do we not see this happen in our own society? Dacoits and murderers have more unity and better organisation than men of goodwill engaged in doing good. Unless we learn to unite our hearts in the performance of the Divine Will and submerge our little personalities, it will be impossible to quell the forces of evil - and that is one of the greatest lessons of the Mahabharata.

These cousins were perpetually at war with each other. The evil ones seem to triumph, in the beginning. Evil has this advantage over the good, that it has no qualms, it is unrestrained, and it has no moral code to deter its nefarious actions - and hence, it has almost unlimited 'power' for mischief and destruction. Incidentally, that is the saving feature; eventually it destroys itself, even as fire after burning other things burns itself out. Whereas goodness is vigilant, cautious and circumspect, hedged in by its own code of righteous conduct, and can, therefore, not afford to be rash and daring. With infinite and inexhaustible patience, the Pandavas bore the evil doings of their cousins, the Kauravas. The Pandavas were even banished from their own kingdom and exiled for thirteen years.

On return, they sent Lord Krishna as a messenger of peace to the Kauravas, to seek terms of peaceful settlement. Though the Kauravas were wicked and they had unrighteously usurped their kingdom, the Pandavas sought a peaceful settlement of the dispute. They were ready to give up their rights, in favour of

peace. That is the nature of a good man - he can ignore his own rights and do his duty: the Gospel which Sri Krishna proclaims in the Gita.

The Pandavas were ready to accept the least. Good men try their best to avoid destruction, they put war away as the last resort. The wicked men misunderstand the meekness of the good as a sign of weakness, and grow more arrogant and offensive. The Kauravas flatly refused to part with even an inch of land for the Pandavas to live in.

Sri Krishna, though He was born specifically to destroy the wicked men, agreed to go as peace-maker. He, the Omniscient Lord, knew it was impossible and that war was inevitable. But yet He went. As He Himself says at the close of the Gita, He gives discrimination to Man, shows him the path, but gives him the freedom to exercise his free will. He will let man try his own ideas. 'Yatechhasi Tathaa Kuru' - do as you wish to.

With the failure of Sri Krishna's mission of peace, war was declared. Both the Kauravas and the Pandavas sought Krishna's help. Krishna placed Himself on one side, and His vast army on the other. He also made it clear that He would not bear arms and fight. Duryodhana, the Kaurava chief chose army. Arjuna, one of the Pandava brothers, was happy to have the Lord on his side. It is one of the fundamental characteristics of the good man that he unhesitatingly chooses the side of God, of righteousness, regardless of possible outcome. For him, to be with God, is good enough. Of course, what happened later during the Mahabharata war justified Arjuna's choice. He who chooses to be with God is ever protected by His Grace. In every crisis, Lord Krishna protected His devotees by wonderful strategem. 'Na May Bhaktah Prahasyati' - never do My devotees perish, said the Lord in the Gita, and proved it by protecting the Pandavas from every peril.

Moreover, Lord Krishna became the charioteer of Arjuna. What a supreme example of humility. What unrivalled example of the dignity of selfless service. To one who has the right attitude, there is no such thing as menial service or labour. All actions are flowers with which the wise man worships the Omnipresent God. Again, we are told that Lord Krishna, the Supreme Godhead, who had come into the world of man in order to save him from undivine forces and to lead him towards Himself, was extremely diligent in the discharge of His duties, self-imposed though they were. Every evening, after the day's battle had come to a conclusion, He would bathe the horses, feed them and lovingly pat them on their back, before He Himself retired. A great lesson for social workers and servants of Humanity. Often, hidden or subtle vanity allows us to do the scavenging, as it were, but tempts us to let the rubbish be carted away by someone else. We often neglect to complete the duty, fulfil it, feeling satisfied that it was sufficient proof of our good intentions that we laid our hand to the plough. For a spiritual aspirant, this is disastrous - and an indication that far from having won a victory over vanity, he is still a slave to hidden egoism which only seeks the laurels of 'humility' without endeavouring to be truly humble.

The armies of both the parties assembled on the battlefield. Fighting was about to commence. The time had come, not only for the conflict to be resolved between Kauravas and Pandavas, but for the conflict between Good and Evil in the Heart of Man to be resolved once for all. What happened is described in the first chapter of the Gita, which is extremely interesting in this context.

Dhritarashtra, the father of the Kauravas, who had been born blind, was offered temporary eye-sight by Vyasa, if he wished to witness the battle. But he was unwilling to accept this offer. Vyasa, then, appointed Sanjaya to give a running commentary of the war to the blind king.

Dhritarashtra was not only physically blind, but morally and spiritually blind, too. Hence, though he knew his children were unrighteous and that therefore, their fate was sealed, he still felt that they would win, because he had supreme confidence in Bhishma. So long as Bhishma, the invincible, fought on the Kaurava side, there was no fear of defeat, whether they were good or wicked. This is real 'blind faith' - the faith that unrighteousness would triumph.

On the tenth day, Bhishma fell. This disturbed the blind king's blind faith. His false hopes were shattered. He then asked Sanjaya the first question, with which the Bhagavad Gita begins:

Dharmakshetre Kurukshetre Samavetaa yuyustavah
Maamakaah Paandavoaschaiva Kimakurvata Sanjaya
What did Pandavas and also my people do when they assembled on the holy plain of
Kurukshetra, desirous to fight, O Sanjaya?

In other words, he seems to plead, 'I forgot that these people had assembled in Dharmakshetra, the field where righteousness prevailed. Now, I realise that Dharma triumphs always. Tell me what happened there, from the beginning.' Even in his own question, Dhritarashtra revealed the root-cause of all our suffering. What did 'Maamakaah' - my people do? 'My people' are placed even before the Pandavas. This mine-ness is the root- cause of all misery.

It is Sanjaya that actually utters the Blessed Lord's Words, and it is through him that we learn the Bhagavad Gita. Esoteric meanings are ascribed to the names of the characters of the Mahabharata. For instance, Dhritarashtra - one who has seized the empire, is regarded as the ego, which claims mineness in all claims the world as its own, whereas everything belongs to the Lord. Sanjaya is 'one who has controlled or conquered himself'. But this esoteric interpretation does by no means cancel the historicity of the scripture. When we say that moths falling into fire represents the worldly man falling into sensual pleasures - we do not deny the fact that moths do fall into fire.

We have another example in our own midst here. The three daughters of Sri Sewpal are named Maya, Dharma, and Nirmala. A philosopher might say, 'We are first born in Maya or illusion. If later, we practise Dharma - righteousness, we shall become Nirmala - pure divine.' But this esoteric meaning does not cancel

the fact that Sri Sewpal has three daughters called Maya, Dharma, and Nirmala. However, we shall take one valuable lesson from the esoteric significance of the names involved in the Gita.

Only self control - Sanjaya, will enable to have subtle vision. Sanjaya was able to 'see' even the thoughts of the people on the battlefield. Sanjaya, the wise man, knew that the blind king would love to hear about his own son first, and so opened the narrative with what Duryodhana did. He did not fail to tickle the vanity of the old king - he called him 'King' Duryodhana.

Duryodhana's conduct on this epochal occasion is an eye-opener to all. Let us remind ourselves here that the scripture paints Duryodhana as the very incarnation of evil. In fact, Duryodhana was guilty of all the heinous crimes we can think of. Yet, when he thought of the fateful battle he was about to wage, when he saw the armies arrayed, ready to let arrows fly and kill one another, when he realised that on the outcome of the battle his own life and future depended, what did he do?

It is one of the most crucial moments in history. And at that moment, Duryodhana, the wicked man, turned to the Acharya, the Guru or the teacher, not to his own counselors, not to his own brothers or lieutenants, nor even to his Chief of staff, Bhishma - but Duryodhana turned to his Guru. Perhaps, in spite of himself, in spite of all his wickedness. The lesson should not be lost upon us. In ancient days, this ideal of devotion to the Guru was so vividly held before all, and so firmly planted in the hearts of all, that even Duryodhana could not escape it.

The Mahabharata itself exalts Guru Bhakta greatly, and gives us the thrilling story of Ekalavya. He was a hunter and wanted to learn lessons in 'higher archery' from Drona, along with Arjuna, Drona's pet pupil. Drona refused. The art was meant only for Kshatriyas - warriors, not for a hunter. But Ekalavya would not give up. He made an image of Drona and by dint of his intense devotion to the Guru, Drona, whom he saw in the image, learnt all that Drona could have taught from the image. Years later, when Drona and Arjuna were camping in the forest, a dog came to them with its mouth nicely stuffed with arrows, so dexterously shot that they did not injure it, but effectively prevented it from barking - a trick which Drona had taught only to Arjuna. With the help of the dog, they reached Ekalavya's hut and discovered that it was he who had done it. 'Who taught you?' 'My Guru Drona.' Now Dronacharya himself came forward. 'Then, where is my Dakshina?' It was incumbent on every disciple to offer something valuable - Dakshina to the Guru in return for the knowledge imparted. Ekalavya was bold and devoted. 'Whatever you ask for, Sir.' 'Give me your right thumb.' The very thumb, without which he could not discharge a single arrow, and all the knowledge of archery would be useless, Ekalavya promptly cut and handed over to Drona, the Guru. 'How cruel' is the first reaction of any man. But Drona knew from the beginning that Ekalavya, the mere hunter, would misuse the art. That is why he refused at the outset. Ekalavya's later action in stopping the mouth of the dog with the arrows proved the wisdom of the Master. Drona was more than

convinced now that to let the hunter have the knowledge was like letting a child have a loaded pistol. It is no use saying, 'I did not give him the pistol. What do I care what he does with the pistol he himself picked up from somewhere.' You must take it away from the child. That is what Drona did. But, here, what we are concerned is with Ekalavya's Guru Bhakti. Guru Bhakti occupied a paramount position in the minds of the people in ancient times.

Let us turn to Duryodhana now.

When he thought of the war ahead, he thought of the Guru. That is all. Immediately, his own wickedness regained its hold on him. In a wicked man, good thoughts do not hold out for long. In a good man, evil thoughts cannot hold out for long. Duryodhana instinctively thought of his Guru. But he at once remembered that he was the King, and even the Guru, Drona, was his subject. He did not ask for the Guru's blessings. The tone of his speech is not submissive, prayerful, or devotional. It is authoritarian, commanding, and arrogant. He told the Acharya, 'Look at these people who have gathered to fight with us, O Acharya.' He taunted the Guru: 'You trained him, the son of Drupada; and he is fighting against you.' Even though the Pandava army was numerically inferior to his own, Duryodhana was scared to look at it and it appeared very big in his eyes - 'Mahateem Chanoom'. It is, as it were, magnified by the magnitude of his own wickedness. Weakness of will, vacillation, suspicion, lopsided scale of values - are some of the symptoms of wickedness of thought, motive, means, end or deed. Duryodhana's address to the Acharya betrays all of these.

Duryodhana looked at the Pandava army and pointed out the chiefs there, to his own Acharya. Bhima loomed large in front of him. He mentioned Bhima first. Perhaps he instinctively knew who his killer was going to be.

Then, Duryodhana turned to his own forces. A taunt once again. 'I am mentioning them to you for your remembrance, O best among Brahmanas.' In other words, 'You are no doubt a great Bahmana. But you cannot be expected to possess exceptional warrior-like qualities. Hence, I am reminding you of our strength.' 'I shall tell you the best in my army,' - this is my-ness, coupled with the fear lurking in his own heart, generated by his wickedness, and by the fact that God and Dharma were on the side of the Pandavas made him feel anxious.

In the course of his description of his own chiefs, Duryodhana let fall a significant expression: 'Madarthe Tyakta Jivitah' - they have given up their lives for my sake. Is the prognosis so bad? The voice of the Conscience unmistakably expressing the truth, though what he actually meant was that they were prepared to give up their lives for his sake. One can also sense an undertone of pity here. 'What fools - they have given up their lives for the sake of me, wicked man, doomed to destruction.'

Conscience - the voice of God - does assert itself, even though we try to muffle it. It is like a watchman who prevents robbers from entering the house. But, we foolishly suppress it, because it is inconvenient to our happy-go-lucky life. We

imprison the watchman in the garage, as it were, for he 'disturbs' our spiritual sleep. Yet, even from there, however muffled his voice may be, he still warns us. Here, Duryodhana reveals to us that his conscience has whispered to him that those great warriors who had joined him had, in spite of their prowess, given up their lives.

In a mood bordering on lunacy, Duryodhana says that 'the Pandava-army is adequate, but our army is inadequate.' How can that be? For, the Pandava-army was numerically weaker and it was nothing compared to the great heroes that had joined Duryodhana - like Bhishma, Drona, Aswatthama, Karna, etc. Yet, who but a lunatic would say that the army is inadequate? But no; it is the conscience again revealing the truth - all that is inadequate before God and Dharma, which had been banished from his side and were fighting with the Pandavas.

Then, finally, Duryodhana commands his Acharya to 'protect the Commander-in-Chief Bhishma from all sides.' What Rajasic impudence and impertinence. Is it because they were full of this quality of rajas, that kings and rulers were called Rajas?

The scene suddenly changes. Duryodhana was talking to Drona. Drona does not seem to have said anything. But, the Gita says: 'The Grandsire, Bhishma, roared like a lion and blew his conch in order to cheer up Duryodhana.' Had Drona nothing to say in reply to all that Duryodhana had said to him?

No. And that is the proper answer to the mad man's prattle. The noble mind does not retort nor retaliate, but ignores the wicked man. The wise sage of India gives us this four-fold attitude to adopt towards others, if we value peace and happiness:

1. Maitri: with equals be friendly.
2. Karuna: with inferiors, have compassion.
3. Muditha: with superiors, have complacency, rejoice.
4. Upeksha: with the wicked, be indifferent.

Drona obviously adopted the fourth attitude towards Duryadhana.

Even Bhishma does not say anything in consolation. He merely roars like a lion and blows his conch.

That was the signal for the war to commence. At once there was conch-blowing every where.

The scene shifts to Arjuna and Krishna. Krishna is the charioteer. Arjuna's chariot is drawn by white horses. Symbolically, it means the good man has the Lord Himself as his guide, and purity, whiteness, as the motive force. Their conches are characterised 'divine' because they were divine.

The poet indulges in a bit of fun here while describing Bhima, one of the Pandava brothers. He says, 'Bhima, of terrible deeds who had the stomach - hunger of a wolf, blew his conch.' Bhima was a great eater, too, and he was a man of superhuman strength and valour.

Dharmaputra's conch was named Anata-vijayam. He was both Dharmaputra - son of Dharma or righteousness, and Yudhisthira - firm in war. Hence, he had Anantavijaya - endless victory. The moral is quite obvious.

The sound pierced the wicked hearts of the Kauravas. It was like thunder in the sky and earthquake on earth.

As soon as the signal for the commencement of the war is given, Arjuna asks the Lord to take his chariot between the two armies and place it from where he could take a good look at both the armies. Krishna finds His opportunity here, and places the chariot right in front of Bhishma and Drona, the two persons for whom Arjuna has the greatest respect. The Indweller of Arjuna's heart felt that the time had arrived for the Gita to be delivered. The climax had to be reached. The Lord leads His first disciple to that climax. He Himself wills that Arjuna should betray his weakness and collapse. Through him, the Lord had to make the Gita known to all mankind. Arjuna was only a channel. I am convinced that it was one of the wonderful Leelas - Divine Plays of Krishna: a powerful suggestion from Him, that made Arjuna collapse. Even the argument that Arjuna saw Bhishma and Drona in front of him is not strong enough. He was not scared of fighting the Kauravas, though Bhishma and Drona were on their side, when he had to rescue Viratas cattle etc., earlier. Nothing but the Lord's own inner promptings could have brought about the frame of mind in Arjuna, suited to the Lord's intention to teach us, through Arjuna, the holy scripture - the Bhagavad Gita.

When Arjuna's mind is confused, he does not recognise it at first, but regards himself as a wise man, fit enough to preach a sermon to the Lord Himself. He 'knows' what is right and what is wrong. He could arrive at the right conclusion himself. Is this not the position in which every lunatic finds himself. He feels that all the others are mad people. The ignorant man feels that all others are ignorant. The world is like a mirror and the wicked man sees his image, in it, and blames everyone else. Such a man is in no mood to listen to anyone else's advice. How can you teach a 'wise' man? It is very hard, often dangerous, to tell him who he really is. The first few verses of the second chapter, if we study them carefully and devoutly, can teach us wonderful lessons in psychology.

Krishna lovingly taunts Him, 'Do not be silly, get up and fight.' The arrogant man cannot be taught. It is unwise to teach without being asked. 'Na aprishta Kasya Chit Bhuyaat' - do not teach without being asked to teach. It is a wise maxim.

Arjuna repeats his objections to the warfare and betrays his confusion by adding, 'Who knows who should win?', making it sound as though he had no real objection to the fighting, if he was sure he would win. Finally, he realises his own

confused state of mind and prays, to be enlightened.

After bowing to Sri Krishna and Guru, let us pray with Arjuna:

Karpanya doshopahata svabhavah
Pricchami twaam dharmasammudhah chetah
Yat sreyaśyan niśchitam bruhi tan me
Sishyasteham shadhi mam twam prapannam
My heart is overpowered by the taint of pity: my mind is confused as to duty. I ask thee.
Tell me decisively what is good for me. I am thy disciple. Instruct me who has taken
refuge in Thee.

Now is the time for the Gita-Upadesha. Not when the disciple showed vanity and arrogance. When someone comes to you and says, 'I feel this is right. What do you think?', he is in no mood to take a contradiction. His mind is made up. He wants to give you a chance to agree with him. If you do, he will pay you a compliment and call you a wise man. If you do not, he will disagree with you and say that there is something wrong with you.

In such cases, I have seen Gurudev reply, 'Oh, is it so wonderful', making it sound as though Gurudev was in complete agreement. Encouraged, the man would plunge headlong in the projected activity, to find out soon - that is Gurudev's own miracle, beyond our comprehension and imitation - that he was wrong. He would then come back and ask Gurudev for guidance, without airing his own views. Then, Gurudev always gave wise guidance.

In the first chapter, Arjuna is the Guru. Krishna does not interrupt, but keeps quiet. 'If you begin to teach, I shall have to listen'. For, one has to be teacher and the other pupil. And, there was every reason for Arjuna to be self-confident, for he had learnt everything under Drona, and his own elder brother Dharmaputra was regarded as an embodiment of the highest principles of righteousness.

'Karpanya-dosho-pahata Svabhavah' - Suddenly Arjuna confesses, 'The defect of pity has robbed me of my own nature, the nature of a Kshatriya or warrior.' This was obviously Lord Krishna's thought, overpowering Arjuna. This is what the Lord is going to tell Arjuna, later in the Gita, that one should not give up one's Dharma.

'Pricchami Twam' - I ask you. At first I was in no mood even to ask you. Now that I ask you, you can teach me.

'Dharmasammudha chetah' - I am confused as to Dharma. My own thinking faculty, my own reason, my own intelligence has failed me. I am confused. Both - fighting and running away - seem to be right from one point of view, and seem to be wrong from another point of view. If I fight, I do thy Swa-Dharma, but perhaps incur the sin of killing my own kith and kin. If I run away, I escape that sin, but I know running away from the post of duty is sin. I am on the horns of a dilemma.

'Yat Sreyassyan' - what is good for me? Now, this word Sreya is generally translated 'good', but it really means a lot more than mere 'good'. For a correct understanding of the meaning, we have to turn to the Kathopanishad, which in several respects is a scripture parallel to the BhagavadGita. In fact, in it occur several Mantras which are literally almost the same as the verses in the Gita, e.g.,

Na Jayate Mriyate Va Kadachit ... Ajo Nityassas wathoyam Purano Na Hanyate Hanyamane Sareere

The Atman is unborn, eternal, and is not killed when the body is killed by death.

The Kathopanishad tells us:

Sreyascha preyascha manushyametastau Sampareetya vivinakti dheerah
Sreya hi dheero-abhi preyaso vruneete preyo mando yogakshemat vruneete
The good and the pleasant take hold of man: the wise man - dheerah: the spiritual hero, examines and distinguishes them. The wise man prefers the good to the pleasant, but the ignorant man chooses the pleasant for the sake of the body.

The word 'dheerah' occurs again in the Kathopanishad where we are told that he who turns his gaze within, turning it away from the objects of sense-pleasure, and directs it on the Inner Self, wishing to attain Immortality, is a Dheera or a spiritual hero. The path that this spiritual hero chooses is 'Sreya Marga'. In other words, it is the path to immortality, to God-realisation, to Ultimate Good or liberation of the soul from samsara.

'Preyo Mando Togakshemat vruneete' - The ignorant man chooses the pleasant goaded by Yogakshema. This word 'yogakshema' has an interesting meaning. To the dull-witted man, all happiness lies in the world and its pleasure-centres. He wants to get what he has not got already - in Sanskrit this is called Yoga, too - and wants to hold what he has already got - Kshema, in Sanskrit. The foolish man wants to perpetuate his bondage to this world and so chooses the path of the pleasant. The dheera - spiritual hero - rejects it. 'This is ultimately ruinous to my very soul.' As Lord Jesus has very beautifully put it: 'Of what use is it if man gained all the world but lost his own soul?' It is this Sreya that Arjuna wants to learn from Krishna. Not that which may be good for the moment.

Often, when we are on the horns of a dilemma, we choose the lesser evil or the line of least resistance. The spiritual hero should not. This is an important prayer for all spiritual aspirants: 'Tell me what is Sreya', whenever they are assailed by doubts. At all cross-roads in our life, let us offer this prayer to the Indwelling Presence and derive proper guidance so that we may reach the Ultimate Good or God.

'Nichitam bruhi tan-me' - Tell me decisively, says Arjuna. Do not mince words. We shall presently see how Lord Krishna beautifully answers this prayer.

'Sishyasteham' - That is the key note. That is the zero hour. That moment when these three words - 'Sishyah te aham' - were uttered by Arjuna, was the greatest

moment for mankind. It sparked the great Light of the Bhagavad Gita: 'I am thy disciple.' When you enter the Guru's Presence, leave your own knowledge and your 'wisdom' at the door and enter on your knees, in all humility. He will impart wisdom, true wisdom, to you.

'Shadhi mam' - Teach me, command me. Now, you are safe. My arrogance has melted in Your presence. You can command me and I shall obey. You can teach, and I shall learn. I am receptive now because I am disciple. Not only that.

'Twam prapannam' - I surrender myself at your feet. What a revolution has taken place in Arjuna! Great indeed should have been the power of the Divine Presence. Great indeed should have been the Divinity that radiated from Krishna's eyes. Those lustrous eyes bring wise words to the lips of Arjuna which prattled a few moments ago. I have seen this miracle take place in the Ashram. Pseudo yogis and learned scholars have often come to argue with Gurudev. A mere look and a radiant smile from the Divinity have often so greatly unnerved the other man that, instead of arguing as he wanted to, he would often bow humbly down and ask for enlightenment. Indescribable was the 'glow' on Gurudev's face, especially on such occasions. It compelled surrender.

Freedom from Sorrow

Not a single moment is lost, after this surrender. The very first words that the Lord utters now are the greatest for ever and ever. They are bold, emphatic, powerful, living and enlightening:

Asochyan anvasochastwam prajnavadamscha bhashase
Gatasunagatosumscha nanusochanti pandithah
Thou hast grieved for those that should not be grieved for, yet thou speakest words of wisdom. The wise grieve neither for the living nor for the dead.

Do you want peace? Do you want happiness? Do you want God-realisation? Meditation on this one verse in the Gita is enough for you. It is most inspiring, most thrilling. Every verse of the Gita is breath-taking in its grandeur, inspiration and light. Yet, this one Sloka is full of that light. It is the central teaching of the Gita.

'Asochyan' - Do not grieve for them. Begins the Gita-Upadesha.

'Ma sucha' - Grieve not. Ends the Gita in the verse,

Sarva dharman parityajya mamekam sharanam vraja
Aham tva sarvapapebhyo mokshayishyami masucha
Abandoning all duties, take refuge in Me alone: I will liberate thee from all sins:
grieve not.

Vedantic scholars generally look at the beginning and end of a scripture to determine its 'contents' or the theme. It is quite simple: if an animal is standing in front of you, and if it has the head of a cow, and the tail of a cow, it must be cow in the middle also. In the Gita, we find, the Lord says 'Do not grieve' in the beginning and ends His message with the same note. That is the central theme. To liberate man from grief, that is the purport of the Gita. Hence, it has served as the guiding light of millions for thousands of years and shall continue to do so for all time to time.

'Asochyan-anvasochastwam' - You are worried for nothing. This a Mahavakya - great sentence. There are four Mahavakyas in the Upanishads:

Prajnanam Brahma - Consciousness is Brahman - God.

Aham Brahmasmi - I am That Brahman.

Tat Twam Asi - Thou art That Brahman.

Ayam Atma Brahma - This Self is Brahman.

Meditation on these will lead one to Self-realisation. The sentence with which the Gita-Upadesha starts - Asochyan Anvasochastwam - can also be classed as a Mahavakya, along with these four. There is such power in those words. There is such a wealth of wisdom in them. It will relieve us of all worry, grief, pain and

gloom. Whenever we are worried or upset in any way, let us visualise Lord Krishna standing in front of us, saying 'Asochyan Anvasochastwam'. You are worrying yourself unnecessarily. The worry must vanish.

God has created a lot of work for us to do in this world. You and I have created a lot of worry for ourselves. This worry keeps us away from work, from achieving what we should in this world. Work does not kill, but worry often does. Worry gives us blood-pressure, stomach ulcer and a host of other ailments like neuresthenia and insomnia. Worry sends people to mental hospitals, and often hurls people down from the top-floor, or they take an overdose of sleeping pills or shoot themselves. Before worry overwhelms you, when worry knocks at your door, visualise Krishna before you and let Him say those words: 'Asochyan-anvasochastwam' - You are worrying unnecessarily. The worry will not enter.

We are always worried about either the past or the future. To worry about what has happened is the stupidest thing. Nothing is going to alter it. It is in order that we may not brood over the past, looking always at the past, that the Lord placed our eyes in front of the skull. Yet, we always look back and brood over the past, thus losing valuable opportunities that the present offers, to make our life. Worry mars our life. When a man dies, his own son wisely buries him or cremates him. Otherwise, the whole place will stink. We should do the same thing with the events of the dead past: cremate them. Otherwise, our poor little head will be a stinking abode of neuroses and complexes. This, however, does not mean that we shall not learn our lessons. Indeed, the son buries the dead man, not his wealth, which he inherits. Keep the lesson. but bury the event.

Nor should we worry about the distant future. But that is what we do when we are not worried about the past. The average man today is worried either over what happened years ago, or, what might happen years hence. Have you not seen people spending sleepless nights after hearing a scientific exposition of what will happen several million years hence, when the world is blown up? What foolishness! Why worry about what might happen years hence. We may not live here then. In any case, that future, too, will one day become the 'present'. If we learn to live in the present, taking great care of it, then we shall know how to deal with the 'future', when it becomes the present. 'Enough unto the day the evil thereof'. Let us utilise the present opportunities well, and we have already made our future. What more, we have banished worry. We should certainly think, work, and even plan for the future - not worry. Worry often prevents constructive endeavour.

Krishna Who 'took' all the teaching that Arjuna gave Him in the first chapter of the Gita, finds the best opportunity now to give it back to him.

'Prajnavadams cha bhashase' - And, you speak wise words, is full of wonderful, delightful, mischievous taunt. You will understand it clearly if you visualise Krishna standing in front of you and saying, 'You are unnecessarily worried, and you speak as though you are a wise man. Wonderful. At least if you behaved

foolishly, I will take you as a fool. But, you speak wise words and pretend to be a man of wisdom. This is indeed ludicrous'.

These words were not addressed only to Arjuna but to you and me. How often do we behave as Arjuna did. We act foolishly and justify our action with words of wisdom. We are worried and find a cause for it. We always find a very valid, often ex post facto, reason why we had to do what we did, and that, of course, was the wisest and most righteous thing to do. But, why are we worried? We have lost the art of self-analysis, nor are we prepared to submit to God, in all humility and meekness. Hence, we act foolishly and talk wisely.

'Gatasun-agatasuncha nanusochanti punditah' - The wise do not grieve for the living or the dead. 'I created the world. I created all these beings. I know what to do. Why are you worried? Give up this self-created responsibility. Give up this self-arrogation of responsibility. Give up this idea of agency. You are not the doer of these actions. It is because you assume responsibility, you are worried. Can you prolong anyone's life for a minute more. Can you create one little ant by your effort? Can you produce a flower or fruit? I am responsible for all these. Why, then, are you worried? Give up this worry and do your duty.'

There is a proverb in Tamil: Maram vaithavan tanneer varpan. He who planted the tree will water it. Why worry?

The Great Secret

Liberation from grief and worry is the great theme of the Gita. It is Lord Krishna's gift to humanity. What is the method by which we may get this? Lord Krishna explains this thus:

Sarvaguhyatamam bhuyah srunu me paramam vachah
Ishtosi me dhridhamiti tato valcshyami te hitam
Hear thou, again, My supreme word, most secret of all: because thou art dearly beloved of
Me, therefore, I will tell thee what is good and of which I am convinced.

'Sarvaguhyatamam' - The greatest Secret of all. It is great secret - not because someone has hidden it from us, but because, by a psychological law, which I shall explain presently, we have excluded ourselves from it. To the man who is hiding himself in a cave for years, glorious sunlight is a hidden secret he knows nothing about it.

'Bhuyah' - Again, I am repeating it. The Lord said the very same thing at the conclusion of the 9th chapter. But He wants to ensure that Arjuna does not forget it. Repetition is necessary, as our Gurudev said, only repetition can fix the great thoughts in our mind. Especially, when we lead a life of endless repetition of wrong thoughts, speech and actions, when we are subjected to repetitions of the same falsities and temptations, repetitions of divine truths and divine names are vitally essential.

'Paramam Vachah' - Supreme Word, the supreme truth. I am telling it to you because it is true.

'Ishtosi' - You are dear to Me: therefore, I am telling you.

'Me Dhridam iti' - I am firmly convinced of it. Hence I tell you, 'tato vakshyami.'

'Te hitam' - It is good for you.

Here, Krishna satisfies His own definition of good speech.

'Satyam, Priyam, Hitam.' - We should utter what is truthful, pleasant and good. Our speech should satisfy all the three criteria. A statement may be truthful, but may not be pleasant - it may hurt others. We should not utter it, just because it is truth. Keep quiet. A statement may be pleasant, but it may not be truthful or good. If I am suffering from high fever and ask you, 'I am craving for ice-cream. Tell me, have I fever now?', to say, 'No, and you can have your ice-cream', may be pleasant speech, but neith truthful nor good. A statement may be truthful and pleasant too, but may not be good. For instance, the rich father of a drunkard might have died, leaving him a rich legacy. If you go and tell him the truth before his mother or others take the necessary precaution to prevent him from squandering it away, he will grab all that wealth and drink himself, to death. You have not done him any good. The speech was not good and therefore not truthful.

Lord Krishna says here that He has satisfied Himself that what He is about to say, satisfies this three-fold criterion of truth. 'I am firmly convinced about it,' says the Lord and thus answers Arjuna's prayer: 'Nischitam bruhi tan me' - tell me unambiguously, decisively without mincing words. Not merely to please me.'

What is the greatest secret?

Man mana bhava mad-bhakto mad-yajee mam-namaskuru
Mamevaishyasiz satyam te pratijane priyosimey
Fix thy mind on me, be devoted to me, sacrifice to Me, bow down to Me. Thou shalt come to Me: truly do I promise unto thee for thou art dear to Me.

'Man-piazza bhava' is the very essence of the Gita. It is very difficult to translate. 'Be thou My-minded.' 'Let your mind itself take My form. Let there be nothing but Me in your mind.' In other words, be God-conscious always. Our mind itself should take the form of God - Tadakara.

'Mad-Bhakto' - Become My devotee.

'Mad-yajee' - Sacrifice unto Me. This word 'sacrifice' is used in the Gita as offering unto the Lord. A selfless life of service and charity is regarded as Yajna - sacrifice.

'Mam-namaskuru' - Prostrate unto Me. Prostration always means 'surrender'. In other words, do total self-surrender unto Me.

'Mamevaishyasi' - You will reach Me. Only when you do not think of Me, do you go astray, by the psychological law that the mind takes the form of the object it thinks of.

'Vritti-sarupyam itaratra' - Elsewhere, when there is no Self-Consciousness, the mind takes the form of the Vritti or the modification.

'Satyam te pratijane' - I promise this is the truth.

'Priyose mi' - You are dear to me.

This is the greatest Secret of the Bhagavad Gita. This is the yoga of the Bhagavad Gita. This is the central teaching - all the rest is but a commentary on this single verse.

This shows the way to overcome sorry and grief, for,

'Macchittah sarva durgani mat-prasadat tarishyasi' - Fixing thy mind on me, thou shalt by My grace overcome all obstacles, sufferings and calamities. It is because we have forgotten the art of saturating the mind with God-thought that we worry and grieve. It is because we are shut in the cave of our own ego that we deny ourselves the life-giving Sunlight. God's Grace is available to all. But he who shuts

himself in the ego-cave, does not enjoy it.

Here, even scientists and psychologists agree with the Yogi. 'As you think, so you become,' is a law accepted by all. If you go on thinking you are ill, you will become ill, even if you are a picture of health now. If you go on thinking you are wonderful, you will regain your health even if you are ill now. If you think 'I am the Immortal Atman', immortal shall you become. If you think of God, you will grow into His true image.

That is one of the reasons why our ancients wanted us to pray to God, to link our mind with God before undertaking anything important. They wanted us to feel: 'By God's Grace, I can.' And, we can. If, on the contrary, we undertake some work feeling diffident - 'I do not know if I can. I do not think I can', the result is foregone conclusion. We do not even exert our utmost to achieve the end.

It is for this reason again that we are asked to meditate upon the forms of Gods and Gurus. When we meditate on Rama, we saturate ourselves with the divine qualities that characterised Lord Rama. When we meditate on Jesus or Buddha or our own Gurudev, we grow in the divine virtues that characterised them. Without any effort at all, those qualities seem to come and dwell in our heart, provided we meditate intensely and with faith and devotion. Not if we merely drop the God-thought into the mind, as one drops a pebble in a cup of water. The pebble does not mix with water, nor does the latter undergo any change thereby. But, the process can be compared to a lump, of salt thrown into a cup of water. The very character of the water is altered - it becomes saline solution, not just water any more. When the mind is saturated thus with God-thought, it satisfies the Gita-commandment 'Manmanaa-bhava'. This has to be experienced, to be understood.

The Course of Destruction

'Man-mana Bhava' - If we constantly think of God, if our mind is of the nature and form of God, if we are ever God-conscious, we shall realise God. We are away from Him, and therefore suffer because we have filled our mind with the things of this world.

During the course of his own discourse on Dharma and how the battle he was about to engage himself in would bring about destruction of everybody, Arjuna had given a few logical steps to destruction. Krishna did not question him, contradict him, nor even interrupt him. Soon after, however, in the second chapter, He gives it all back. 'Not by doing your duty, Arjuna, will the destruction be caused. But by thinking of worldly objects of enjoyment does man walk into the pit of self-destruction'. In a couple of highly inspiring verses, He analyses this process:

Dhyayato vishayan pumsah sangasteshupajayate
Sangat sanjayate kamah kamat-krodho-bhijayate
Krodhat bhavati sammohah sammohad-smriti-vibhramah
Smriti bhramsat buddhi-naso buddhi-nashat-pranasatyati
When a man thinks of objects, 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.

When a man thinks of an object, the process of destruction has commenced. The mind assumes the form of that object. Hence we are unable to think of anything else. We are possessed by the object.

'Sangasteshupajayate' - A contact is established with them. The mind is linked with them. What links the mind with them? Our own-life-force, psychic force. Through this the mind flows towards them and envelopes them.

'Sangat sanjayate kamah' - This contact gives birth to desire. There is within us a violent passion to possess the object of enjoyment. This is kama, lust. It has been characterised by the Lord as 'Mahashano, Mahapapma', born of the rajasic nature in us. It is a 'great eater' and 'great sinner'. It is this kama that goads man to sin. God is not responsible for it. Hence, St James says in his Letter: 'Let no one say, when he is tempted, I am tempted by God', for God cannot be tempted with evil and He Himself tempts no one, but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then, desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death. Here 'death' is self-destruction - and how closely the Gita and the Holy Bible resemble here, too.

'Kamat krodho-bhijayate - Anger is born of desire. When desire is thwarted, anger arises. But you may ask, what if the desire is satisfied. True anger may not rise immediately. But the evil day is only postponed. For, let us never forget that Kama is 'Mahashanah' - great eater, insatiable. It will arise again and again, and it will be more and more violent. Let us recall Yayati's words of wisdom :

Na jatu kamah karnanam upabhogena samyati.

Havisha krishnavartmeva bhuyayevabhivardhate

The craving for sense-gratification never ceases with the enjoyment of sense-objects. On the other hand, it grows stronger and stronger like fire fed by ghee.

One day, this desire has to be thwarted. Anger is just waiting round the corner then. But this is only in exceptional cases. In the case of most of our desires, the frustration - fortunately for us, comes immediately. If even then we turn away from the objects of enjoyment, we can save ourselves. Or desire gives vent to anger - another name for hatred and the like. Anger is a demoniacal quality. I have often wondered if anyone who has seen his own face in a mirror when he is angry, will ever lose his temper again. That face is ugly. Why get angry at all? 'Loss of temper' is a beautiful expression whose meaning is not understood properly. It means 'loss of the temper or sharpness of our intelligence or discrimination'. The angry man has lost the sharpness of his own discrimination. The knife which has lost its temper is a piece of metal, not knife. A man who has lost his temper is not a human being, but just a living animal.

'Krodhat bhavati sammohah' - From anger comes delusion. In a fit of anger, we are enveloped by a cloud of delusion. Heaven and earth seem to unite in a blaze. The earth and all that is in front of us seem to whirl. It is near dementia.

'Sammohat smriti vibhramah' - From delusion arises loss of memory. We forget our identity, and do the most heinous crimes and unbecoming acts. Where you normally behave your very best, you behave ludicrously. If someone provokes you, you have forgotten your identity. When you cool down, you may regret. If the anger exceeds its bounds of decency, a gentleman becomes a dentist and pulls out the teeth of the opponent. The identity is forgotten.

'Smritibhramshat buddhinasah' - From loss of memory arises destruction of discrimination. It is this discrimination that distinguishes us from the animals. When that is destroyed, what remains? We are animals only. We are not aware of 'right' and 'wrong'.

'Buddhinasah pranashyati' - From the destruction of discrimination, he reaches self-destruction. When discrimination is lost, then he forfeits the glorious human birth, the greatest chance of attaining Self-realisation. In the words of the Isavasya Upanishad, he is an 'Atma-hana' - destroyer of his own Self, and enters the dark infernal regions. That is where loss of discrimination, which is the light that illumines the human intellect, leads him to.

Krishna reminds Arjuna that, not by doing one's duty, but by thus letting the mind dwell passionately on the objects of sense-pleasure, that one reaches self-destruction. 'One's own duty,' according to the Bhagavad Gita, 'must be performed, even if it looks, on the face of it, defective.'

Sahajam Karma kaunteya sa doshamapi na tyajet

On the other hand, the Dheera or spiritual hero will not let desire for sense-

gratification arise in his heart. Let us turn again to the Kathopanishad:

Paranjikhani vyatrinat swayambhuh tasmad paran pasyati na antaratman
Kaschit dheerah pratyagatmanam aikshat avrutta chakshuh amritatwam icchan
The Creator created the senses with outgoing tendencies: therefore, man beholds the
external universe and not the internal Self. But some wise man - Dheerah, Spiritual hero,
with eyes averted from sensual objects, desirous of Immortality, sees the Self within.,

When the desire for sense-gratification is quelled, then and then alone shall we be able to perform our actions in the spirit of the Gita, and then and then alone will we be able to rise beyond grief and worry. It is then alone will that we be able to understand God's Will and to do everything in the right spirit. Desire for sense-gratification can be quelled, only if, instead of thinking of the objects, we think of God - hence, the Lord commands us - Man-mana-bhava.

This is Pratipaksha Bhavana. Our Gurudev Sri Swami Sivananda says, in a very interesting poem: 'Do not cooperate with the mind'.

1. If the mind says 'Let us go to the cinema', say 'I will go to the temple.'
2. If the mind says 'I want to read a novel', say 'I will read the Gita'.

The greatest secret given in the Gita is that, if we keep up God-thought in our mind, no desire will arise and hence no worry.

All that needs to be understood in spiritual life, and all that really matters in life itself, has been summed up in this one Sloka, nay the one phrase: Man-mana-bhava.

The World is in Your Mind

In one of our greatest scriptures, the Yoga-Vasishta, there is a bold declaration that the world exists only within our mind. It is not a solid reality outside ourselves that we take it to be. It appears because of our own mental projection. If we cease to recognise it, it will vanish. It is a little difficult to grasp this concept of pure subjective idealism.

Here is a brown paper-bag of medium size. Let us first consider its size. It is neither big nor small. You are able to see it, and to you now it has certain dimensions. A few decades later, in your old age, your eyesight may fail. At that time, you may not see it as you are seeing it now, which is the correct dimension. The eye-surgeon holds a board in front of you now - you can read all the lines today. Some years later, you may not be able to do so - the last few lines will be indistinct. Were they really small and you were able to read them now, or were they big enough and your defective vision made it impossible for you to read? The 'size' of the object depends on the health of your eyesight. There is nothing called 'normal eye-sight.' It is a matter of convention.

Similarly, in the case of colour, too. This is a brown paper-bag. Supposing a boy who is born colour-blind and who saw red as brown and brown as red, had been told by his mother that this was brown paper; he would register that word 'brown' in relation to this colour - though to him the paper appeared as red appears to us. Today, when you hold this brown paper-bag in front of him and ask him what its colour is, he will say 'red', though he experiences it to be what to us is red. Hence, Vasishta makes this hold declaration that if all of us call certain objects by the same names, it is only on account of convention and confusion. We do not experience them in the same way.

Take a holy book, for instance. To you and me, it is holy book. To a printer, it is a well-got-up octavo size printed paper. To a businessman, it is just another marketable commodity. And, to a donkey, it is a mouthful of food. But what exactly is it? If we know, we can do and undo things, we can re-mould the world, as we want.

When we think of an object, we give it a value. It does not possess that value inherently. For instance, here is a young lady. To her husband, she is a dearly beloved wife, the object of greatest enjoyment, the life of his life, and she is all the beauty and charm embodied. To the child, she is none of these, but the source of its nourishment and a fortress of security. When it is hungry or when it is threatened by an enemy, it will run to the mother. To the father, she is a daughter, for the moulding of whose character and life he is responsible, and that which might delight her husband, e.g., a fashionable appearance, might shock her father. If she happened to go into the circus grounds and accidentally found herself face to face with a hungry lioness, she has none of these, but delicious lunch. What is she? She is nothing but your own mental projection. What you feel she is, that she is, and nothing more. You superimpose value on the object you

project from your own mind. You can, if you wish to, change that value in a minute. The same husband, if he attains a certain amount of discrimination and dispassion - as happened to Lord Buddha before he renounced the world - the young lady would not appear to be an object of pleasure but a disastrous snare.

What an object really is in itself, we can know only when this projection ceases. That is Yoga. 'Yogah Chitta Vritti Nirodhah' - Yoga is restraint of mental modifications. In other conditions, the mind assumes various forms, and experiences them outside. The state of sleep, when the projection seems to cease, is not regarded as the state of yoga, for sleep itself is a vritti - mental modification and, in that state, instead of experiencing many things, we experience 'nothing'.

What exists is the One, indivisible, homogeneous, Brahman or Infinite God. That God, when we endeavour to perceive Him or grasp Him through the senses, is the world. When what we call the world is perceived or directly experienced through the eye of intuition, it is God. God alone exists. 'Sarvam Khalvidam Brahman, Neha nanasthi kinchana' - All this is indeed Brahman there is no diversity here. But when That is perceived through the impure, finite senses and the mind, it is experienced as the finite, imperfect world. When the object is seen by the eye, it assumes a form; when it is grasped by the ear, it emits a sound; when it is felt by the tongue, it gets a taste, and so on. And the mind assumes the form of that object. The mind becomes Vishayamaya - full of the objective perception. Repeated perception of these objects forms a groove in the mind and we develop a habit. We are all slaves of habits, hence we are unable to get out of this snare of perverse perception. But, if we listen to the words of Lord Krishna - 'Man manaa Bhava', then we shall constantly think of Him, we shall be filled with Him, and we shall experience Him and Him alone everywhere. Then we shall realise that the 'objects' that we perceived were only our own 'dream-objects' and as false as dream-objects.

Once, King Janaka had a strange experience. For months together he slept for twelve hours a day and throughout this period he dreamt that he was a beggar. Soon he became puzzled and asked the wise men of his court, 'Am I a king dreaming that I am a beggar for twelve hours, or am I a beggar dreaming that I am a king for twelve hours?' Often, such philosophical enquiry, when it arises in the mind, will not allow us to rest till the answer is found - we must arrive at the Correct Value which we had forgotten so long, on account of habitual superimposition of false values. At last, sage Ashtavakra solved the problem for Janaka by boldly asserting that both were false and that the waking state was not essentially different from the dream state. We can understand that only when we wake from this persistent dream of our world-experience, when we awake to God.

This world is a long dream. It is unreal - it is not what it appears to be. But then, how is it that these objects seem to have a realistic appearance? Can something so real come out of something which is unreal? Yes. When you dream that a robber has entered your room and is throttling you, you scream and wake up, your body is covered with perspiration. The dream-robber was unreal - but the screaming

and the perspiration are real.

Again, when we say that the world is unreal, we only mean that the way we see it is unreal or false. We are not perceiving it as it is, viz., God, but we are perceiving it in a perverse way. That is unreal. That unreal perception causes a lot of havoc.

A young man saw a kite flying away with a diamond necklace on its beak. He wanted to get it. The kite sat for a few minutes on a tree. The young man ran towards it and climbed the tree, feeling sure that the kite, which had in the meantime flown away, must have dropped the necklace there. He found a hole in the tree and put his hand into it. Something 'bit' him. He was sure it was a deadly cobra. He fell down and was almost dying. All the symptoms of the last hour were there, except the marks of the cobra's fangs. A wise old doctor noticed this and was sure that there was something wrong. He examined the hole and discovered a dried mango-seed. It had 'bitten' the young man. The doctor made the young man realise what had happened and the latter was saved.

God pervades the entire universe. In fact, He alone exists. But we experience something else, and suffer in consequence. If we realise 'Maya tatam idam saivam' - all this is pervaded by Me, or 'Ishwarah Sarvabutanam hriddeserjuna tishtati' - God is seated in the hearts of all, then this illusion will vanish.

Incidentally, this expression 'God is seated in the heart' has given rise to a lot of misunderstanding. It is not as though God is only in our heart and the rest of our body is without him. He is in the 'heart' of every cell of our being. He is in the 'heart' of every atom of creation. The expression has been used to help us in our meditation. As we need a form to fix our mind upon, so we need a centre within to fix our mind upon. That is the heart.

God pervades the entire universe. 'Ishavasyam idam sarvam', says the Upanishad. The Vedas proclaim, 'Yat cha kinchit jagat sarvam drishyate sruyate-api va, antar bahischa tat sarvam vyapya Nrayana stithah - whatever there is, seen or heard, the Lord pervades all this inside and out. We do not experience this because of the habit of the mind to experience the world in its diversity, through the avenues of the finite, impure imperfect senses. Mind is Maya. Maya projects the image of the world, and the senses revel in it. The urgent need is to throw away this image. Often we meet people who decry idol worship. The man who says, 'These images are false', is himself an image in your mind, and he is false - forget him. The idol, the image that should be destroyed is not the idol of God in the temples, but the imagery of the world in our mind. We should destroy it and substitute in its place the realisation of the One Being. The image or the idol of God is helpful for this.

Mind is Maya. Mind binds us, and mind itself will lead us to liberation. 'Maita Eva manushyanam karanam bandha mokshayoh'. Lord Krishna says in the Gita,

Atmaiva hyatmano bandhluh atmaiva ripuratmanah
Bhandhuratmatmanah tasya yenanaimaivatmana jitah
Anatinanastu shruratwe vartetatmaiva satru vat

Man is his own friend and his own enemy. He is his own friend when he has controlled himself with the Self. He who has not thus controlled himself, his own self or mind becomes his enemy.

It is our uncontrolled, impure mind that perceives good and evil outside. It differentiates - 'He is a good man', 'He is a wicked man' - and thus creates its own net of Raga-Dweshha, likes and dislikes, in which it gets imprisoned. In fact, all are God. Judgment is an expression of our own imperfect, sinful nature. Hence, Lord Jesus, too, warned: 'Judge not others'. Our judgment is nothing but the expression and confession of our own ignorance. This leads naturally to the experience of pain and pleasure.

If we like to do something, it is pleasure; if we do not, and if we are made to do it, it is pain. A young lady may be cutting vegetables under the mother-in-law's compulsion; if the knife makes a little scratch on a finger, she will scream with pain. The same lady may join the war as a nurse, and in the course of her duties, voluntary and joyous service in the front ranks, she might even lose a hand; she will proudly and happily show it to others later.

It is the mind that creates pain and pleasure and the other dualities. Hence, Lord Krishna says, 'Control the mind, and you have found the key to happiness and peace; you will never sorrow nor grieve.' 'Man manaa bhava', and then you will see everything as God. The dualities will vanish.

Maya and its Three-Fold Nature

To have such a complete mastery over the mind is the essence of spiritual life. Mind is the tool of ignorance, the child of Avidya or Maya. Maya is that indescribable power which veils the Reality and makes the unreal appear as Real. We assume separate individual existence, though there is only One Infinite Existence. We see water in the desert, where there is none. We see diversity where there is only One.

A man walking in semi-darkness - only in semi-darkness is this possible - sees a snake across his path. Someone brings a lamp and in its light the snake is seen as nothing but a rope. Similarly, in the semi-darkness of human-ignorance, the world is perceived as the reality. The world is the 'snake' superimposed on the rope which is the Reality or Nature of God. But till the Guru comes with the lamp of Knowledge, the individual suffers in ignorance. When, in the light of that knowledge, he perceives the Reality, ignorance and the world-perception vanish. With ignorance, fear, grief, worry, deluded attachment, desire and anger - all of them vanish. Hence, Lord Krishna defines the sage as 'Veetaraga-bhaya-krodhah-sthithadeeh' - he is of steadfast wisdom, freed from deluded infatuation, fear, anger. He now sees everything as his own Self.

'Love thy neighbour as thy own self,' we have heard. This 'self' does not really mean the little egoistic self, but the supreme Self, with a capital S. Otherwise it might lead to all sorts of perversions - e.g. 'If I were in his position with such an incurable disease, I would commit suicide and, since he is too cowardly to do that, I shall lovingly do it for him and commit euthanasia'. In order to prevent such perverse interpretation, Lord Krishna supplements it with its counterpart, and says:

*Sarvabhutasthamatmanam Sarvabhutani cha atmani
Eekshate Yoga yukthatma sarvatra samadarshanah
The Yogi perceives his own Self in all beings, and, all beings in his Self.*

The latter part of this statement rules out the limited self. It refers to the One Self in which we are all forever linked, united, with God Who is the Self of all. This is the 'Anyonya asrayatvam' or mutual interdependence, in the words of Sage Narada. Hence it is that, when we hurt 'someone else', we really hurt our own self, and when we serve 'someone else', we serve our own Self. We are all One Common Consciousness. The realisation of that Cosmic Consciousness is reached when the mind is 'annihilated'. That is reached by stages.

Since mind is nothing but Maya, let us see what this Maya is. We cannot truly understand the nature of the mind or Maya, except in the light of Atma-Jnana or Self Knowledge. Mind cannot understand mind, for that knowledge will only be partial, biased, imperfect and therefore false. Similarly, it is not possible to know what Maya is, for even the instrument - Antahkarana, mind or intellect, is itself a tool in the hands of Maya, a product of Maya. Logic and scientific instruments are the grand children of Maya. The intellect is born of Maya, her son, and the logic

and the instruments are the products, children, of the intellect. They cannot understand the nature of Maya. Hence, the great sage Yajnavalkya asks:

Vijnataramarey kena vijaneeyaata
By what can we understand the understander?

The Atman can, therefore, be realised only by the process of Neti-Neti - not this, not this, carefully and persistently denying the manifestations of Maya. That is the reason why Lord Buddha refused to answer the questions 'Is God real? Is the world real? Is God unreal? Is the world unreal?' And when the questioner asked, 'May it be that you do not know?', he still kept quiet. When the questioner turned to go, He said, 'Look, I did not say God is real nor that He is unreal, I did not say that the world is real nor that it is unreal, I did not say that the world is real nor did I say that the world is unreal, I did not say that I do not know. Why this futile enquiry? When the house is on fire, a wise man would busy himself putting it out, not to enquire into the cause and the composition of fire. You are caught in the wheel of birth and death, release yourself from it by the noble eight-fold path'.

That is what Lord Krishna says, too, in the Gita:

Avityam Asukham lokam imam prapya bhajasva mam
Having come into this world of pain and death, worship Me.

The problem of creation - Why God created the world, the problem of what is Maya, the problem of origin - which was first, hen or egg, or how and where did the Law of Cause and Effect begin, cannot be solved by the finite intellect.

But, Krishna says:

Daivee hyesha gunamayee mama maya duratyaya
Mameva ye prapadyante mayametam taranti te
This Maya or illusory Power is divine, Mine, of the nature of the three Gunas, and very difficult to cross. Only they cross who surrender themselves to Me.

The three Gunas, Satwa, Rajas and Tamas constitute the world, the entire creation. When we endeavour to understand the nature of these three Gunas, we have a glimpse of the nature of Maya.

My Master Sri Swami Sivananda often used to ask of the intelligent man, whose 'academic degrees' are longer than the name itself, 'Do you know which Vritti is operating in the mind at a particular time? Do you know which Guna is operating in the mind at a particular time? You do not. Then, what is your intelligence, and what is the use of your degrees and diplomas?' Lord Krishna gives us a clue to the understanding of the operation of the Gunas.

'When the mind becomes serene and cheerful, when the senses are subjugated, when the body is free from fear, when the mind is free from attachment, Satva grows and makes it easy for you to realise Me.'

'When the mind is distracted by actions, when desire multiply, when the senses

become restless, when the mind is always wandering, know by these signs that Rajas is increasing.'

'When the mind cannot grasp, when it is drooping, when it is not able to reflect on the Atman when it languishes, when it is vacant, when ignorance and dejection prevail, know by these signs that Tamas is increasing.'

Again,

'The knowledge of the existence of the Atman as something distinct from the body is sattvic; that which identifies the Atman with the body is Rajasic; the knowledge of the uncultured, like that of children, the dumb, etc. is Tamasic. That knowledge which concerns Me and which is beyond the Gunas is Jnana.' Srimad Bhagavatam, 11th Skanda.

When Satwa predominates in our mind, we approach God. Satwa is light. It is the 'quality' of God, as it were. The suffix 'Wa' is the same as the suffix 'ness' in English. 'Sat' is the term by which God is designated in our scriptures. Satwa means, therefore, God-ness, the quality of God. Not God Himself, but the quality that is closest to God.

Rajas is sensitiveness; it enables us to feel, live, grow, and involves a lot of restlessness, passion and activity.

Tamas is the quality of inert matter.

Continuous discrimination between Atma and un-Atma - divine and undivine, Self and not-Self, promotes the growth of Satwa in us. Lord Krishna comes to our help here. He even gives us detailed lists of what is Satwic, Rajasic and Tamasic in the food we eat, thoughts we think, actions we perform, etc. This is in order to help us choose the Satwic in all these - the best aid to grow rapidly in this divine quality.

Tamas is inertia, belonging to the 'mineral' part of our being. It has to go, by right exertion, in all directions. Yoga prescribes several methods of getting rid of Tamas, like Asanas, Pranayama, etc., and dynamic selfless service.

Rajas has to be controlled, sublimated and directed God-ward. Rajas is the sinner, when it is associated with Tamas or ignorance or foolishness or delusion. After the Lord had discoursed upon unattached action, surrendering all actions to God, Arjuna asks a question which rises to the lips of all of us, too:

Atha kena prayuktoyam papam charati purushah
Anicchannapi varshneya baladiva nybjitah
But, what compels man to sin, often against his own desires?

In other words, can we glibly say, that even sin is God's will? Often, we do. As a matter of fact, human nature takes all credit for any good done, to itself, and

ascribes failures to His Will. This is a gross spiritual blunder.

Lord Krishna replies,

Kama esha krodha esha rajo-guna samudbhavah
Mahasano mahapapma vidhyenamiha vairinam
It is desire and anger, born of Rajas: this is your enemy.

Desire and anger are two of the three gates to Hell.

Trivadam narakasyedam dwaram nasanamatmanah Kama krodhas tada lobhas
tasmadetat-tryam tyajet

Desire, anger and greed are the three gates to hell: they must be shunned.

They open out on Hell. At the fourth gate, hints the Lord, 'I am standing, awaiting your return.' Hence, He assures us, 'Mameva ye prapadyante mayametam taranti te' - They who take refuge in Me, cross the Maya of three Gunas, including the triple-gate to Hell, viz desire, anger and greed, which are Rajasic' Hence, 'Manmana bhava' - Be thou God-minded.

Rajas is the quality that is described with the terrible words 'Mahasano' 'Mahapapma' - the great eater, the great sinner, also as 'Duspurena anala' - insatiable fire, and 'Jnanino nitya vairinam' - the eternal enemy of the Jnani, the man of wisdom.

This quality of Rajas has to be sublimated into Satwa.

Modern science is coming very close to Indian philosophy. We all know now that the entire creation can be reduced to the 'three' - electron, proton and neutron. If we regard these as Tamas, Rajas and Satwa respectively, we seem to get a clear view of the picture painted by our sages. For, Oppenheimer says that in the atom, the proton and the neutron are interchangeable and do often change into each other. That again is what the Indian Yogi also said, long ago. He called it 'sublimation'. Rajas has to be sublimated into Satwa. The direction of the current should be changed. Only Satwa can penetrate the Veil of Ignorance and enable us to attain Self-realisation. Similarly, only the neutron can break up the atom and release the energy and other neutrons. Neutron is a particle of no electric charge - Satwa is similarly a quality which is not Raga-Dwesa, attraction-repulsion; it is the neutral divine quality which is characterised by sameness or Samatwa.

For the sublimation of Rajas, our ancient sages prescribed Karma Yoga, which is so highly extolled in the Gita by the Lord. By directing all our Rajasic nature along Satwic channels or the channels of good and divine activity, we sublimate Rajas into Satwa. Such activity is Rajas based on Satwa. Rajas functioning with the help of Tamas results in blind passion. It is the womb of all evil qualities. It corresponds, more or less, to the animal urges or the Id in terms of modern

psychology.

When Tamas has been eradicated by the various Yoga-practices, then Rajas begins to function with the help of Satwa.

This sublimation is effected by substitution.

Yoga recommends the method of Pratipaksha Bhavana - substitution of the good for the evil. The Yogi does not endeavour so much to dig up the subconscious, as to substitute the hidden evil tendencies with positive good tendencies. In this respect, Yoga differs markedly from the process of psycho-analysis. As experience mounts upon experience; as layer after layer has been laid by our day-to-day actions and experiences, the mind undergoes continuous change. It is very difficult to pin-point a single cause for a single complex or neurosis. A parallel can be drawn here between the difficulty in locating the cause of any one of our complexes, and the difficulty that the nuclear physicist has in locating a single electron and determining its velocity at a particular moment. The energy which probes it, alters the position and velocity of the electron. Similarly, the very effort to analyse the hidden cause of the complex brings about some changes in the mind-stuff, thus still further complicating the process. That is the reason why our Master describes the mind as the tool of Maya.

What is the depth of the subconscious mind? How many times should we be psycho-analysed to be able to be totally free from all complexes and to regain the norm - the norm, here, being the faculty to see everything as it is and not as we have been conditioned by habit, and tradition - inhibition - to perceive it?

It is strange that science which advocates that the best method of getting rid of pain is to forget it, prescribes a different treatment for getting rid of inner, psychological 'pains' or complexes. Here, too, the best thing is to forget them and to promote 'health' or wholesome spiritual tendencies. Then the evil tendencies die a natural death. By indulging in a frontal attack, by thinking of them and thus strengthening them, we might do just the opposite of what we desire to do.

In the case of the hidden tendencies, Vasanas, frontal attack is often disastrous. That is the lesson we learn from the Vali-episode in the Ramayana. Lord Rama has been criticised for killing Vali from a place of hiding. It is unrighteous, unchivalrous and unbecoming of Lord Rama, they say. But, the scripture tells us that Vali had a boon by which he always absorbed half the strength of his opponent. This made him invincible. He always had the strength of his opponent plus his own. Hence, the only way to kill him was to shoot from a place of hiding. This is a lesson in psychology. We cannot attack the mind from the front. Then, we shall be forfeiting our own will and bestowing it upon the vicious mind. The method advocated is to get behind the mind, to hide ourselves in the Lap of God within ourselves, and then to kill this mind is easy work.

If we are sincere - and that is the most difficult thing in spiritual life, we can

discover our own defects. And, then, we have resolutely to endeavour to cultivate the opposite qualities, and let the evil ones die a natural death. Gurudev gives us practical hints here. First, restrain the evil tendencies from manifesting themselves physically. If you want to give up drinking, then for some time do not go anywhere near the bar; if it is on your way back home, take a different route. And, if the desire persists, instead of going to bar, go to the temple. Here, the temple substitutes the bar and once the habit of going to the temple is formed, the other evil habit will drop away. That is why Lord Krishna assures us:

Api chet suduracharobhajate main ananya bhak
Sadhureva sa mant avyah samyak vyavasito hi sah
Kshipram bhavati dharmatma saswat-santim nigacchati
Kaunteya prati janehi na me bhaktah pranasyati.
Even if the wicked man comes to Me, with single-minded devotion, he should be regarded as good, for he has rightly resolved. He soon becomes a good man and attains supreme peace.
I promise: My devotee never perishes.

It is not the strength of the evil tendency that matters. It is the earnestness with which we resort to God that matters, for His 'is the power and the glory', in the words of the Lord's Prayer. Lord Krishna gives a clear description of the inner mechanism, so that we can operate on it intelligently and overcome this powerful enemy within - Lust and Anger, or Rajasic nature.

Indriyani paranyahur indriyebhyah param manah
Manasastu para buddher yo buddheh paratastu sah
Indriyas are superior to sense-objects or the world: the mind is superior to the senses: the discriminative faculty or Buddhi is superior to the mind and He is superior even to Buddhi.

The senses are superior even to sense-objects and the world. If I am deaf, a songster appears to be a mad man convulsively shaking his head and lips. If I am blind, the greatest painting is a piece of coarse canvas. The senses themselves receive their light and their power from the mind. I may be staring at you, but if I am deeply thinking of something else, you are a mere shadow without meaning for me. The mind was elsewhere. The senses continuously carry all sorts of impressions to the mind, but it is the discriminative faculty which makes the mind choose. For instance, we ride along the market street, but we do not seem to notice, and the mind does not take notice of anything but what we are 'interested in', and this interest is created by the discriminative faculty which distinguishes one object from the others. When this interest shifts by the maturity or otherwise of the discriminative faculty, the mind also follows it. A child likes toys, but as he grows old finds no use for them. The discriminative faculty now directs the mind towards other objects. Buddhi, thus the Director of the mind, the boss of the mind, with whose grace does the Buddhi perform this task? It is by God's Grace, in God's Light.

Hence, Lord Krishna says, 'Man manaa bhava.' Do not worry yourself with your own lower nature, lack of self-control, etc, come to me, and I will surely liberate you from this lower nature of yours. For I am superior to even your Buddhi, which shines because of Me.

Tasmat twam indriyani adau niyama bharatarshabha
Papmanam prajahi hyenam jnana vij nano nashanam
Therefore, first control the senses and then destroy this terrible demon of Desire which
destroys all knowledge.

There are three distinct stages in this process. The first is Mano-Nigraha - control of the mind. The second is Mano-laya - absorption of the mind. The third is Mano-nasa - destruction of the mind, analogous to the destruction of the 'snake' when it is seen to be only a rope, destruction of darkness when light is brought in.

All the Yogas aim only at this goal. In Raja Yoga, Pranayama and Pratyahari achieve Mano-Nigraha, Dharana and Dhyana achieve Mano-laya, and Samadhi achieves Mano-nasa.

In integral Yoga - the Yoga of Synthesis, Karma Yoga eradicates the evil tendencies and brings about Mano-graha. Bhakti Yoga or Upasana - prayer, concentration and meditation on God, brings about Mano-laya, as the mind is absorbed in God. This increases the Satvic content of the mind. When even this is transcended, everything is seen as God and God alone and, when through the practice of Jnana yoga, ignorance is eradicated, there is Mano-Nasa - total eradication of the mind.

There is one important and imperative prerequisite which is demanded of the aspirant - surrender to God, which is but another way of saying - one pointed devotion to God. Hence Lord Krishna said:

Mameva ye prapadyante mayametam taranti te
They who resort to Me, surrender themselves to Me, cross this Maya.

We must rivet our attention upon God, neither looking this way nor that. The Path to God is the Subtle Middle Path of Buddhism. On either side is Maya. In all our spiritual endeavours we should avoid the extremes, even if they appear to be 'spiritual', are in the realm of Maya only. Moderation in all things is the condition prerequisite to Yoga. Lord Krishna says:

Tuktahara viharasya jukta chehstasya karmasu
Tukfasvapnavabodhasya yogo bhavati dukkhahaa
Yoga destroys the miseries of one who observes moderation in eating, moving, working,
waking and sleeping.

He unequivocally declares that Yoga is not for one who eats too much nor too little, who sleeps too much or too little, etc. On either side, there is Maya - in the middle is God. This is the significance of the common representation of many of the Hindu Gods having two 'wives'. The Deity says, as it were, 'Do not look this way or that. Fix your mind on Me, and surrender yourself to Me, and you will not be affected by Maya.'

Let us not belittle this wonderful power of God, Maya. It is indescribable, Anirvachaneeya. It is very difficult to cross, Duratyaya. We cannot perceive it, because Maya is not the object of perception or reasoning or inference. The

reasoning faculty itself is the product of Maya. Perhaps we shall never know what Maya actually is.

Let us take an analogy - darkness. We have not seen darkness at all. How do we see an object? When light-rays are refracted by an object and when they fall on your eye, you perceive that object. Otherwise you will not see it. Therefore, in darkness, the object even in your hand is not visible to you. Now, on the same principle, if we have to see darkness, we should let light shine upon it. But, the moment you flash a light upon darkness, it vanishes. In other words, when you 'saw' darkness, you were only enveloped by it - you did not actually see it, you could see nothing. And, when you produced the conditions in which you could see darkness, it vanished. That is what happens to Maya, too. We are under the sway of Maya. When the Light of the Atma dawns in us, Maya vanishes. The Jnani knows what Maya is - not as an object, but as an experience - in the same way as you and I know what darkness is or is capable of doing to us - not as an object whose nature we are aware of, but as an experience whose effect we can comprehend.

It will not do to deny Maya or ignore the illusory power, for in that very denial or ignorance is the power of Maya. A great devotee of Mother Parasakti, in Bengal, Ram Prasad, who has sung very many inspiring songs in praise of the Mother, says in one of them:

'Mother, the philosopher who declares that the One Brahman alone exists, that Maya does not exist, and that he is one with that Brahman, is really ignorant, and he is Under Your foot, for he has not understood the Reality. When he says, 'I am Brahman', his 'I' connotes for him only his individuality or egoism. This ignorance itself is Maya, and he does not realise that. I am Thy child, Mother, and I hold fast to your Feet, knowing that You are one with the Lord. This is the path to Liberation.'

Unless and until we are firmly established in wisdom, and unless and until all the defects in our heart have been totally eradicated, we shall not be able to understand what is meant by the term 'I am Brahman' - Aham Brahmasmi, or the famous formula of Shankaracharya:

Brahmassatyam Jaganmithya jeevo brahmaiva naaparah
Brahman is Truth: the world is false: the individual is non-different from Brahman.

This illusory power, too, is His - Mama Maya - and is divine - Daivee. We have to perform the extremely difficult feat of this spiritual rope-walking. We should not succumb to this illusion, and at same time we should recognise the power as inherent in God's Nature. There should neither be contempt for the world nor deluded attachment to it. The world, as illusion, should give place to the world as God. It is not as easy as it sounds. It demands constant vigilance and the acquisition and application of right knowledge.

This Maya has a two-fold aspect. On the one hand, Maya is delusion, ignorance,

Avidya. On the other, Maya is knowledge, the liberating agent. We are given very clear guidance on this point in the Devi Mahatmya or Durga Saptashati.

Sa Vidya parania mukterhetubhuta sanatanee
Samsarabandhahetuscha saiva sarveswareswari
She is the Supreme Knowledge which is the cause of liberation and She is the cause for
bondage to Samsara too.

As Avidya, Maya veils as Vidya, Maya unveils. In other words, wrong knowledge or ignorance will only bind us fester to Samsara. Right knowledge, though yet within the realm of becoming Maya or relativity, will lead us towards Liberation, which will be attained when we transcend both, right knowledge and wrong knowledge, and get established in Knowledge. Absolute Rajas based on Tamas is Avidya and it binds. All activities based on wrong knowledge or ignorance bind. Rajas based on Satwa tends towards liberation. Activity based on right knowledge or the light of Truth leads us towards liberation. Only Satwa can break the shell of Maya - and let us recall the parallel in nuclear physics - only the neutron can break the atom.

Substitute Avidya by Vidya. Burn up the impurities, so that the heart can become pure.

The Inner Discipline of Yoga

This burning up of impurities is another important factor in spiritual life. It is called Tapas. Tapas is literally burning. The ancient ones adopted many forms of Tapas. Here, as in other spheres of spiritual life, the form, unfortunately, overwhelmed and crushed out the Spirit, with the result that a liberating technique came to forge one more link in the chain of bondage. People began to indulge in Tapas for show or for some unworthy purposes. Krishna styles people who indulge in such exhibitionist type of Tapas as 'diabolically-minded.' At the Lord's hands, many of our concepts have had a revolutionary treatment, and Tapas is one of them. He gives us an entirely new definition of Tapas. He gives three categories, viz., mental Tapas, verbal Tapas, and physical Tapas. Here they are:

Devadwijaguruprajnapujanam sauchamarjavam
Brahmacharyamahimsa cha sareeram tapa uchaate
Worship of the gods, the Brahmins, the teachers and the wise, purity,
straightforwardness, celibacy and non-injury, are called austerities of the body.

Anadwegakaram vakyam satyam priyahitam cha yat
Swadhyayabhyasanam chaiva vangmayam tapa uchate
Speech which causes no excitement, truthful, pleasant, beneficial, the practice of the
study of the Vedas, are called the austerities of speech.

Manaprasadah saumyatwam mounamatmavinigraha
Bhavasamsuddhirityetat tapo mavasamuchyate
Serenity of mind, good-heartedness, silence, self-control, purity of nature - this is
called the mental austerity

The meaning is abundantly clear. Yet, since we are dealing now with the control of the Mind especially, and the purport of the great secret of the Gita, 'Man manaa bhava' - be thou God-minded, let us examine the last a little closer.

Manaprasada - serenity of mind. It is not gloominess, not castor-oil face, but a calm radiation of inner joy. We associate the word 'Prasada' also with sacrament which, in turn, signifies the tangible token of God's Grace. Manaprasada similarly is an indication of Divine Grace.

Saumyatwam - Goodness, not a cloak - a wolf in lamb's skin. It is not a policy. It is not an art. It is not for exhibition nor demonstration. Saumyatwam is not the quality of a busy body who runs about doing many good turns, with foul motive. It is the aura that surrounds the man whose heart is good. When you approach him, even without exchanging a word with him, you will know he is good.

Mounam - Silence. We generally associate it with vocal silence. But our Master has often warned us against this misinterpretation. The man who observed vocal silence often wastes more energy and gets more excited and excites others, too, by uttering all sorts of 'hu, hu' noises and gesticulating violently. Let us also not forget that whereas Krishna lists 'truthfulness' among austerities of speech, He includes Mounam as a mental austerity. It pertains to the mind. The mind must be silent. Then the vocal chords will naturally be silent. A great amount of energy

is wasted in idle talks. It would be highly interesting and enlightening if we can tape-record all our daily conversations with our friends and guests, and listen to the recording a month or so later. Much of it would be pure nonsense, even to us. Moreover, if you want to be 'Man manaa' - God-minded, then let the mind and the speech keep quiet. If you have nothing profitable spiritually to communicate, keep quiet.

Atma-vinigraha - self-control.

Bhava-samsuddhih - purity of motive.

All these mental disciplines eradicate Avidya and promote Vidya. All these enable the mind to be controlled for its eventual absorption and annihilation. But, it is not as easy as it sounds.

When Lord Krishna described in detail, the Yoga of meditation, how the Self should be experienced, and how that self should be perceived as all-pervading, in the 6th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna asks a very pertinent question:

Yoyam yogah twaya proktah samyena madhusudana
Yetasyaham na pasyami chanchalatwat stithim sthiram
Ghanchalam hi manah krishna pramathi balavad dridham
Tasyaham nigraham manye vayoriva sudushkaram
I do not see how the mind can be steadied for it is as difficult as controlling the mind.

The Lord readily agreeing with him, gives the remedy too:

Asamsayam mahabaho mano durnigraham chalam
Abhyasena tu kaunteya vairagyena cha grithyate
No doubt, the mind is extremely difficult to control. But it can be controlled by persistent effort and also by the cultivation of dispassion.

Dispassion is extremely essential. The moment dispassion is mentioned, many modern men feel that Yoga advocates pessimism, other-worldliness, and self-mortification, and that the Yogis are kill-joys. The Yogi, as has been pointed out, is asked to observe moderation in everything - neither abstaining nor indulging too much. That is the best elucidation of this word 'dispassion'.

The Yogi will not starve, nor go about naked, the Yogi will not wear a gloomy look, nor will he be always giggling. The Yogi will not refuse to recognise friends and companions, nor will he ever get deludedly attached to them. In everything and everywhere, he seeks the middle path. And hence it would be true to say that the Yogi, because of the absence of the passionate craving for sense-enjoyments, enjoys righteous pleasures better. The boy who steals a sweetmeat, he 'simply loves', and eats it in secret, does not enjoy its taste as much as another who does not crave so much for it, but, when it comes to him, leisurely enjoys to taste.

Dispassion means absence of a passionate craving or longing in our heart for sense enjoyment. Even the external restraint, though it is extremely essential as a step towards it, is only an insurance that the inner state of dispassion is not

disturbed.

Side by side, we should resort to Abhyasa or persistent practice, at the control of mind, at concentration and meditation. These two together are the universally recognised methods at control of the mind, not only in the East, but in the West, too. If one reads the life of some of the early Christian Fathers, beautifully portrayed in the wonderful and inspiring book 'The Way of a Pilgrim', one cannot but notice the similarity in this way between the Eastern and the Western seekers. The Holy Fathers instruct their disciples to repeatedly pray to God to grant them the state of continuous prayer. 'O Lord, may my prayers be uninterrupted.' Lord Krishna's teachings are the same.

Abhyasa yogena tato mam icchaptum dhananjaya
Then, desire for Me, by the continuous attempt at the practice of Yoga.

When faced by the identical problem of control of mind, the seeker, whether he was in Russia or South India, found the same solution, and adopted the same method. We cultivate dispassion and we strive again and again to control the mind.

An episode in the life of Sri Krishna, however, warns us that it is only the Lord Who can quell this poisonous reptile that the mind is. You all know the story of Kaliya-Mardana. There was a deadly serpent with a thousand hoods, named Kaliya, in a pool. It emitted such virulent poison, that even birds flying over the pool were killed. The symbolism is clear - this deadly cobra is our own mind. It has innumerable hoods - thought-waves and moods. By its poison - vicious thoughts and feelings, it spreads destruction everywhere. Lord Krishna jumped into the pool, played with the vicious reptile for some time, then danced on its hoods and subdued it. Even so, the Lord will play with our mind within us, enable us to enjoy heavenly bliss, and then dance on it - control it, and enable it to be absorbed in Him. When we introduce a God-thought into the mind, there is an instantaneous rebellion. It happened in the case of Kaliya too. Kaliya asked, 'I have been here for so long, as the master of the whole show; who are you?' The evil mind will rebel. Persistence in the practice of enthroning God in our heart is necessary, and ultimate victory is ours. But, let us not forget.

Mameva ye prapadyante mayametam taranti te
They who surrender themselves to Me, will get over this Maya.

Cling to His feet. Surrender yourself to Him. Let Him take over. Only He can quell this vicious reptile - the mind. That is what the Lord means by 'prapadyante' - surrender. 'Enough of the mischief of Your own intelligence. Hand it over to me. Only I can liberate you. When you hand yourself over to Me, you will naturally think only of Me.' Therefore, 'Man-manava bhava' - be thou God-minded.

To make the mind God filled, we have to remove the bestial and fill it with goodness.

Daivee sampath vimokshaya nibandhaayaasuree mataa

Divine qualities lead to Liberation, and indivine qualities, like anger an greed, inordinate attachment, fear etc, must be got rid of.

Says Lord Sri Krishna:

Vitaraga bhaya krodhah manmayaa mam upasritaah

Bahavo jnana tapasa puta matbbavam agatah

Many have attained My being, freed from attachment, fear and anger, absorbed in Me, taking refuge in Me, purified by the fire of knowledge.

Desire or lust for sense-enjoyment must go. It is the spiritual aspirant's deadliest enemy. In fact, a South Indian saint wants that we should eradicate even the desire for God. 'Aasai arumin, aasai arumin, eesanodaayinum aasai arumin'. Eventually even the desire for God dies. It is like fire which after burning the fuel extinguishes itself. Desire for God or desire for liberation - Mumukshatwa - removes all other desires. When we are free from all other worldly desires, then we realise the Self, by the practice of meditation and acquisition of Jnana, and desire for liberation lapses.

They who equate God-love with the love they know of, have not understood its real significance. Divine Love is not like human love. It has no Raga or attachment in it. It does not expect a reward. It is but a manifestation of the ultimate unity of the supreme soul and the individual soul. It is the inevitable, natural, irresistible force that exists forever between God and Man - like magnetism which operates when a pure iron is placed near a magnet. The caution not to let this God-love degenerate into an attachment is based on experience. Often man clings to the symbol which he used to approach God and is unable to renounce it. He is attached to the idol or the image itself as God - not as a symbol of God. Similarly, the philosopher gets intensely and deludedly attached to a doctrine. It binds him. He has been side-tracked. One has to be very careful on the spiritual path.

The aspirant is fearless. When the whole world is pervaded by God, whom is he to fear? When he knows that only Lord's will is done here, what is he to be afraid of? When he knows that the worst 'calamity' that might befall him can only be in the shape of working out of the Prarabdha Karma, from what experience need he run away? The God-man is fearlessly calm. Let us here recall to our mind the glorious episode from the life of Jada Bharata. When he was roaming the forest, a few bandits caught hold of him in order to offer him as 'human sacrifice' to Devi Kali. They bathed him, made him eat, and prepared him to be offered in sacrifice. He remained unmoved by fear. Coolly, he awaited the event. Of course, the Divine will was otherwise. Kali leapt out of the image and killed the bandits. His attitude gives us this formula: 'If you tear a worn-out shirt, what do I loose? Nothing happens to me.' If you heap insults on me, wonderful. If you injure me, wonderful.

I remember the greatest day in our life at the Ashram, 8th January, 1950, when the Christ-like Master Sri Swami Sivananda blessed the man who came to-murder Him. The prayer service was going on in the Ashram's Hall. A semi-

lunatic entered the Hall, which was very poorly lit, and attacked the Master with an axe. After three infructuous blows, the assailant was overpowered. The news was conveyed to me in the office. As we ran up, I heard the entire congregation chanting the Santi Mantras. I was sure that nothing had happened to the Master. No one else in that situation could have the head on his shoulders. When we saw Him, there was not a ray of disturbance on His face. Imagine yourself in that position. Even the thought that 'I could have been killed' would be enough to spread a veil of worry over our face. But the Master was fearless and radiant as ever.

Anger also has to go. Anger turns upon itself. It burns itself. Only Raga or Kama or desire becomes anger. When the former is absent, the latter has no existence. 'Man-mayaah' - transfigured into Myself, is what results from 'Man manaa bhava' - be thou God-minded. 'Mam Upasritah' - they resort to Me for I am their all. Our heart goes to the things that interest us. When God and He alone is the be-all and end-all of our life, we resort only to Him. 'Jnana-Tapasa-Putah' - they are purified by jnana-tapas. Not 'Moorka-Tapas - foolish austerity, devoted to extreme self-denial or self-mortification. Their austerity is knowledgeable and wise. As I have mentioned already, all these concepts - like Tapas, Jnana, etc., have received a revolutionary re-definition from Lord Krishna.

'Mad-bhavam agatah' - in them, 'I and mine' cease. They become one with the Lord. They share His Nature, and their attitude towards life and the world is God's attitude towards life and the world. They have no separate will, thoughts, feelings, or actions - it is all His. They are non-different from God. Hence, our scriptures proclaim, 'Brahmavit Brahmaiva Bhavati' - the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman. Therefore, 'Man-manaa Bhava' - be thou God-minded.

There are two ways to become God-minded. Both of them have been indicated by the Lord in Gita. The first:

Ananyaschintayanto maam ye janah paryuipasate
Tesham nityabhiyuktanam yogakshemam vahaamyaham
Think of me constantly. I will look after your welfare.

In this constant remembrance, it is the aspirant who tries to fill his mind with God-thought. He does Japa, Kirtan, Swadhyaya and meditation. He feeds the mind with God-thought.

The mind is after all finite. The Infinite cannot be fed into the finite mind. Moreover, we do not know the depth of the mind, and we, therefore, do not know what lies at the depth. With all our spiritual endeavour, we can only approach the topmost layers of the mind and bring about a little bit of transformation. There may still be, deep down in the unconscious, layers of evil, untouched by our endeavours. If and when we relax our spiritual vigilance, if and when we yield to a mood of complacency, this evil layer will suddenly burst into the conscious level and lead us astray. This danger has been alluded to in our scriptures by depicting the downfall of even the gate-keepers of the Kingdom of God, Jaya-Vijaya. Hence,

again, Lord Krishna warns us in the second chapter of the Gita:

Sthitwaasyaam antakaalepi brahmanirvaanamricchati
If you remain in this Brahmic state till the end of your present life, you will attain Nirvana.

Hence, the need for the second method, which has thus been described by the Lord in the Gita:

Mayyeva mana adhatwa mayi buddhim nivesaya
Nivasishyasi mayyeva ata urdhvam na samsayah
Place your mind in Me, enter your Buddhi into Me. You will surely live in Me.

When the mind and the Buddhi are offered up to Him, He will take complete charge of us, and there can be no fear of a fall. We just do not exist as separate beings. The two methods have to be combined.

In order to climb the ladder of constant remembrance from the lowest rung where we are, never thinking of God, to the highest rung where we shall think constantly of Him, the Lord has placed several convenient rungs between these two. If you study the Vibhuti Yoga Adhyaya or the description of the Divine Manifestations - 10th chapter of the Gita, you will understand this.

First, learn to see God in the Holy Images, temples, churches and mosques, which evoke devotion in us to God, by holy association. Then, gradually expand this consciousness to include the marvels of God's Nature, like the sun, the moon, the ocean, etc. The Red Indian prays and meditates whenever he sees wondrous phenomena - we are told in the Journal 'Knowledge'. From the gross to the subtle in the 15th chapter of the Gita, the Lord tells us that He dwells as the vitamin in plants and He Himself as Vaiswanara Agni - gastric fire in us digests the food. Even our own anatomy and physiology, the wonderful way in which the body and mind function, ought to remind us of God, the Divine Creator. We have yet to cross another milestone. We should be able to perceive God as the substratum of even what superficially appears to be evil or wicked. Only then will you understand the meaning of the oft quoted expression 'Hate evil, but not the evil-doer.' Now we are near the top rung of the ladder. Immediately this mind-made distinction of good and evil vanishes from the enlightened vision of the sage, the whole universe shines in its true colours - or the unicolour of Pure Light. Then there is not a moment of Self-forgetfulness. There is a state of perpetual communion with God. A state of constant remembrance of God. He does not even need an agent Provocateur, for he is established in Him.

This is the simple method by which Krishna asks us to combine activity and communion. This is the true meaning of the injunction 'They who are constantly thinking of Me.' Constant thinking does not mean that we should give up all our activities and seclude ourselves in a cave. We are born in this world of activity and diversity. We should learn the art of perceiving the Unity or Divinity that underlies all this.

Who perceives this Unity dwells in God, Who, as the Omnipresent Being, 'looks after his welfare'. That is the promise of Sri Krishna. Is it a promise, or is it a puzzle? If God looks after only the devotee, who thus constantly thinks of Him, who looks after the others? In fact, it is God who sustains the entire universe. This 'promise' is intended to tempt us to walk this path of Yoga. In other words, the Lord says, 'Come. If you come to Me, I will look after you.' It only means: 'Do not worry yourself about what you should have and so on. Think of Me constantly. I am the one who is looking after you.' This is the central teaching of the Gita, as we have already seen.

Though God does look after us in mysterious and miraculous ways, what is alluded to here is not some supernatural phenomenon, but an entirely simple and natural one. You see God in all, think of His Omnipresence and worship that Omnipresence through unselfish service of all, and He, the Indwelling Presence in all, will look after you, through them.

This constant remembrance of God not only lifts the veil of evil - 'evil' and 'veil' have the same alphabets differently arranged, thus denoting they are synonyms, but also enables us to welcome pain and suffering. We shall see that it is God's Grace that comes to us as pain and suffering, to awaken us to the true nature of the world, and to turn our gaze towards God. As Sri Gurudev sings:

When you get knocks and blows
In the daily battle of life
Then your mind is duly turned
Towards the spiritual path.

That pain is a blessing even the wise doctor knows. A medical journal recently reported the case of a young lady whose sensory nerves did not function, though the motor nerves did. She did not feel any pain at all. Wonderful condition, you think. But, no, the very opposite of it. If she sat on a pin, she would not know. If the tea was boiling, she would not know, and would drink it. If her finger was jammed between the doors, she would not know. If she was standing on coals of fire covered with ash, she would not know. But she could not escape the consequences. She suffered terrible injuries and she had to have two people constantly in attendance to see that she did not injure herself. Pain is truly a blessing, to life and to the soul.

Thus will the wise sage perceive His Omnipresent Omniscience. This will liberate him from pain and misery, grief and delusion. When they are welcomed, they will lose their sting and hence their nomenclature, too.

Here is how to achieve this end.

Start the day with the repetition of the Lord's Name, associating it with the breath and meditation on some auspicious and inspiring Form of His. This is the first step. Then try to remember the Name or the Mantra whenever there is a little

leisure during the day. Also, at regular, fixed intervals, eg, every hour as the clock strikes, for a few seconds, associate the Mantra with the breath. At the same time, let whatever you see remind you of God.

Yad yad vibhutihat satvam srimad urjitameva va
Tadtadevavagaccha twam mama tejomsa sambhavam
Whatever there is here which is glorious, prosperous or powerful, that know thou to be a
manifestation of a part of My splendour.

The strength of the strong man - Balam balavatam cha aham, the intelligence of the intelligent - Buddhir buddhimatasm, let all these remind you of Him. It does not matter if this is broken now and then. We did not learn to walk without falling down. Let us get up again and walk, let us try and try again. It demands only earnest and sincere effort.

'Abhyasa yaga yuktena chetasa na anya gamma' - is how it is described in the Gita. The mind which does not go elsewhere, having been united with God by the Yoga of persistent practice. We should thus endeavour by persistent practice to build up this constant under-current of God-consciousness, and combine all our activity with this. Hence, Sri Krishna says, 'Mam anusmara udhya cha' - Think of Me, and fight, or do your duty. These two - God-thought and activity - are not consecutive nor even parallel, but concurrent, simultaneous and united. If we persist consciously in this practice for sometime, later the mind will go on repeating the Mantra and think of God even during sleep. How is this proved? Even during the day, when the task on hand has been completed, the mind will quietly and automatically slip into the undercurrent of God-thought, and you will, in the initial stages, be surprised to find that involuntarily the mind goes on repeating His Name and thinking of Him.

You will, at this stage, be a centre of attraction, for you will be radiating peace and joy, and you will be radiating divinity around you. He, through all, will certainly look after you. Even during the practice of this Yoga, it will confer ever so many blessings on us. It will save us from unnecessary talks and arguments, with their consequences of misunderstanding and misery.

Another very subtle truth which emerges from the Lord's Assurance: 'I will give you what you need, I will look after you,' should not be forgotten. It is that by this Assurance, God robs us of our worst enemy - desire. When we repose faith in this Assurance, and when our mind is busy constantly thinking of Him, we forget to entertain desires for worldly objects What a wonderful method has been given to us!

Again, this practice will save us from nervous exhaustion and nervous tension. Why are we exhausted so easily in our daily life? Because we heap burden upon burden on our nerves. We do not deal with each situation as it arises, but we carry over one trouble to another. If there is some disturbance at the house, we do not leave it there when we go to our work. When we, naturally, as we invite it because of the building-up tension, get some trouble in the office, the pressure on

the nerves is, therefore, doubled. Then we go to the market. Frayed nerves tend to break easily and we actually create trouble - it becomes 'impossible' to carry on.

The Yogi snaps the thread at every stage and the scissors he uses are constant remembrance of God and constant repetition of His Name. With each problem thus cut away from others, it is easy for us to solve them, or to dissolve them. That is what our Master did. I have seen it with my own eyes. Once two people came to him, quarrelling. He pacified them. Then, he closed his eyes for a minute, and turned to a visitor. Suddenly one of the parties to the quarrel began to say something. Gurudev cut him short with the words: 'All that is over now, repeat Sri Ram, Sri Ram'. This single admonition contains the essence of the Gita Yoga. Moreover, since God's Name is tonic to the mind, and as it is used to cut each problem out, the mind and the nerves get immense strength during the interval between one problem and another. Hence,

Ananyaschintayanto marn ye janah paryupaste
Tesham nityabhyuktanam yogakshemam vahamyaham
I look after the welfare of those who constantly think of Me.

is a very practical and very real divine teaching and assurance. It will save us from great evil. We shall see no evil. We shall think no evil. We shall bear no evil. We shall do no evil. When we endeavour to see God even in the wicked man, we do not encourage evil - we do not see it. This is very important to bear in mind. The sage who says, 'See God even in the evil-doer', does not encourage or justify evil-doing. For, Lord Krishna Himself says:

Daivee sampath vimokshaya nibandhayaasuree mataa
Virtues liberate one and undivine qualities tend to bind one.

The evil-doer's evil-doing will bind him to Samsara. But, that is not our business. We should see God in Him. 'Dhyutam chalayatam asmi', says the Lord. 'I am the gambling of the cheat'. Once it happened in our Ashram. A thief had broken into the temple at night and stolen a number of silverware. When this news was conveyed to our Master, He smiled heartily and said, 'I admire his intelligence and excellent planning and execution. If you find him, bring him to me and I shall award the title of Chora-Siromani on him. He is indeed a jewel among thieves. To the sage, there is no duality. To the ignorant, duality exists. Hence, in the words of the Kathopanishad:

Mrityossa mrityum apnoti ya iha naveva pasati
He goes from death to death, who sees diversity here.

The wonderful method of constantly thinking of God enables us to live in the world and do our duty, yet perceiving the Unity that underlies all this manifestation of diversity.

The counterpart of this Sadhana is given to us in the verse:

Mayyaveshya mano ye mam nityayukta upasate
They who worship Me, constantly united with Me, having entered their mind in Me.

In the verse 'Ananyaschintayanto', we find the expression 'Nitya-bhi-yuktanam'. Here we find almost the same words repeated: 'Nitya-yuktah' - 'for ever united with Me'. In the former verse, we were asked to think of God constantly, or, in other words, enthrone God in our heart. Here, in this, we are asked to offer ourselves unto the Lotus Feet of the Lord - to enter our mind into God, or, in other words, to enthrone us in the heart of the Lord. The Lord Himself assures us that the practice of true devotion brings this about:

Ye bhajanti tu mam bhaktya mayi te teshu chaapyaham
They who are devoted to Me, I am in them, and they are in Me.

In other words, the distinction between they and Me vanishes. They get rid of the 'I'. To them, it is all 'He'. When devotion blossomed into direct experience of the Supreme Truth or God, they wake up to the truth: 'All this is indeed God and God alone. In that God, the 'I' had so long been imagined. Oh, what foolishness'. They now realise God. Or, perhaps, even this word 'realise' is inefficient, inadequate and false. 'To realise' means 'to make real'. No one can make God real. He is the Reality Itself. Words are imperfect. God-realisation can best be illustrated by a parable.

You have gone to a theatre to witness a drama. You know all the actors, and you know that it is all a male-cast. Suddenly you find a lady on the stage and she is the best of all. You begin to feel that perhaps at the last moment they had drafted a lady to play the part. You go back to the stage after the play, to congratulate her. To your surprise, you find that 'she' was your own friend - a 'he'. 'Oh, brother, it was you.' That is God-realisation. 'She' had not united with 'he'. 'She' had not vanished, nor had 'he' been realised or made real from unreality. 'She' was unreal. All the time it was only 'he'. The wrong idea in you has been removed. That is all. That is God-realisation.

Enter your mind in Him. You will know Him. Enthroned God in your heart, and yourself in His heart. You will become one with Him - again, an imperfect expression. When you immerse a mud-pot, or a bag made of thin cloth, in a pond, you find there is water in it, outside it, and even through it. That will be your state when you realise Him.

To attain this state, the two Sadhanas must be combined: entering God in our mind - Ananyaschintayanto, and entering our mind and heart into Him - Mayyavesya mano. The former practice which is more common than the latter, often makes the devotee feel superior - such is the power of Maya - and that no one is equal to him in devotion. In the latter, however, he does not exist at all - it is all God and God alone, and there is no place in him for pride or vanity, even of the spiritual kind. The ego-sense is dissolved in Cosmic Consciousness. Hence, the Lord says,

Mayyavesya mano ye mam nityayukta upasate
Shraddhaya parayopetaste me yuktatama matah.
They who, entering their mind into Me, and constantly united with Me, worship Me, with

supreme faith, they are My best devotees.

'Shraddaya paraya' - supreme faith. Unshakeable faith, in God. Living faith in Him. The nearest common-place equivalent to it is the faith that you and I have in the fact 'I am a human being'. No one can disturb this and make us feel 'I am a cat'. That is the type of faith hinted at here. Because, we live in Him and He lives in us, there is no doubt about His reality, and no one can raise the doubt in us. Established in this faith, we cross the terrible chasm of grief and swim, in the ocean of Bliss.

Victory at Every Step

In this Yoga, it is not only the culmination that is worth our while. We do not suffer till we reach the goal, Supreme Bliss. It is not as though we go on loosing in order to gain something ultimately. In which case there is a great danger which Arjuna specifically mentions: we may have lost everything here, and we may not get That at least in this life, and God knows whether all this love's labour is lost. Moreover, at a certain stage in the practice of this Yoga, some minor rituals, which were till then indispensable or extremely essential, drop out. The rituals have to be transcended, not given up prematurely, for they are within the sway of the three Gunas. Krishna Himself says:

Traigunyavishayaveda nistraigunyo bhavarjuna
The vedas treat of things which are within these three Gunas: go beyond them, O Arjuna.

Sage Narada, too, in his Bhakti Sutras, specifically defines devotion as 'Loka vedavaypara nyasah' - renunciation of worldly and scriptural works. If we let them drop out of our life - they are never given up, because we do not want to do them, but they drop out because we have something better to do, viz; meditation and continuous God-thought - and this is very very important to bear in mind, and then either the life comes to an end or we suffer a slip, and so we do not reach the goal. What happens to us? For, some people tell us that we are neither here nor there, and perish like a rent cloud. Krishna emphatically replies:

Partha naiveha na-mutra--vinasastasya vidyate
Nahi kalyanakrit kaschit durgatim tata gacchati.
Arjuna, neither here nor there is their destruction for him. One who does good never has a bad end.

This is very good for us always to bear in mind. Let us then arise boldly and walk the path of Divine Life, of Yoga, of the Gita, convinced that no evil can ever befall us. All good men - in this world, when we are told a thousand times every morning that it is no good to be good - must meditate upon this great assurance of the Lord every day. This indeed is a corollary to the other great Mantra which, we have already seen, is the central teaching of the Gita, viz.. Asochyan anvasochastwam. The two together mean: 'You need never worry yourself nor grieve, because if you do good, no evil can ever befall you'. 'Therefore, think of Me and do your duties'. In the practice of this Practical Yoga,

Nehabhikramasosti pratyavayo na vidyate
Swalpamapyasa dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat.
In this, there is no loss of effort nor is there any harm. Even a little of this knowledge, even a little practice of this Yoga, protects one from great fear.

You have to take only one step at a time. And, every step takes you nearer the goal. Even as when you approach a fire-place in winter, every step you take lessens the severity of the cold and enables you to enjoy the warmth of the fire, as you get closer and closer to God, you will experience greater and greater divinity and divine bliss. At every step you will enjoy the fruits of the proximity of God. Do not worry yourself over the distance to be traversed: remember that the Gita

Yoga is the very antithesis of worry, even in the spiritual life. Every step is a step forward. An achievement as great as reaching the peak. Hand yourself over to God, let Him lead you. The most difficult tasks become easy in His Grace, even as the path up a steep hill, straightens out, easy to ascend, as you go on and on.

Even as you take the first step and say: 'Lord, Thy will be done', you will find a big load is lifted off your shoulders. The best gift of modern civilisation - tension - will be eased immediately. This is the first fruit of this Yoga. At least for the sake of this, one should take up the practice of this Yoga.

Constant Nama-Smarana or repetition of the Mantra or Name of the Lord will not only destroy all sins, but destroy their very roots - Papa-moolam. The very tendency - the Papa-vasana - will go.

You will be free from all sorts of complexes and neuroses. To get rid of them, we do not dig them out, but we adopt the more positive and intelligent method of appealing to the Higher Power. For, as we have already seen, 'The senses are superior, and superior to the senses is the mind, Buddhi is superior to the mind and He is superior to the Buddhi'.

Take this example. In darkness, someone is flashing a torchlight on your face. It hurts your eyes. You do not then analyse the energy that makes the bulb emit that light, and so on. You do not worry yourself over the charge that is in the battery cells. You walk over to the man holding the light and ask him to switch it off. Here in our case, the sense-organ is like the bulb. The mind is like the cells where the energy is stored. The Buddhi or the discriminative intelligence is the switch. The Divine spark - the Indwelling Presence - is the man holding the light. We do not have to worry about the power in the bulb or the cells, or even the nature of the switch. We do not have to worry about the nature of the sense organ, the mind, or even the Buddhi. But we have to go round to God and by appealing to Him, disconnect the Buddhi itself from the world.

If the Buddhi is extroverted, and the mind is filled with worldly thoughts, because it operates on a wrong scale of values, the senses cling to the objects of the world, deluded that happiness lies in them. But, if the Buddhi is turned in, as a result of the right understanding that supreme Bliss is within, in the Self, it perceives God and finds eternal rest there. Even in the latter case, the mind will still receive the light through the Buddhi - but now it will be the Pure Light of God. The mind will then no longer seek pleasure, but will radiate mercy, compassion, selflessness, and unity, with a burning desire to promote the welfare of the entire universe. The mind will be calm for, in it, the currents of Raga-Dweshya or like and dislike do not operate any more, and the whirlpools of desire have been stilled. The individual then attains Liberation:

Ihaiva tairjitah sargo esham samye stitham manah
Nirdosham his samam brahma tasmad brahmani te stitvah
Even here, birth-and-death is overcome by those whose minds rest in equanimity. Brahman
is spotless indeed and equal and tranquil; therefore, they are established in Brahman.

No profit motive governs his actions. In fact, he has even gone to the pinnacle of perfection in Buddhi Yoga or Karma Yoga, and he feels that the Lord, working through him who is just an instrument, serves Himself manifest in all The purpose of Creation which is to realise the Self-Bliss, to realise the Cosmic Being or Cosmic Oneness, has been reached.

This grand goal is reached through the amazingly simple Sadhana of Nama-Smarana or constant repetition of the Lord's Name or Mantra. This, with a little bit of Vichara or right thinking or cogitation, ensures that the Buddhi or the discriminative faculty is ever divine, turned within without falling a prey to delusion. And this wheel of discrimination, if it is kept ever revolving in mind, will throw out any undivine thought before it could successfully invade the heart. Here again the simple Mantra or the Name of the Lord will do the trick.

Those who have seen the art of fencing will readily understand this. Just a single long stick in the hands of the expert serves him as a shield. He swings it so fast that he cannot be hit - it is as though he has a big circular metal shield in front of him. Similarly, if we go on repeating the Name of the Lord and keep it up throughout the day, we keep this divine weapon revolving so fast in our heart that no un-divine thought can enter the mind. By his Grace, we perceive Him and Him alone in all. By His grace, we realise that we live, move and have our being in Him, and we function because of His Power. In the words of the Kenopanishad: 'He is the eye of our eyes, ear of our ears, mind of our minds, the power of our speech.' We are truly blessed that He has chosen us as His instruments. Just as He is the Reality in us, He is the Reality in all. Therefore, we do not serve the world or humanity, but Him and Him alone in all. Our entire outlook on life changes, with this understanding.

Deep sleep teaches us very important truth. We are happy during deep sleep because (1) we forget ourselves and (2) we forget the world. The same effect is produced now during the waking state itself, by the practice of this Buddhi Yoga. We forget our little selves. We are but instruments in the hands of God Who is the Reality. Our vanity is lost. But it is no loss at all, for we have become the Cosmic Being. The drop has become the ocean. And, we have forgotten 'the world' which, in the light of this Buddhi Yoga, has been transformed into Omnipresent Divinity.

Gurudev's integral Yoga enables us to reach this goal of life, viz., Cosmic Consciousness, very easily. It has been put in the form of the following simple song:

Eat a little, drink a little, walk a little, sleep a little.
Mix a little, move a little, serve a little, rest a little.
Do Asana a little, do Pranayama a little; reflect a little, meditate a little.
Do Japa a little, do Kirtan a little, write Mantra a little, have Satsang a little.

We must meditate and pray daily. For, it is then that we get the 'feel' of His Presence. But that is only a part of this Integral Yoga. We must go out and repeat this experience during our daily life. We should re-experience the same thrill when we meet any one - all are God. One helps the other. Service and meditation. If we are really communing with God during our morning meditation, then we shall readily be able to see God in all. If we are seeing God in all, serving God in all, and loving God in all, then we shall be able to enter into deeper and deeper meditation - for, there will then be no obstacle to our meditation caused by desire, anger, greed and selfishness.

This is the Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita. This is the great Truth. This is the greatest secret revealed by the Lord. How beautifully He had summed it up in that single verse:

Man manaa bhava mad bhakto mad yajee mam namaskuru
Mamevaishyasi satyam te pratijane prziiosi me
Be thou My-minded, My devotee. Serve Me in all, prostrate to Me, and you will surely
attain Me. This is the truth, I promise because you are dear to Me.

In conclusion, Lord Krishna, the Supreme Lord, asks Arjuna, 'Have you understood? Has your delusion gone?', and also gives him the freedom to choose his own line of action, 'I have told you what My opinion is. Do as you please.'
Arjuna bursts forth:

Nashto mohah smritir labdha twat prasadat mayachyuta
Sthitosmi gata sandehah karishye vachanam tava
My delusion has gone, I have attained intelligence, I stand with my doubts dispelled, all
by your Grace, O Lord. I will do as You say.

That is what we too should be able to say, if we are intent on putting the Lord's teachings into actual practice.

May the blessings of Lord Sri Krishna be upon us all. May, by the grace of Gurudev, Who is re-incarnate Krishna, His Light illumine our path and may we all become Yogis in this very birth.