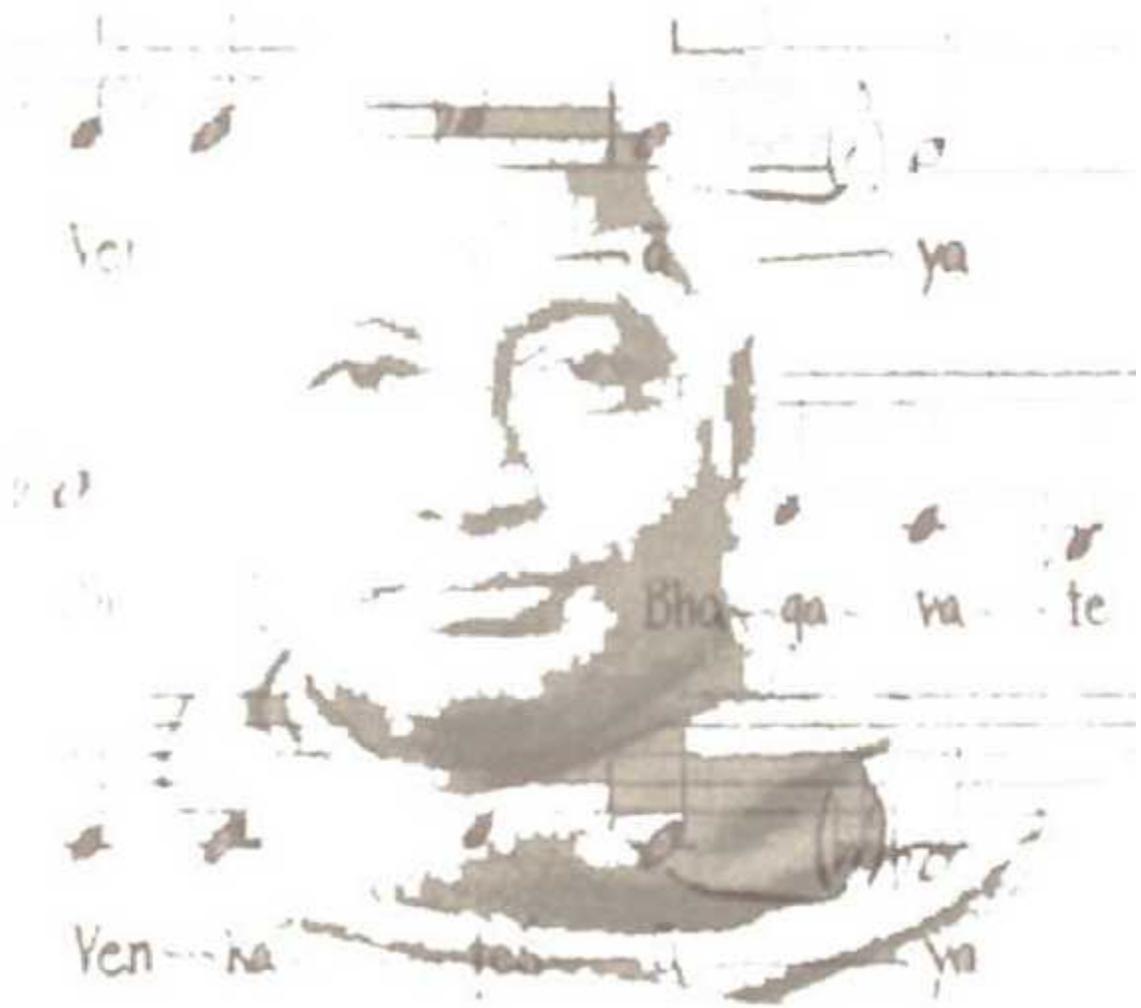


Meet Yourself
Swami Venkatesananda



Om Namah Venkatesaya
Om Namah Shivaya

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by Swami Venkatesananda

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Lecture 1

Bhagavad Gita literally means 'The Song of God', because it is the word of God - the song of God. Whether you believe in this as the word of God or as a lovely little book of 700 verses, whether you believe in the Divinity of the person called Krishna, is immaterial. All that matters is if it has relevance to my life. If it has, then I am content to accept it.

Conflict is the basic element in the life of man and this is portrayed in this scripture. Whether it is fact or fiction, it is certainly a mirror in which you see your own face.

It is said that there were two royal brothers. The elder one was blind and the other was pale and anaemic. The blind man had one hundred vicious sons - indicating that, if you are spiritually blind, you have not one but one hundred vicious qualities as your offspring. The other man was a very good man, but anaemic. Is that not what we see in this world today? The wicked are strong, very strong - the noble ones are so anaemic, so impotent, so weak, that they do not want to assert themselves. So that both of them together conspire to promote evil. Who is more responsible for the evil? The anaemic, good man or the strong wicked man? The strong wicked man at least manifests his nature, but the good holy man is afraid - so of what use is his goodness? He is more responsible for the prevalence of vice than the wicked man. This good man had five sons - the Pandavas. In the Golden age, this is the maximum ratio or proportion we might achieve. For every hundred wicked people, there are five good people.

What do the wicked people do? They are not happy. Even the millionaires cannot enjoy themselves. The furniture in their house is shining, for it has never been used - there is no time. The only thing that is used is the bed. When the man comes home very late, worried, miserable and often drunk, he falls into it but cannot sleep unless he takes some pills. He does not even have this universal free gift of God which is sleep. He cannot enjoy himself at all. If one wants to enjoy oneself, why does one get drunk? Nobody who is drunk enjoys himself. He does not even know what he is doing. There is no salvation for the wicked people - their sole aim is that everything else must be destroyed. This is the basic trait of wickedness, of viciousness. These hundred wicked men, right from their childhood, wanted to destroy the five good ones.

Put five good men together; each one has a brilliant idea and has the goodwill of the whole organisation at heart. But, they never come to a decision. The result: it is a constant victory for evil. To make a very long story short, they decide on war. Both of the parties go about canvassing.

In those days, there was a princely shepherd called Krishna. Arjuna, one of the five good brothers, went to Krishna believing that he was divine. He stood near the feet of Krishna who was resting. The haughty, wicked Duryodhana also went in and thought: 'I am not going to stand at the feet of this man. I am an emperor'.

So, he stood at his head.

Krishna opened his eyes, saw both of them, and asked: 'What is the matter?' They replied: 'We have had an argument and we are going to fight. We have come to see you because both of us want you to join us'. Krishna, the Divine, answered them. It is important to remember that God does not love one more than another. 'Both of you are dear to me, and so I give you the choice'. It is a lovely idea: if you have two votes, cast one on this side and one on that side. Then you are neutral. Krishna said: 'I myself will join one side and let my army join the other. However I will not fight'. The wicked man thinks: 'Why must I have this man?' and he says to Krishna: 'No, I do not want you if you are not going to fight. I would rather have the army'. Krishna says: 'Take it and go'. Arjuna says: 'That is exactly what I wanted. I am happy to have God Incarnated on my side.'

This is what Jesus said: 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God. All else shall be added unto you'. We do not have to bother about the material things of the life - if we have God, if we have enlightenment. If I have this light within, this inner light, and if I am vigilant and awake, I will know how to live. I can find the path. I can walk the path towards the resolution of all conflicts, towards harmony, towards peace, towards happiness. I do not need happiness to be given to me. My mental or spiritual peace cannot be given to me by anybody else. If you give me peace, I will be frightened that you may take it away again. No, I must 'have' the peace. Let me first find this inner Light, to which you and I might give the title God, and then all else can be found. That is the lesson He taught us.

The war was about to begin. On the side of these wicked people were invincible heroes, terrible men who could wipe out a whole army. The blind king was sitting in his palace with his minister Sanjaya. Sanjaya was clairvoyant and able to observe the happenings of the battlefield. He looked at the king and asked: 'Would you like to know what is going on out there?' The king said: 'Great heroes are on our side. The war will be finished in one day. The minister said: Very well. If you are not interested, why should I bother? He was observing all that was happening on the battlefield. The battle lasted eighteen days. On the tenth day, the foremost among the heroes, the most invincible of them all, was killed. Sanjaya, the clairvoyant minister, approached the king and said: Sire, the man on whose strength your wickedness depended has been killed! The king was shocked and said:

*dharmakshetre kurukshetre samaveta yuyutsavah mamakah pandavascaiva kimakurvata
sanjaya
What did the sons of Pandu and also my people do when they had assembled together,
eager for battle on the holy plain of Kurukshetra, O Sanjaya? - I:1*

Suddenly the blind king expressed concern, and wanted to know what was happening. The same king who, ten days previously, had said, 'I do not care. Might is right. We can crush these people in one day'. This part of the story emphasizes one important point: before you can listen to any scripture, any teachings, before you can even approach a Guru, you must be sure you are awake.

Previously, the blind king was asleep, having the faith of a blind man in the unreal, taking the unreal to be the real. This has to go. Many of these beliefs, faith in the false, prejudices, and conditioning, have to be thrown completely away. So long as there is some attachment in the corner of your mind, in your heart, please remember that the awakening will not be real. If the mind attaches even the last value to that habit, to that prejudice, to that childhood fancy or ignorance, it is bound to come back. In order to wake up, all this has to go.

We come face to face with these problems on the field of battle, the field of activity, in the field of Dharma. However much we may condemn the world for its wickedness, and weakness, it is still the creation of God, and God is good. Is there any difference between God and good? One 'o', isn't it? That is nothing. God created the world, so it must be good. So, this is a good world where Dharma prevails. Where is wickedness and unrighteousness? Only in your heart and in mine. We must remove this enemy, that is all. I have false beliefs, I have faith in the false and unreal. I must not blame anybody else for it.

uddharedatmanatmanam natmanamavasadayet atmaivahyatmano bahdhuratmaiva ripuratmanah
Let a man lift himself by his own Self alone, let him not lower himself; for this self alone is the friend of one self and this self alone is the enemy of oneself. VI:5

Says Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita later on. 'Arjuna, there are no obstacles outside yourself. You have neither friend, nor enemy in the world except yourself'.

bandhuraatmaatmanastasya yenaatmaivaatmanaa jitah anaatmamastu satrutve vartetaatmaiva satruva
The self is the friend of the self for him who has conquered himself by the Self, but to the unconquered self, this self stands in the position of the enemy like the (external) foe. VI:6

Who is your friend and who is your enemy? It is your mind. If your mind is controlled, disciplined and pure, that mind is your friend. If your mind is impure, undisciplined, violent, full of hatred, attachment and vanity, it is your enemy. There is no division here between impure mind and pure mind. We cannot possibly say, 'Oh, the right side of my chest is all divine, the left side is all impure - so I must cut the left side out'. The impure part of the mind cannot be destroyed. It has to be purified and the impurity thrown away.

In order to have this awakening, all these old prejudices must go, all the faith in the false must be discarded. When will we discard these false beliefs? When did the blind king wake up? When did he discard his own stupid feelings that might be right? Only when he saw that might is not right, when he saw that his faith had led to a foolish situation where - by his life was endangered.

Do we have this perception? Do we see that our own false beliefs, our own prejudices, our own faith in the unreal, are leading us to towards the precipice? If we do not see this danger, we had better drop all enquiry. Spiritual enquiry will make no sense if we are snoring under a blanket of false beliefs. Until we awaken ourselves, we shall not see the truth, and in order to wake up, we must come to

grips with the tragedy of our life. Arjuna asks Krishna, 'What does wisdom consist of?' Krishna replies:

indriyaarthesu vairaagyamanahankaara eva ca janmamrtyujaraavyaadhi
dukhhadosaanudarsanam
Indifference to the objects of the senses and also absence of egoism, perception of
(or reflection on) the evil of birth, death, old age, sickness and pain. XIII:8

Wisdom consists in being able to see at first hand, intimately, without any mediator. What must I see? That birth is pain, that death is the axe, and that my perception of both is only second-hand. We do not appreciate God's blessings, so our lives are full of sorrow, imaginary sorrow. Sorrow is deep ignorance, spiritual ignorance, spiritual blindness, in whose vicious grip we are caught. This is common. We see it often - but do we really see it? These are questions we should ask ourselves.

I do not have to die before I realise that I shall have to die. I can see this without any mediator - then ignorance, prejudice and false belief have gone. I see that I have been clinging to unreality. I do not blame anybody else. I can see the basic truth of this with my own eyes. So, why am I not aware of it? I am responsible for myself. When I see this danger, the terrible illusion to which I cling, then I get a shock and suddenly wake up.

To return to our story: what does the opening verse of the Gita show us? That when we undergo this profound inner change, when the Truth is revealed to us, there is a transformation, an inner awakening. And the Sanjaya, this wonderful running commentator, relays all the happenings on the battlefield.

Sanjaya uvaca: drstvaa tu paandavaanikam vyudham duryodhanantadaa aacaaryamupasangamya
raajaa vacanamabravat
Sanjaya said: 'Having seen the army of the Pandavas drawn up in battle array, King
Duryodhana then approached his teacher (Drona) and spoke these words. I:1

It is an ancient Indian custom that, before we undertake any religious or spiritual activity, we bow to the Guru. Hence you will find that almost all the Scriptures in India begin with the salutation to the Guru. The Bhagavad Gita is a scripture that forms a small part of a huge epic. It is not an independent scripture. So it does not open with an invocation, but the salutation to the Guru has been beautifully woven into it. How? Sanjaya tells the blind King, 'O king, your son Duryodhana looked at both armies and he knew he would have to fight'. There is a big difference between thinking and doing. He stood on the battlefield, looked at the armies and shivered with fear. Do not forget that this man is pictured as the wickedest of human beings. What does he do when faced with this prospect of life and death? Whom does he think of? He only thinks of his Guru, saying, 'I must go to my Guru and take his blessings'. Thus the scripture teaches us the glory of devotion to Guru. So, Duryodhana went to the Guru and said 'Namaste Guru'. Being a very wicked man, that was as long as his goodness lasted. He said, 'Do you know how strong the enemy's army is?' Is this the way the Guru should be addressed? 'I think you should know about this'. What does this wise man do when he is taunted like this? He just keeps quiet.

Somebody gave a signal and the war commenced. Krishna had joined the side of the five good brothers, volunteering to become charioteer to Arjuna. The lesson here is simple: in the eyes of the Divine, no work is great and no work is menial. Arjuna, one of the five good brothers, was a very powerful warrior. The warriors knew there was no illusion about the war. Arjuna said: 'Krishna, take the chariot and put it right in the middle of the battlefield. Let me have a good look to see who are my friends and who are my enemies'.

senayorubhayormadhye ratham sthaapaya mecyuta yaavadetaanniriksheham
yoddhukaamaanavasthitaan kairmayaa saha yoddhavyamasmin ranasamudyame
In the middle of the two armies, place my chariot O Krishna, so that I may behold
those who stand here, desirous to fight, and know with whom I must fight, when the
battle is about to commence. I:21, 22

Here is the biggest puzzle for those of you who have studied the scripture. Krishna deliberately placed the chariot right in front of the two people for whom Arjuna had the greatest reverence, his Guru and his great grandfather. 'Arjuna, look, these are the people who are your enemies. Now you must be careful'. On the battlefield, Krishna told Arjuna to fight. I told you this story because it reminds me that on my battlefield, I also have enemies that I must fight.

When I enter this battlefield, I know that there are wicked vicious qualities in me, hostilities, hatred, jealousy, greed. I come to the battlefield as a spiritual aspirant, and Krishna the Lord, places the chariot of my mind, my Buddhi, my intelligence, right in front of the evils, the enemies, I love most. Then what happens on the inner battlefield? What does Arjuna say on that battlefield?

drstvenam s'ajanam krsna yuyutsum samupasthitam
Seeing these, my kinsmen, O Krishna, arrayed, eager to fight. I:28
sidanti mama gaatraani mukham ca parisusyati vepathusca sarire me romaharsasca jaayate
My limbs fail and my mouth is parched up, my body quivers and my hairs stand on end.
I: 29
aandivam sramsate hastaatvakcaiva paridahyate na ca saknomyavasthaatum bhramativa ca
me manah
The (bow) Gaandiva, slips from my hand, and my skin burns all over; I am unable even
to stand and my mind is reeling, as it were. I: 30

This is a beautiful description. I say to myself: 'I thought all these qualities, smoking, drinking, lust and greed, were my enemies. Now I look at all these things and find they are not my enemies at all, they my friends. I take a glass of whisky, then when I sit for meditation, immediately I ascend right up. It is not as though I still love this cigarette, but if I have a smoke, my digestion is better and I do not feel nervous any more. So I do not see anything wrong in it'. This is what Arjuna said: 'I came to the battlefield to look at my enemies. You have placed my chariot right in front of my enemies and I see that they are my own people'.

Lecture 2

By placing the chariot right in front of the people for whom Arjuna had great regard and reverence, Krishna sets up an ideal situation to help Arjuna to have a change of vision, and to realise how foolish he has been. He sees that the enemy are really his friends and so he does not want to fight.

It takes a lot of wisdom to understand clearly that we are stupid. The general tendency is to start with the assumption that, 'I am right', and therefore the other person is wrong. It takes tremendous moral courage to look at ourselves dispassionately, and realise that there is some confusion here. We do not want to face ourselves and admit there is something wrong within us which we must put right. Rather than solve our own problems, we prefer to solve other people's problems and put them right.

We take alcohol to steady ourselves, pills to help us sleep, rather than face up to the conflict, pretence and hypocrisy within us. Some of these hypocrites do not even know that they are hypocrites, which makes them doubly guilty because of their ignorance and their hypocrisy. A hypocrite keeps himself extremely busy. That is what Arjuna did. He started talking philosophy, pretending to be the wise man: 'I know all the laws. I know what righteousness is, what dharma is. This is what I feel is right, and this what I feel is wrong'. The busiest people are often those who have a had conscience and who dare not face themselves. They hate themselves. They do not want to live with themselves. They are on the go all the time, running away from themselves. Another culprit is the transistor radio; it never allows them to be alone with themselves. The noise diverts their attention, saves them from looking at themselves. That is the problem. That is when we pretend to be angels without wings, paragons of virtue. Then we say: 'There is just this thin veil between me and God. I am so perfect that I can advise all. I can solve everybody's problems. I can help all the world because all that is wrong is in other people and not in me'. When a man talks such wonderful wisdom, then he is a fool! What does the wise man do? He smiles and keeps quiet.

There is a lovely story of a Zen master who was sitting in his house when a renowned professor of philosophy came to see him. They sat down opposite one another, and the master started pouring tea. The cup was full, the saucer was full, and the man's lap was full. His clothes were spoiled and he cried: 'Stop! The cup is full. It cannot hold any more.' The master replied, 'Thank you very much. That is just what I wanted to tell you. Your cup is full - I cannot pour any more knowledge into it, or any more wisdom into it. You are a professor of philosophy, aren't you? Your cup is full. What do you want me to do with it? Go and empty it - then come back'.

So, Arjuna pretended to be wise, quoting the laws from all the text books in the world and literally teaching Krishna, God Incarnate, what righteousness was, although nervously shaking while doing so. Please remember this contradiction. The wise man who knows what is right and who wants to do what is right, does

not shake. Why must you be nervous? Why must you be neurotic, if you know what is right and that you are doing what is right? What does Krishna do? He merely smiles and says: 'What an important role you are playing here on the battlefield. You are a great hero. So, do not behave like an impotent fool. Get up and fight. That is all you can tell a fool who pretends to be wise - tell him to get up and do something about it. Krishna's smile and the way He said those words made Arjuna reconsider, saying to himself: 'Here is my good friend and counsellor, who merely wants me to get up and fight.' Perhaps at that time he did not recognise Krishna as God Incarnate. 'Why does he say this?' When Arjuna looks within, he continues with his pathetic plea: 'How can I kill all these people?' However, Krishna still stands there smiling. He does not respond. And then comes a delightful verse, spoken by Arjuna:

kaarpanyadosopahatah svabhaavah prccaami tvam dharmasammudhacetah yat sreyasyamiscitam
bruhi tanme sisyasteham saadi maam tvaam 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. II:6

This is a wonderful moment in the history of the world - when an arrogant man bows down. What tremendous strength of will and moral courage is necessary for that.

Arjuna suddenly realise that he is a warrior and his birthright is to fight. What has happened to his nature? Why is he behaving like this? Arjuna is not a dull-head: 'I know it is my duty to fight my enemy'. There is no consideration here of whether the enemy is a relative or not. It does not matter. If you listen very carefully, perhaps you may find that you too are saying this in your own heart. 'It seems as if I have been robbed of my true nature'. Krishna wants to learn what is right and what is wrong. Now he is ready to bow down and to listen. When you ask me: 'Swami, tell me what you feel is right', I will tell you what I feel is right. Until then, no teaching can be imparted.

This is a modern tragedy: in ancient days, students had to travel great distances to go to the master. They did this when they saw the need within themselves, and they were in a receptive condition. Nowadays, pseudo-masters wander around and try to sell their wares. The ancient master never committed this blunder. He knew it was better to have ripe student than a multitude of follows.

Arjuna said: 'I am your disciple'. What is the difference between a disciple and a pupil? You know what the word 'pupil' means. You all went to school. But there is another meaning. You have two pupils, one in each eye. Is there any relationship? Yes. You know the function of the pupil of the eye: in darkness it widens, and in brilliant light it closes. That is what a pupil does towards the master. When there is spiritual darkness, his eye open wide. When he stands before a great master, he closes up, seeing no light - nothing at all. That is called a pupil.

There is no such word as disciple. The word is discipline. So, if I want to go to a Guru - Guru meaning the One, the Light, who removes the darkness of ignorance

- and if I go with the attitude of a pupil, I am closed, contracted against anything he can do for me. But if I go to him as a disciple, one who wants to learn, an embodiment of discipline. Then, first I must realise that I am ignorant. Second, that this ignorance is dreadful, that it is the cause of all my sorrow and unhappiness. Third, that this Light will help to dispel the darkness of ignorance. Only when these truths are accepted can I learn, otherwise I cannot learn. I must go to the Master only when I have these disciplines. He need do nothing more than light the candles - and they will radiate their light, by which I can see the Truth. It is only in this Light that I shall be able to see. Unless I am awake, alert, unless my eyes are open, the light will do nothing for me. This is what is meant by discipleship. Living near a great master does not automatically confer merit on me. I can live in this room with my eyes tightly bandaged for two hundred years and will not see a thing, because my eyes are not open. It is not difficult to find a Guru, it is very difficult to find a disciple. It is not be Guru that matters. If I am alert, if my eyes are open, I will find light anywhere. It is my openness, my discipleship, my eagerness to learn, that matters. Therefore it must be my own complete realisation - that there is this darkness within me, which is terrible, and that I must get rid of it - that is what matters. Once this realisation is there, the whole path is clear.

Arjuna says, 'Tell me what is good for me, what is ultimately good for me, pleasant or unpleasant! I surrender myself.' This surrender is a mysterious thing, Isn't it? Does anybody want to surrender at all? Do I know what surrender is? If there is surrender, what is surrendered, and by whom? It is very easy to say 'Oh, I surrender myself to you'. Every girl promises the boy before they get married 'I am yours - so long as you do what I want you to do!' Is that surrender? If I surrender myself, is there ever a need to surrender myself again? If I do, it means there is some doubt, doesn't it?

Surrender is an extremely difficult concept to understand, because the understander of this surrender is the ego. It is very easy to bluff oneself. If there is true surrender, then there is immediate illumination, because the one thing that stands between God and me is me. When the me is removed, God alone exists - which is Truth. Krishna reveals the Truth to Arjuna immediately: 'You are grieving, you are worried unnecessarily. You are worrying about those you should not worry about'. This is a fantastic verse, it has saved my life a hundred times. Let us be clear about what we are talking. I say I am worried, but if I try to find out who this 'I' is, what this 'worry' is, the problem is gone.

So, Krishna merely throws the ball back into Arjuna's court. He says, 'Look, you are worrying about people about whom you should not worry. The wise man does not grieve for those whose life has gone - they are dead. They are not going to be brought back by your grieving. 'You should not grieve for 'agataasumsca'. The literal meaning is not 'the living', but those who are not yet dead. Nothing is immortal here - some are dead and some have a few more days before they die. Why must you worry about them?

Does this seem a terribly callous, cruel philosophy? It might, if you forget that this includes my body and my personality also. As Buddha said: 'All that is born must die'. All components must decompose. There is only one thing that is eternal here - and that is change! Isn't that beautiful? Why must I hold back something which is changing? Why do I want to stop this change? Is not that the cause of my unhappiness?

Is not that the problem with men and women too? The man does not look at himself in the mirror; he looks at his wife everyday. She was a beautiful young girl, but she does not seem to be the same any more; so, he goes looking for a beautiful young girl. We must accept the change. It is ridiculous not to. I cannot but accept the change. Change does not depend upon my acceptance. The only thing that is permanent is the ocean - not the waves, not the streams, not the currents. The only thing that is permanent is the Infinite. Everything else changes constantly. Therefore, one who is blind to this truth, one who clings to changing phenomena, is beyond redemption. Our business lies in seeing these truths, seeing this entire fact that life is a constant change, and therefore moving. The whole scene is changing. Even within me, within my body, every thing is changing.

Krishna tells Arjuna, 'You think you are worried because you are going to kill these people'. What does killing mean? It means that these people are going to die. But they are going to die anyway. One must be careful to understand and interpret these statements correctly. 'You are worried that they are going to die, but they are dying all the time'. Here is another viewpoint. If I asked you what you were twenty years ago, granting that you are now about twenty-four, you would say, 'I was a little baby'. From where did you get all this extra flesh, muscle, bone and hair? From all those chickens, eggs, potatoes, tomatoes, etc. which you ate. Then, why do you call them your body? Why don't you call them tomatoes or soup?

I am going to ask you another question. Who was it that was born on the day of your birth? I am sorry - it may seem rude, but you were a benign tumour inside your mother's body, which somehow got dislodged without the help of surgeon. What was the tumour made of? The food eaten by the mother. Therefore, the physical organism of all human beings is nothing but vegetables. Vegetables are taken into this body, and it grows and grows, and every day a little bit is given back to the vegetable kingdom. One of these days, the whole thing will be put back into the vegetable kingdom. We call this birth and death.

Lecture 3

Arjuna, the mortal man, subject to confusion, collapses. I wanted to say: 'How strange!' But it is not so strange. Something similar is going on right here in front of us. Why do we not see it? Confusion hits us just when we need to be unconfused. You may know all about the tape-recorder - when you want to operate it, the simplest thing becomes confusing. Have you not seen it in your own life? School children can answer all the questions that their mother asks them at home - everything is easy; but just when it matters, the brain is muddled and there is confusion.

Arjuna, this wonderful man, this brave, courageous and powerful warrior, collapses on the battlefield. How did Krishna, the Divinity Incarnate, handle the situation? There are two wrong ways of handling it. One wrong way is to deal with it piecemeal - somehow overcoming the present hurdle and 'everything will be all right later on'. This is what we try to do with tranquilizers, pills and tablets. There is some pain - you swallow a pill, an aspirin, a tablet, and the pain is gone. Why has the pain gone? Because you have deadened the nerves. We are very fond of overcoming part of the problem. Rather than strengthening ourselves by tackling the whole problem. Last year, I had some trouble and the doctor said: 'Would you like to have something to relieve the pain?' I said, 'No, I would rather have the pain which enables me to look at the sick or diseased spot, so that I can deal with it.' If the pain is deadened, I am dead. This is one wrong method. Lord Krishna did not adopt it.

Another wrong method of dealing with the situation is to introduce an unknown element into an argument. Lord Krishna did not say. 'Look, my dear friend. I have got a third eye and you know my seventh chakra is open, and through that I am able to see all this. If you do not fight, you are going straight to hell. Therefore, you must get up and fight'. The psychologist's version of introducing this unknown element is to say: 'Arjuna collapsed on the battlefield because his mother weaned him too early, and so he suffers from a perpetual sense of insecurity'. Why should I blame that poor mother now for something that happened forty-eight years ago - instead of facing life as it is? The trouble is not with what I was, but with what I am.

Perfection means integral perfection. Solving a problem means solving the entire problem. If I am afraid of my wife, husband, neighbour or friend, it is very easy to shoot them. But will this rid me of my fear? No, I will still be afraid of a rat, a mouse, a new husband, a new wife, a new friend. Instead of dealing with the object of fear, you must deal with the subject of fear. You must go to the root of the problem and deal with that. Krishna tells us this in the Gita, and my Guru, Swami Sivananda, told us this all the time. Go to the root of the problem.

What is the subject matter of the Bhagavad Gita? 'Asocyaan' in the beginning and 'maa suca' in the end. Grieve not, here; grieve not, there. Abandon your sorrow, here; abandon your sorrow, there. Then how do we get rid of sorrow?

How do we get rid of grief? How do we get rid of worry? Can I get rid of worry by merely saying 'I will not worry any more?' No, that will be a new worry, a big worry.

So, how do I get rid of this worry? Only by going to the root of the problem and seeing the truth there. We must ask ourselves: 'What am I worried about, and where does this worry spring from?' Then you suddenly come face to face with the root of the problem: ignorance. I do not know who I am, or what I am. I am afraid to be involved in some activity of which I may not approve. Arjuna was worried about the consequence of killing these people and what other people would say. Our problem is whether to kill our inner enemies or not. In myself, I see some dreadful obstacles which I alone have created. I have cultivated wrong habits of thinking, speaking, doing, acting, and behaving, because I think they confer on me a sense of security. I have created this world of relationships, and it seems wonderful. Suddenly I realise that I am living in a fool's paradise. When I am in trouble, these people are not able to help me. I can smoke and drink and do all sorts of things with my friends, but when I get lung cancer, I suffer alone.

I must sit down and look at the whole picture, not just a corner of the picture. When I say, 'I must get rid of this bad habit', suddenly all sorts of doubts assail me: 'How can I let my friends down? What will they think? I may suddenly become friendless.' But even now you have no friends. I have no real friends. Do you know what an unreal friend is? Why call him a friend at all? My problem becomes exactly the same as the one that faced Arjuna. These friends are my enemies, they disturb my peace of mind, they cause me sorrow, grief, and worry.

How must I get rid of this worry, grief, and sorrow? To be able to answer this question, I must know what I am. Therefore, on the battlefield, Krishna taught Arjuna this atma-jnana, Self-knowledge. Without Self-knowledge, whatever you do is a waste of time. I can stand on my head for three hours, but without Self-knowledge it cannot confer lasting benefit. We might feel that it is stupid to stand on the battlefield and talk of atma-jnana. We think that discussions on Self-realisation would be held in a lovely spiritual atmosphere, in a forest or a cave, where nobody irritates us, where nothing is born, nothing dies. The problem is here and now. The battle is here, the problem is here. What must I do about this noise, about this nagging wife, this drunken husband? The need for the Bhagavad Gita is here. It must be practiced here.

Occasionally you can get away - but do not take your transistor radio with you. Sit and meditate, that will at least prevent you from going mad. The need for Self-realisation is in the battle of life. I am the creator of this battle. I am the battle. If I run away from this battle, I must return to it. To solve this problem once and for all, I must be here. I must attain Self-realisation. This is why this dialogue concerning Self-knowledge takes place on the battlefield. The confusion is 'I'. This body is supposed to be 'you', but actually it is potatoes, vegetables. If I understand this, then I know what to do. Therefore, in this discussion of self-knowledge, Arjuna says, 'I am killing them', but Krishna says, 'You are not killing

them'.

A sage said: 'You have no brothers and sisters. Only one entity was born with you - death'. Everyone that is born must die. So, what are you worried about? Do not jump to conclusions saying, 'Ah, then I can go about killing people' It is not what I do or do not do that matters, it is the 'being' that matters. First Be good, and then what you Do will be good. If I am a rose, I have the fragrance of a rose; if I am a lotus, I have the fragrance of a lotus. I do not have to put scent on my petals, I do not have to worry how to behave or what to do. If my body is pure, there is not foul breath problem. If my mind is pure and clear, there is no psychological problem. If my heart is pure, there is no behaviour problem.

Gurudev Sivananda said, 'Be Good, Do Good'. I assume that I was born good. So, I will start to do good now. This is the tragedy. If I see the Self without confusion, then whatever I do is righteous. If I see the Divine within me, then my whole life is Divine Life. I do not have to look at a chart of spiritual instructions and keep on ticking them off to be sure I am living up to them. Everything seems to be right; then everything goes wrong. Why is that? I find I am anxious, I am stupid, I am confused. Why? Because, who ticked all those things? My ego.

Krishna deals with the fundamental problem of my ignorance of reality. What am 'I'? Krishna tells Arjuna, 'You are the immortal essence. You are not his body'. You are free, totally free. Just as a man puts on his clothes, and then takes them off, you get into this body and then, when the time comes, you leave the body and go. It is very important point to understand because the entire problem of our life hinges on it. Do I understand what this 'I' is?

na jaayate mriyate va kadaacin naayam bhutvaa bhavita vaa na bhuyah ajo nityah
saasvatoyam purano na hanyate hanyamaane sarire
He is not born, nor does He ever die; after having been, He again ceases not to be;
unborn, eternal, changeless and ancient, He is not killed when the body is killed. II:20

Gurudev was extremely fond of this verse. It explains that we are unborn, undying and eternal. The self does not change with the changes that take place in the body. It does not die when you think the body is dead. There is no date of birth for the Self. Krishna Himself mentions the doctrine of the 'next birth'. He gives elaborate hints on how to live and how to die, how to leave the body and go up, by sitting erect, raising the prana and fixing it between the eye-brows, repeating Om and meditating upon the Lord. But what is this life and what is death? What is rebirth? What is transmigration, reincarnation? Again this question can be answered only if I know what this 'I' is.

Here again is the beauty of the English language. Supposing I asked you to write the word 'I'. Do you realise that you can write two words having the same phonetic sound. One has a single letter 'I'; the other has three letters 'eye'. It is not only men and animals that have an eye. There is another type which is called a cyclone, which also has a eye. Can you visualise this cyclone for a moment, with the eye surrounded by violent streams of air and wind? They even give it a name,

as if it has a personality. What is the eye of a cyclone? Are you not tempted to say it is nothing, that it is only an empty space; and yet, dare you say it is nothing? As it moves, the whole nation can be watching, very worried about what is going to happen. Even so, what you call this 'I' is nothing but a spot of ignorance, around which there is a whirl wind of confusion. It is this confusion which goes on destroying our lives, birth after birth.

You have also heard that eventually this cyclone disintegrates. What happens to the eye of the cyclone then? It becomes what it has always been - nothing. It is merely that the atmospheric pressure changes at a certain place, and the whole thing becomes peaceful. In the same way, when we discover the 'I', when the pressure inside us changes, when there is no more ignorance, no more love and hate, then the 'I', the cause of the problem, disintegrates. Nothing more happens - we are liberated.

Lecture 4

Krishna seems to be terribly confused. One moment he says, 'There is no birth, no death,' and the next moment he says, 'There is death, and for everyone who is dead there is rebirth.' It make you wonder. You would think that if he was a prophet, he would be more authoritative, saying, 'And I say unto you ... ' But there is no such statement here, for the simple reason that it will not do to try to jump over one's own shoulders. I can only see the fact as I see it. From there I must be slowly helped. If you are my Guru, My Master, God Incarnate, a prophet, perhaps you might be able to illuminate the next step for me Krishna is a wonderfully clever realist and says:

acchedyayamadaahyoyamakledyosyosya eve ca nityah sarvagatah sthaanuracaloyam sanaatanah
This Self cannot be cut, burnt, wetted, nor dried up. It is eternal, all pervading,
stable, immovable and ancient. II:24

What is this Self? You must find out, I cannot do it for you. That which is trapped in this body is unborn, is undying. It is eternal. I cannot say that nothing is born, and nothing dies. No, there is death for this physical body - but the individuality remains. Do you know what this word individuality means? It is a sort of telescoping two words into one. The two words being 'indivisible' - 'duality'. When you drop the letters 'sible' and telescope the other two words together, you get this word 'individuality'. There is a duality. But it is an indivisible duality. In all things, there is this eternal, undying, immortal principle, which we can compare to the electric energy in the computer, the data-holding cells being compared to the mind and the metallic component being compared to the body. Krishna merely says, 'You can smash the computer (the body), but you cannot destroy the electrical energy within it. It is eternal.' The basic law in physics is that nothing can ever be destroyed. Material objects only change their form and that is exactly what the Bhagavad Gita tells us.

The body is subject to all sorts of changes. You can throw water on it and it becomes wet. You can blow hot air on it and it becomes dry. If there is death, if you call it death, if you see death, it is only matter changing its form. This is an inevitable process - what is born must die. All things that have been composed of other things will have to decompose. This is a natural process. No one can arrest or cancel it. It is only this Indweller that is immortal. How do you know you are eternal, immortal? How do you know you are eternal immortal? We must not fall into the trap of immortalising this personal individuality. So, Krishna teaches us that we are not only eternal, but also all pervading, omnipresent.

When Moses walked up Mount Sinai, he heard a voice, and asked who was speaking. The voice of God Himself answered, saying, 'I am that I am, I am who I am'. I am is the name. Who is it that says, 'I am'? Strangely enough, every one of us if asked any question, uses these two words 'I am'. This 'I am' is the all pervading reality or omnipresence, isn't it? The truth of 'I am' is veiled; we have lost the original idea. We are caught up in this narrowness and smallness of vision. Therefore we think we die. But of course we do not die. Supposing this

body called Swami Venkatesananda falls dead. The young man over there who is still alive says, 'Venkatesananda is dead, but I am ... ' It does not matter if one thing drops dead, the other 'I Am' is still there, everywhere, and that is the eternal, immortal principle. It is only this flash which is changing all the time.

What is the body made of? The Bible says the body is made of dust. Indian philosophers, including Krishna, looked at grain of sand and saw that it was not all earth, that there was some moisture in it, and when you took that moisture away, there was some heat in it. They went a little deeper into the analysis of matter:

bhumiraaponalo vayuhtnam mano buddhireva ca ahamkaara itiyam me bhinnaa prakrtirastadhaa
Earth, water, fir, air, ether, mind, intellect and egoism - thus is My Nature divided
eightfold. VII:4

This physical body is not only made of dust. If you cremate the body now, the earth element will probably be only a handful; the rest consists of other elements. I wonder if you realise that our bodies, so beautiful to look at, are mostly plain water, and that this is the reason why we are so weak-willed. The basic characteristic of water is to flow downwards; so, our mind also flows down. Water, when it starts flowing, takes the line of least resistance - and so do we. We have no resistance at all, and so we say the Universal Prayer, asking God to give us the 'Inner spiritual strength to resist temptation'. We are made of water; so, we take the line of least resistance. We do not want to resist, especially temptations - which are so beautiful, so exciting. There is also heat and air inside the body, otherwise we would not be alive. The physical body is made up of these five material substances: earth, water, fire, air, and ether. Even our mind, our discriminative faculty, the ahamkara (egoism) within us, the egoistic 'I', is all modifications of matter, not to be confused with the eternal 'I am'. Only if we understand this clearly, we perceive why we are unable to think except in terms of matter.

Can you think of love? I can only translate love in terms of somebody. I cannot think of love devoid of material association, unless I am highly spiritually evolved. The mind is bound because it is still matter, even though extremely subtle. The mind, the intellect, and the ego, are nothing but subtle forms of matter. Krishna says these eight categories; earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intellect, and egoism, form 'My inferior nature'. When Krishna says 'My inferior nature', it is not as though these words apply only to Him. In the Bhagavad Gita, wherever you find the first person singular pronoun 'I', it does not refer to Krishna alone. It refers to the Divinity, to God, to the Eternal Omnipresent Being. The material part is the outer sheath, or inferior nature of God.

apareyamitastvanyaam prakrtim viddhi me paraam jivabhu'aam mahaabaaho yayedam dhaaryate
jagat

This is the inferior Prakriti, O mighty-armed (Arjuna); know thou as different from it my higher Prakriti (Nature), the very life-element, by which this world is upheld. VII:5

This is wonderful. This inferior nature carries the living principle, graphically

described in the Bible, where it is said that God breathed the Breath of Life into man, who become a living soul. How does the Omnipresent God breathe into something other than Himself? In other words - is God Omnipresent or not? There is this materiality which is not outside God but within God. It is only an outer part of the inferior part of His nature. The living part within, the Soul within, is the superior part of His Nature.

It is very difficult to get out of God. So, please do not try to do so! Somebody says, 'Go to hell!' God is there too! How do you know? Because God is omnipresent. If God is omnipresent, He is in heaven and also in hell. Why do we call materiality - the inferior nature, and the living Soul - the Superior Nature? Do we or do we not have this distinction in our own body? In this very body, if you cut my hair, I shall say; 'Thank you very much'. If you cut my nose, I will blow the roof down, and if you cut my throat, I will fall down. See the difference here? The one is superior to the other, the throat to the nose, and the nose to the hair. It seems as if all these things are part of one organism, that there is no division at all. Yet there is this distinction.

There is distinction in God's nature. In His inferior nature, there is this Ahamkara, the thing that says, 'I'. This egoism, which is part of the Divine Nature, can be understood if you look at a living cell. Billions of cells are functioning almost independently. Why almost independently? Are you aware of what goes on in your body? The supper you had is being smashed and ground up, and the juice extracted and all sorts of funny things are taking place in the abdomen. Are you aware of all this? No. Therefore they are independent of me. Are they independent of me? No. Supposing I shoot myself, will it still go on? No. It will stop. So, there is the semi-independence. That should be very clear. Each cell of the body is semi- independent; independent up to a point, but dependent upon the organism as a whole for its existence.

If I have understood this, I have understood what this 'I' is, in relation to the Omnipresent God. If I have understood this, then I have understood how far I have free-will and where my fate is determined. If I have understood this, I have understood what choice means, what Yoga means, how I must live. I may exercise my independence, yet I must realise that I am ultimately dependent upon this Omnipresent Being. Krishna explains this again at another point in the Bhagavad Gita:

dvaaviman purusau loke ksharascaakshara eve ca kshara sarvaarni bhutaani kutasthokshara ucyate

Two Purusas there are in this world, the perishable and the imperishable. All beings are the perishable and the Kutastha is called the imperishable. XV:16

We are aware of these two entities, the perishable and the imperishable, in the world around us. We are aware of something that is ever changing. Are you the same man I met two days ago? You are not the same man. Many imperceptible changes have taken place in you - imperceptible, because I am blind. I am not equipped with that subtle vision which is able to perceive the change which has

taken place. So that all material substances are constantly changing, but so subtly that we do not notice.

Food is grown in the garden, eaten, digested, eliminated. This is apparently riotous, disorderly activity; it goes on all the time. Yet, in this seeming disorder, there is order. In this ever-changing mass of matter, there seems to be something which never changes. So, Krishna says, 'You are aware of these two, something which is ever changing - and some thing which is not changing'. You think: 'Ah, this is easy, my body changes all the time. I do not change'. Even now you see that the maximum height we can reach, is this thing called 'I'. Isn't it? Whatever you do, you cannot get away from this 'I' which grips you:

uttamah purusastvanyah paramaatmetyudaahrtah yo lokatrayamaavisya bibhartavyaya isvarah
But distinct is the supreme Purusa called the highest Self, the indestructible Lord Who,
pervading the three worlds, sustains them. XV:17

Krishna says, 'Do not fool yourself that you have arrived at the summit of knowledge or wisdom'. We must realise that Truth is beyond thought, but we do not have to go that far. I give you a simple puzzle. It concerns space; that is why in some scriptures we are told to meditate upon the Supreme Being as Akasha - space. Do we understand what is meant by infinite space? Even this small thing called space cannot be comprehended by our minds and the intellect. What is this ultimate Truth or Atman Brahman or God, or whatever you want to call it? It is not possible to comprehend it. It is not possible to think of it, because I myself am in it. I am part of it. This is the Truth that is revealed to us in the Upanishads. The more we read the conclusions of the modern physicists and biologists, the more we learn to admire and perhaps to understand the wisdom of the great sages.

A sage is sitting under a banyan tree. This tree sends down new shoots, which become roots. It keeps on growing and growing. This enormous tree which belongs to the fig family, has a small fruit or berry. A seeker asks the Holy Man, 'Sir, can you tell me what the Self is?' How is the sage going to explain this? He says, 'My son, go and fetch me one of those little fruits'. When he has done this, the sage asks him to break open the fruit; then he asks him what he could see. The seeker tells him he can see one or two hundred little seeds, tinier than mustard seeds. The sage tells him to break one seed and then asks him what he can see. The seeker replies that he can see nothing. The sage then says to him, 'It is from that nothing that a big tree like this will grow. So, how can you call it nothing?'

We are still asking questions, but these ancient sages went to the root of the problem, reminding us that that which we imagined to be nothing is a something out of which a huge tree grows.

The sage concludes with the famous expression Tat Twam Asi, Thou Art That. The thing that you say is nothing. That is what you are. That is the all-pervading Entity, because it is eternal and omnipresent, it is unborn and undying.

Lecture 5

In a moment of great affection for the disciple, Krishna says:

raajavidya raajaguhyam pavitramidamuttamam pratyakshaavagaman dharmyam susukham
kartumavyayam

This is the kindly science, the kingly secret, the supreme purifier, realisable by direct intuitional knowledge, according to righteousness, very easy to perform and imperishable. IX:2

When you want someone to listen very carefully, you say, 'This is something very secret. I heard it directly from my Guru'. Then he will listen with all attention. Arjuna says, 'What is it Sir'? Krishna replies:

mayaa tatamidam sarvam jagadavyaktamurtinaa matshaani sarvabhutaani na caaham
tesvavasthitah

All this world is pervaded by Me in My unmanifest aspect; all beings exist in Me, but I do not dwell in them. IX:4

The 'I' in the Gita does not mean Mr. Krishna, it means God. Krishna says: 'I pervade everything in this Universe'. He says very clearly, 'All beings are in me, I am not in them', not denying thereby His immanence, but knocking out the false concept - the defective expression: 'God is in me'. God is not in all, but He is 'All in all'. This is what is meant by that simple word 'Omnipresent'. God is not confined within me. God is not limited to you or to me, nor are there spaces where God is not. The simple conclusion of the word Omnipresent is that there is nothing but God. This is the greatest secret. Why? Because you and I still do not understand what God's Omnipresence means.

We think: 'Oh of course, I know God'. But of course we do not know. God is a code word, and God is hidden 'in our own heart'. It seems that God, having created all beings in the Universe, suddenly finds Himself homeless. It seems that God said, 'I have created man. He is my own child. So, I must not be too far away from him, but he must not grab Me - unless his heart is pure. So, what must I do? Where must I dwell? I will dwell in his heart, very close to him, and yet he will never look into his own heart - unless it is pure'. So, He deposited Himself in man's heart where man does not look. The key to the knowledge of God is in the heart, which must be pure - only then shall we find Him. The key to this realisation that God is Omnipresent, that God alone exists, that God is 'All in all', is in the heart - the one place where we do not look. We may not even know where to look and how to look.

All this teaching took place on the battlefield, where there is no time for theorizing. We are also studying on the battlefield of our own life; there is no time for theorising. I cannot say: 'I will refer to the Gita. Then I will think about it, and later return with the answer'. From moment to moment I must solve the problems that my life brings. There is no time to waste. I must practise, but in order to practise, I must see very clearly that 'I' is a cell in the body of God. When does a man become weak? When he is not a Yogi. To be totally submissive to God's will requires tremendous will-power. This total surrender of one's own will,

enables the individual to work in harmony with Cosmic will, and therefore enjoy direct contact with the Cosmic Power House.

prakrteh kriyamaanaani gunaih karmaani sarvasah ahamkaaravinudhaatmaa karta ahamiti manyate

All actions are wrought in all cases by the qualities of Nature only. He whose mind is deluded by egoism thinks, 'I am the doer'. III:27

Krishna says: 'The Divine Nature does all this, and yet the fool thinks 'I am doing all these wonderful things'.

yadahankaaramaasritya na yotsya iti manyase mithyaisa vyavasaaste prakrtistvaam niyokshyati

If filled with egoism, thou thinkest 'I will not fight' vain is this, thy resolve; Nature will conquer thee. XVIII:59

If you say: 'God does everything, why should I bother?', and withdraw yourself from full participation in life, you are deluded. The Divine Nature of which your body and mind are part, will make you do it; there is no choice whatsoever. 'Shall I go on doing what I want to do?' It would be lovely. Arjuna asks this question. What is the answer? No doubt, as Jesus said, 'Not even a sparrow will fall unless it is the Divine Will'. But do 'you' fall because it is the Divine Will? If you did something unpleasant yesterday, did you do it because it was God's will - or because you wanted to do it? You think the answer is 'I wanted to do it', in order to prove that you have free will. But everything takes place by the Will of God in this world. When the action is motivated by desire, anger or hate, man sins.

Is our life not continually conditioned by these forces - desire and hatred? My Guru Swami Sivananda once said, 'Take desire and hatred away and there is no world at all.'

What you call samskara is nothing but 'I like' or 'I do not like'. If I say 'I desire', there is a desire in me to do this. Therefore I do it and so I am sinning. If I say 'I do not desire to do this, I will not do it', I am sinning. Where there is total surrender, then my actions are yogic action.

When we look at a beehive, or an anthill, we learn how the cells in our body function independently but subserviently. In the case of a beehive or an anthill, the insects work together without an overseer standing by with a whip and a watch. They just work automatically, but do we?

Do I do my duty joyously, eagerly, spontaneously? No. There is violent resistance. What I want to do, I go out of my way to do; what I do not want to do, I try to extricate myself from. My life is not one of spontaneous, wholehearted, joyous, eager participation in the Divine Will, but a cancerous rebellion all the time. Why? Because I am motivated by desire.

dhyaayato visayaanpunsah sangastesupajaayate sangaat sanjaayate kaamah kaamaatkrodhabhi jaayate

When a man thinks of the objects, attachment for them arises; from attachment desire is born; from desire anger arises. II:62

krodhaadbhavati sammohah sammohaatsmrivibhramah smrtibhramsaadbuddhinaaso budhinaasaat pranasyati

From anger comes delusion; from delusion loss of memory; from loss of memory the destruction of discrimination; from destruction of discrimination he perishes. II:63

Why do I desire certain things? Let us take desires like those for smoking cigarettes or taking alcohol or for sex or money. Are we born with these? Give a three-month old baby a 20 euro bank note; he will just take it, put in his mouth, tear it up or throw it away. Then how does it happen that we desire these things? Most of these pleasures, when first indulged in, were painful or gave us only momentary pleasure. As the mind keeps thinking about the momentary experience, contact is made. When this contact is established, a desire is created. Until then, there is no desire - whether the first experience was pleasant or unpleasant. In the case of smoking, if I thought that it was not pleasant, it would be finished. But I go home, thinking about it and saying, 'How is it that this gentleman was puffing away and enjoying it, and he is a great man? How can I become a great man if I do not smoke? This is a sort of auto-suggestion. Thus again, this thought produces desire: 'I must smoke again tomorrow'. So that whether the experience was pleasant in the first instance, in both cases this thought interferes, prolongs it, stretches it and converts it into a desire - because the contact is there. When this contact is established, my mental substance flows through it, creating a channel of desire, samskara. When this desire and this lust are thwarted, when there is an obstacle, the same list turns into anger. Every fulfillment strengthens it, adds to its power. Sooner or later it has to burn itself out. You are a very good wife, a charming wife, and you are very loving to your husband. Your husband is a nice old fool satisfying every one of your whims - you just have to say the word and it is done. Then what happens? It becomes bigger and bigger and bigger, until one day he must realise that he has had enough and says: 'Shut up!' And there is the end of story. It has to come. And that is our life. Constantly swinging between desire and anger, between love and hatred.

These desires prevent us from realising the Omnipresence of God. If I have no desire, no hate, what will I be? The answer, the Truth, lies between these two statements: 'Everything is done by Divine Nature, but the foolish man imagines he is the doer', and 'Do not think foolishly that you can refuse to participate in the Divine drama. You are helpless. You have to take part'. Between these two statements, there is this delightful admonition from Krishna: 'Nimitta maatra bhava' - 'Be thou a mere instrument'. Again transport yourself to the battlefield. Krishna says, 'Arjuna, do you think that, by refusing to fight this battle, you will save these people?' This is not a sanction for violence - it is a spiritual vision.

mayaivaite nihataah purvameva nimittamaatram bhava savyasaacin
Verily by Me have they been already slain; be thou a mere instrument. O Arjuna. XI:33

'By My will what you are asked to achieve now has already been achieved. I have done it already. I only want you to be an instrument in my mind'. This concept of instrumentality in the hands of God has again been grossly misunderstood. I do whatever I want to do, and then I say: 'You know, I am only an instrument in the hands of God'. Krishna said: 'Be My instrument'. God said it - 'Be an instrument in my hands'. But the moment we say 'I am', we have already negated that we are an instrument. We write a lovely poem with a fountain pen. The pen does not say either, 'I am writing', or 'I am an instrument in the hands of this gentleman', it is

totally unaware. What can I do? I can only watch most vigilantly, look within myself, and see if the ego rears its head. Is there a feeling within that it is 'I' that am doing this? Then, that is wrong action, even if you rationalise it by saying, 'I am an instrument of God'. The minute I say this, there is something wrong, because the instrument does not know that it is an instrument. We are discussing Karma Yoga. Not the practice of it, and not our progression towards the ultimate goal, because when we reach that goal, there is no feeling of 'I am doing all this as an instrument of God', but 'It is done'. Whatever is done, is done by God.

Those of you who have studied Indian legends might often have been surprised by some of them. For instance, there was a great king called Bali, whose foremost characteristic was to be most charitable. He never refused anybody anything, and yet he was supposed to have been a demon! Vishnu had to take an incarnation to dispose of him and dethrone him. Why? Does God really discourage charity? No, because this man of supreme charity did so with egoistic feeling. 'I am a very charitable person'. So he had to go. One who is a true Karma Yogi is free from the notion of 'I will do it' or 'It is not desirable for me to do it'. Karma means action, yoga means union with God. Union with God in the sense that we realise that we have always been one with God, or God is 'All in all'. In order to emphasise that Yoga is total, eager and joyous participation in the Divine Will - but egolessly and therefore unselfishly - Krishna prescribes what He calls Karma Yoga.

Krishna reminds us: 'I am desireless, I am egoless, I am vigilantly watching that there is no desire within'. In order to safeguard us against this, because the ego is something terrible and comes creeping upon us unawares, Krishna gives us a most lovely picture towards the end of the Bhagavad Gita:

yatah pravrttirbhutaanaam yena sarvamidam tatam svakarmanaa tamabhyarcya siddhim vindati
maanavah

He from whom all the beings have evolved and by whom all this is pervaded - worshipping Him with his own duty, man attains perfection. XVIII:46

He says, 'Arjuna, there is only one road to perfection'. He has discussed all sorts of paths - the paths of devotion, of Raja Yoga and of meditation. Having said all this, He reverts to the vital issue - perfection. How is perfection attained? By worshipping God. What is this God that you want me to worship? Yatah pravrttirbhutaanaam yena sarvamidam tatam - He from whom all beings have evolved and by whom all this is pervaded. This God has created the whole world. Where is He? He is everywhere, Omnipresent.

aham hi saarvayaajnaanaam bhoktaa ca prabhureva ca
I alone am the enjoyer and also the Lord of all sacrifices. IX:24

God is All in all. Any service I do, any work I do, is done to God - is accepted by God. Krishna says that whatever you do, have this feeling: 'This is a flower offered at Thy feet, O Lord'. When this feeling is entertained, no selfish action, no egoistic action, no unrighteous action, is possible. And that is Karma Yoga.

Lecture 6

We studied Krishna's teaching concerning Karma Yoga. Krishna himself uses the words 'Karma Yoga', but the Bhagavad Gita was not divided into sections and chapters by Krishna. It is very difficult to edit the Bhagavad Gita into chapters. There are chapters on Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, and so on. These were not originally intended, because these Yogas are not different from one another. This is where trouble starts. You say, 'You practise Dhyana Yoga, I practise Bhakti Yoga, and somebody else practises Karma Yoga'. Stuff and nonsense. Either you practise Yoga or not at all. You cannot practise Karma Yoga exclusively or Bhakti Yoga exclusively.

Some people are after the body beautiful, but in their head is nothing and in their heart cruelty. And then there are these emotionalists. - they have neither, let us call it wisdom, nor the intellectualism to discriminate between what is devotion and what is emotion; neither have they the will nor the capacity to do something about it. They are so full of love that, if I faint, they will also faint. This is also called love, isn't it? I love you so much that unfortunately I can do nothing to help you.

These are all what Gurudev used to call lopsided development, which is no development. Perfection is integral, or there is no perfection. Visualise this worldly existence, which we call samskara, as a well, ten feet in diameter. The Karma Yogi is able to jump six feet, the Bhakti yogi four feet, the jnani Yogi eight feet. Where will they land? All of them down the well. Unless we achieve integral perfection, there is no perfection.

What prevents this integral perfection? The Me - that is all. The entire universe is pervaded by God, by the Divine, though you may call it God, Ishwara, Christ, Brahma Atma, Allah. Somehow I am caught up in this diversity - I, you, He, and this is the obstacle. 'I' is the obstacle. This 'I' was originally the infinite. Probably the letter 'I' actually stood for the whole word Infinite. But we use the word 'I' to refer to the finite, to the little, absurdly little thing, a lot, a point. This littleness must go. This 'me' must go, must disappear. How? By practising self-denial, self-sacrifice - that is called Karma Yoga. You can practise self-surrender - that is called Bhakti Yoga; you may have Self-realisation, that is called Janna Yoga. But do we or do we not see that eventually all these have the same significance, all these mean the same thing? Whether the self is denied, whether the self is surrendered, whether the self is sacrificed, whether the self is realised, it is all the same. The self, this little self, this 'me' is the problem. Supposing I am a Karma Yoga specialist and another man is a Bhakti Yoga specialist, this same 'Me' returns in some other form, 'I am an instrument of God'. 'I am a more perfect instrument of God than this man'. Oh no, do not think I am proud. Very humbly I say that I am the direct disciple of the Guru and I am nothing at all. 'I am so humble, the dust of his feet, I am the only fit man to broadcast his message.' What is happening now? The 'Me' has come back in all its glory. Why? Because there was no vigilance.

Because I am a fool, I go on doing all sorts of things in the name of Karma Yoga, Yoga, etc. I do not try to understand what this involves. My brain is empty, my intelligence has gone to sleep, my wisdom was never there. All the time I am deceiving myself that I am doing Karma Yoga, that I am doing this and doing that. Our Master used the words 'discrimination' and 'dispassion' in His writing; when it came to instruction, He used the expression 'eternal vigilance'. Eternal vigilance is vairagya, dispassion.

Buddha beautifully illustrated this. He says: 'Supposing at night you are disturbed by some sound in your bedroom. You switch the light on. You see a terrible mamba, a cobra, a most deadly snake, just near the door, so that you cannot get out. It is midnight. There are six hours to go before anything can happen. How wonderfully you can mediate, you know? How vigilant you are. You can do nothing, you cannot get out of the room, you cannot sleep. If God were that snake, you would have God-realisation before dawn. You are sitting there and watching every little movement. What is your mind? The mind is a snake. There is no other mind, there is nothing else in that mind. When the mind is completely possessed by the God-thought, this is vairagya.

There is a peculiar word in the Bhagavad Gita: manmanaa. It is impossible to translate - my-minded is the literal translation. Mana is mind, man is min. My-minded: what does it mean? If you can examine the mind of the person watching the cobra throughout the night, eternally vigilant, unblinkingly vigilant, with not the slightest trace of lethargy, with not the slightest trace of the mind wandering - this is devotion, discrimination, dispassion.

This is described in the Bible, 'Love your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with your whole being', just as you are afraid of that cobra with all your being, love your God with all your being. He will manifest immediately, why not? God is everywhere. So, only when your whole being is possessed by God is this 'Me' completely absent.

isvarah sarvabhutaanaam hrddeserjuna tisthati bhraamayansarvabhutaani yantraarudhaani
maayayaa

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

'Arjuna, God dwells in the heart of 'all' beings.' We are conditioned to thinking that only human beings in this world are our friends. All the others are non-human beings. 'God dwells in all beings' means in all that exists - this microphone, this glass of water, this carpet. Whatever being there is, in me, between you and me, in every speck of space. God dwells in the heart of all beings; in every atom of existence. We have a nice habit of saying 'God dwells in my heart'. Poor thing. God dwells everywhere, but I do not recognise that He is everywhere. I close my eyes and I think of God in my heart, a lovely little God, like a little dog. Then I sit and mediate. This may help me. But unless I am vigilant, I shall become a terrible egoist, believing that God is in my heart and I

am meditating to four hours in the morning - and nobody should disturb me. At 7 o'clock, my tea must be ready, because I am meditating upon God and she, who serve me, will get a free ticket to heaven. This leads to all sorts of absurdities.

'God dwells in the hearts of 'all' beings'. If your consciousness cannot rise above this body, if you are so dull-witted that you cannot do anything else, then please sit down, think of God in the right side of your chest where the spiritual heart is. There is very good reason for thinking this way. Those of you who are fixing your attention on the heart, on the physical heart, and meditating on the presence of God there, if you are anxious, and if you sit tense and tight, fixing your attention - attention of most people means tension, grinding your teeth and at the same time thinking of your heart, your blood pressure will rise. So, at least think of another heart on the right side, and at least you will not suffer from blood pressure.

Elsewhere in the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna says:

vistabhyaahamidam krtsnamekaamekaamsena sthito jagat
I exist, supporting this whole world by one part of My Self. X:42

'Arjuna, I pervade the entire universe by just one part of My being'. If you try to visualise entire space within yourself, you will go insane. The Infinite cannot be measured by the intellect, by the mind. Yet, in order to enable you to break this 'Me' and realise the Omnipresence of God, you are allowed to visualise God in any form you like.

yo yo yaam yaam tanum bhaktah sraddhayaarcitum icchati tasya tasyaacalaam sraddhaam
taameva vidadhaamyaham
Whatsoever form any devotee desires to worship with faith - that (same) faith of his I make firm and unflinching. VII:21

This is fantastic freedom, and God-love only manifests in freedom. Where there is no freedom, there is no love. I cannot love God unless I am free to love. Therefore, Krishna says, 'Look, do not worry what God looks like.' It does not matter. What appeals to your heart is the most vital factor. God is beyond all conception. Yet, since He is omnipresent, one can worship Him anywhere, in any form, in any manner.

This freedom is inherent in Indian religion and is reiterated in the Bhagavad Gita. Think of God in any form, because He is present in all forms. He is the reality of the mediator, the devotee. I am sitting here, visualising a form of God within myself. What is 'this' made of? The question is not meant to be answered, but if you look close, this inside is made of God too. This that I see here, within me, is made of consciousness and that is God. So, one can visualise this God in any manner one likes, and there is freedom of worship.

patram pusyam phalam toyam yo me bhaktyaa prayacchati tadaham bhaktyuoahrtamasnaami
prayataatmanah
Whoever offers Me with devotion and a pure mind (heart), a leaf, a flower, a fruit or a little water - I accept (this offerings). IX:26

How must I worship? Must I kneel down, or bang my head on the floor? Must I

fall flat on the ground, or offer a large donation? Do anything you like. What is demanded here is 'with love in your heart'. Whatever you give, whether it be just a fruit or a flower, a little water, it does not matter. What matter is love, devotion. What is devotion? Krishna does not mention it here. Krishna merely says the devotees love to talk of God constantly. In other words, all the time they talk about Him. They are completely self-forgetful. In some scriptures, descriptions are given of great devotees of God who, in a state of ecstasy, have tears flowing down their faces. These are beautiful descriptions but are only external marks of ecstasy.

How does one distinguish devotion from emotion? Look at the words. Emotion is externalised motion: 'I love him, I love her, I love it'. When my consciousness flows outwards, it is emotion. To love everybody means to love 'no-body'.

What is devotion? It is motion in depth within me. There should be no externalisation. The opposite of emotion is devotion, or depth; the fountain which see the truth, which loves the Truth, which loves God deep within, not only here but there, every where, deep within.' Let me behold Thee in all these names and forms', as we repeat in the Universal Prayer. In the depth of all these names and forms, there is the Divinity. When the mind constantly moves in to this depth, then the light of God is experienced. Until then we are only loving forms. So, devotion or Bhakti is not love of form, though I may make use of forms. Because God is in all, I may worship a picture or a stone image, provided I realise that this is not God. This form is not God, because he has no limitations - but in the depth of this image, there is God. When I reach the depth of the image, I suddenly realise that in the depth of all beings, including this being, there is God How shall I worship Him? In any manner I like.

tameva saranam gaccha sarvabhaavena bhaaratha tatprasaadaatparaam saantim sathssnam
praapsyasisaasvatannm

Fly unto Him for refuge with all thy being, O Arjuna; By his Grace thou shalt obtain
supreme peace (and) the external abode. XVIII:62

Krishna tells us: 'Worship the Lord with all your being and with all your feelings'. Treating God as 'All', my husband is God, my wife is God, my children are god, my parents are God, and my teachers - all are God. They are not Gods, little, medium of large. God has no shape or form. I only use these images because of my own limitations. God is never limited. Krishna allows us to use any method but the method that He recommends is:

mayyaavesya mano ye maam nityayuktaa upaasate sradhayaa parayopetaste me
yuktatamaamataah

Those who, fixing their mind Me, worship Me, ever steadfast and endowed with supreme
faith, these are the best in Yoga in My opinion. XII:2

Mayi aavesya - 'Do not try to squeeze Me into your heart, but put heart in Me.'
The literal translation is 'Introduce your mind into Me'. I am everywhere, but your mind is veiled, covered by ignorance. Put your mind into Me and I will burn that veil. You will become 'one' with Me. Do not try push Me into you, for then you will fail, you will burst. Enter your mind into Me, enter your intelligence into

Me, enter into Me. You cannot stand outside and look at Me, because I am all-pervading. Get into Me and then meditate. When you enter your consciousness in Me, meditation is easy, wonderful, because whether you turn within or outside yourself, above below, to your right, to your left, in front, behind, every where, you will see only Me. This is the beautiful Bhakti that Krishna recommends.

Then another description is nitya-yukta - constantly united. Yukti is the same as yoga; nitya-yukta is practicing this Yoga constantly. These are the greatest yogis, they are my devotees. 'How can I constantly think of God?' Someone says, 'Look, Swami, I have got to live my normal life. I have got to manage a theatre: there are actors and actresses and a stage-manager to think about, whilst I worry about the box-office and all sort of other things. How shall I constantly think of God?' This question arises because it becomes extremely difficult for us to live in the spirit of God's omnipresence, because of our own past Samskaras, our own inheritance of ignorance, our own conditioning from birth to birth. These limitations make it almost impossible for us to live in the spirit of truth.

When I read the 12th chapter entitled 'Bhakti Yoga', I feel happy. Here God says, 'Whatever you do, I will not give you up. If you cannot do this, then try that. If you cannot do even that, please try the next one.' It is almost a pleading tone:

atha cittam samaadhaatum na saknosi mayi sthiram abhaasagogenata tato maamicchaaptum dhanamjaya

If thou art unable to fix thy mind steadily on me, then by the Yoga of constant practice do thou seek to reach Me, O Arjuna. XI:9

Krishna says, 'Please try to think of me often'. If you cannot think of me constantly, think of Me sometimes, even three or four times a day.

abhyaasepyasamarthosi matkarmaparamo bhava madarthamapi karmaani kurvansiddhimavaasyasi

If thou art unable to practice even this Abhyasa Yoga, be thou intent on doing actions for My sake; even by doing actions for my sake, thou shalt attain perfection. XII:10

If you say that cannot possibly sit down and think of Me and take a mala and repeat My name, that is alright. Then do all your work for My sake. There is only one thing, do not shout at your subordinate, 'For God's sake, get out!' If we do everything for God's sake, then let everything be soft and sweet. Do whatever you are doing for God's sake, so that in the back of your mind, you have the feeling that 'There is God and I am doing all this for His sake - He is not going to give me up'.

If I am going to pray to God, how must I do it? I mechanically repeat 'Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya', then I remember 'Oh, I have not paid the electrically bill this month. If only God pays the bill, I could meditate.' Krishna says even that is alright. This is the most beautiful thing, when god comes down to our level and woos us.

caturvidhaa bhajante miam janaah sukrtinorjuna arto jijnaasurararthartha jnaani ca bharatarshabha

For kinds of virtuous men worship Me, O Arjuna, and they are the distressed, the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of wealth and the wise, O Lord of the Bharataas. VII:16

Four types of people come to Me: the man, worried about his sickness, wanting to be cured; the poor man who needs money; the student, the theologian, wanting to discover what I am, analysing and tearing me into pieces, to find out what god looks like; then the jnaani, the wise man, who has no motive, no desire, but says, 'Look God, you are my own self, so I cannot help but be devoted to you.'

udaaraah sarva evaite jnaani tvaatmaiva me matam aasthitah sa hi yuktaatmaa
maamevaanuttamaam gatim

Noble indeed are all these; but I deem the wise man as My very self; for steadfast in mind he is established in Me alone as the supreme goal. VII:18

All these are good people; but the jnaani is My Own self. There is no mention here that God is going to fulfill all our prayers.

One may approach this God with whatever motive one likes. If I touch the fire, it will burn me, no matter what the motive is, even if it is that of pure love. In the same way, whatever be the motive with which we love God, eventually it must do its work - it must burn up our impurities and so purify us. People ask: 'How many years must I meditate and do japa?' May be two years, may be 2.000 years. What harm is there if you have to be here for another 2.000 years?

Krishna woos and attracts us all. He brings God down to our level. We are attracted, and then we are not satisfied until we become one with God. This is what happens in Bhakti Yoga. God loves us, He tempts us to go to Him. Whatever our motive is does not seem to matter at all, you just sit there, love God and meditate upon Him. 'Wonderful; I have joy, ecstasy,' and then the me does not exist any more.

sarvadharmaanparityajya maamekam saranam vraja aham tvaa sarvapaapbhyo mokshayisyaami
maa suca

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

It is this love that frees us completely from fear. It is this love that frees us completely from grief and sorrow. Surrender your whole self, your entire self to God. The moment you have surrendered, you have become one with God. 'I will free you from all sins.' Sin is nothing but an action done in a state of ignorance. In this state of ignorance, we do commit many sins, many actions, and we are 'punished' in this dream of world existence. When we become 'one' with God and we awaken from this slumber of ignorance, when this dream comes to an end, there is no sin, there is no suffering.

Lecture 7

The ways of God often appears to be rather strange and interesting. The other day, we were discussing the nature of Reality. We tried to compare God, the Ultimate Reality, to some sort of a Cosmic Being. The world could be compared to this cosmic Body in which we are all tiny cells.

I read a delightful article in the 'Readers Digest', explaining how a germ entering the body is fought by other cells in the body. The cells behave as though they have an independent intelligence and total free-will. One details which caught my imagination is that white cells function even after death. This means that one of the vital life forces functions even after I am dead. So, even after death, my defence mechanism is still active. According to Hatha Yoga, the pranas goes on functioning after life has left the body; in other words, part of the vital life force functions even after death. These vital defenders of our organism are manufactured in the spinal marrow. Those of you who have studied Hatha Yoga, especially Laya Yoga or Kundalini Yoga, will recall that all the vital centres, the chakras, are located within the spinal cord. There are suggestive similarities between these descriptions. So, if we are all cells in the body of God, we should function more or less in the same way as the body's cells - beautifully, harmoniously and lovingly. According to the author, diseased conditions, disharmony, are produced only when a germ invades the body from the outside. So, why is it that we, if we are all cells in the Cosmic Body of god, are at loggerheads with one another? Why is there no harmony in our life? Why is there is perpetual carving for this and that? The cells in my body do not feel sorrow, they are not restless, they are active. We must learn to distinguish between being active and being restless. Work and worry are also two different things. God created work, man created worry.

Let us go back to this cell in the body of God. The cell in my body, according to our view, has no egoism, no thought. How do we know? We do not know the truth, but we think this is so. The problem is still this: that it is because of this ego, this thought, that I think differently from you. If the ego were absent, this disharmony would vanish. And what is the ego? Our master used to say, the ego is the first thought, the root thought. First of all, there is this thought 'I', then you add on lots of other thoughts. Cartesian philosophy says 'cogito ergo sum' - 'I think, therefore I am.' It may not be so. It may be: 'I am, therefore I think.'

It is interesting if you take the following example. The very fond husband presented his wife with a beautiful watch on their second wedding anniversary. Years have passed, she has grown old and the watch has now only sentimental value. Still, she does not want to throw it away, she wants to use it; so, she keeps on replacing the watch part by part, so that, fifty years later, there is not a single thing in that watch which was there when the husband presented it to her. Yet she still goes about showing it, 'you know, my husband gave it to me on our second wedding anniversary.' But no, it is not the original any more, all that remains is the idea. So, perhaps 'I' is only an idea.

It is up to each one of us to come to grips with this problem and to see what this 'I' is. It cannot be grasped by hearing from someone else's lips. Perhaps this thing you and I call 'I' is just an idea, composed of a hundred thousand things. Krishna mentioned this in the 13th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita:

mahaabhutaanyahankaoro buddhiravyaktameva ca indriyaani dasaikam ca panca
cendriyagocaraah

The great elements, egoism, intellect and also the Unmanifested Nature, the ten senses and one, and the five objects of the senses. XII:5

icchaa dvesah sukham duhkham sanghaatasacetanaa dhrtih etatkshetram samaasena
savikaaramudaahrtam

Desire, hatred, pleasure, pain, the aggregate (the body), intelligence, fortitude - the field has thus been briefly described with its modifications. XII:6

All these put together, the elements of which the physical body is composed - the senses, the mind, the intellect, the ego sense - all these represent the field of desires, of hates, the feelings of pleasure and pain, which are our inheritance. Somebody may say: 'We inherit all these from our own past incarnation.' Somebody else may say: 'No, it is hereditary.' Others attribute them to group consciousness. We must remember that all this is the ground of the field the kshetra. When I say 'I know the field', the word 'I' is not the 'I' used in our everyday language. The one that is conscious of this field, including this ego sense, that is the Self. This ego is nothing but a field - a conditioned, limited, ignorant being - the child of ignorance. If we are able to remove thought, including the first thought called 'I', then we shall behave like the individual cell in our body, a harmonious part of the whole. This is wonderful.

If we are able to remove this thought, go beyond it, we now enter a realm where there are no words. When the intellect has been silenced and therefore the ego has faded away, what remains is God. Now there is only spontaneous activity. If we met some of these great Masters, like Gurudev Sivananda, we would understand this. It is not possible to understand it intellectually, rationally. Because of our own conditioning, we are aware of only two things - either a man is stupid, or he is instinctual, automatic. We are not conscious of another dimension, of spontaneous activity. We are conscious of only these two things - either the deep sleep state of stupid ignorance, or the state of diverse perception, called thinking. We are not conscious of another dimension called Samadhi or God-consciousness. It is not possible to describe this, to explain it, nor rationally to understand it.

saktaah karmanyavidvaamso yathaa kurvanti bhaarata
kuryaavidvaamstathaasaktascikirsurlokasamgraham

As the ignorant men act from attachment to action, O Bharata (Arjuna), so should the wise act without attachment, wishing the welfare of the world. III:25

These great ones, to all appearances, live and behave like us. Inwardly they are completely different. Whereas you and I are ruled by thought, they have reached a realm beyond thought. Can I understand it? How? By thinking. Somebody says, 'You know, I think ...', but during meditation we do not think at all. We are only thinking that we do not think and that is only another thought. How to get there

is the problem.

yatroparamate cittam niruddham yogasevayaa yatracaivaatmaanam pasyannaatmani tusyati
When the mind, restrained by the practice of Yoga attains to quietude and when seeing
the Self by the Self, he is satisfied in his own Self. VI:20

The Bhagavad Gita describes this state beautifully. When the Chitta - mind becomes quiescent, the whole mind stops - conscious, sub-conscious, super conscious, ultra super conscious - all these put together are the chitta. When this chitta becomes quiet, I go to sleep. You say later, 'I had two hours of wonderful meditation'. But you have only developed the extraordinary faculty of sitting and sleeping.

The second line is especially beautiful. It is only possible for me to give you a literal translation of it, 'In which state seeing the Self by the Self, one is blissful in the Self.' What does this mean to us? I think I am blissful. That is thinking. You are still caught upon the weaves. You must learn to dive deeper. It is like diving in the Pacific Ocean and coming out in the Atlantic ocean. You cannot say, 'I have hit the rock bottom of the Pacific ocean.' Even that is not enough. You must go through the crust of the earth and come out in the Atlantic. Then we have learned Yoga. How do we do it? Krishna tells us:

yam labdhvaa caaparam laabham manyate naadhikam tatah yasmin sthito na dukhena gurunaapi
vicaalyate
Which, having obtained, he thinks there is no other gain superior to it; wherein
established, he is not moved even by heavy sorrow'. I:22
tam vidyaaddukhasamyogam yogasamjnitam sa miscayena yoktavayo yogo nirvinna cetasaa
Let that be known by the name of Yoga, the severance from union with pain. This Yoga
should be practised with determination and with an undesponding mind. VI:23

This is how Krishna defines Yoga. He does not assert 'This is Yoga'. If He does, He is caught. As soon as you define Yoga, it is destroyed. So He just says, 'This is called Yoga'. How do we describe this? 'Yam labdhvaa caaparam laabham manyate naadhikam tatah.' - 'One who has got it, he is quite satisfied', is the literal translation. This is not like the satisfaction one gets when the mind becomes dull, after enjoyment. You are excited, you want this, you want that, you go and smoke, have a couple of drinking, dance and you are tired, you come back and collapse. This is dullness; you get no satisfaction. Why? Because early the next morning, it starts all over again; that is not satisfaction. Here in Yoga, you have permanent satisfaction - all desires come to an end, there are no problems any more, there are no cravings any more, there is fulfilment. Then Krishna says: 'yasmin sthito na dukhena gurunaapi vicaalyate' - 'if one is established in this, he is not shaken by the worst calamity.' You and I will start weeping and crying, turning our house into hell, if something is lost - a child or a husband. But where is the loss? He left this place and went somewhere else, why must I cry for him? Selfishness again. If we understand the spirit, the truth, there is no loss. If I say, 'It is my loss' - ah, that is it - some thing which was mine is no longer mine.

Even if the worst calamity befalls him, the yogi is not shaken. Why is that? Because he is rooted in this state called Yoga, and there is no thought, no effort.

In this all-pervading Omnipresent Being, there is no ego, no 'I-ness', no pettiness, no mineness, no possession. All belong to all; therefore, there is no loser. It is not possible for this Omnipresent Being to lose anything. Therefore, he goes beyond the possibility of contact with pain. You cannot say, 'Oh, I do not experience any pain now. So I must be a good Yogi'. If there is any possibility of future pain, you are not a good yogi. When will the possibility be destroyed? When there is no thought. What must I do to get rid of these thoughts? I must take one thought and drive it out. Then what do I do with the next thought? Keep on for 275 years, if you live as long as that. That is the problem which yogis and mystics all over the world have faced. But how can one teach anyone how to reach this state? Each Yoga teacher and master has given us a different technique. Somebody has said, 'Sit and repeat Om'. Very good. It is possible to enjoy the thought-less state for a split second. With great effort, this is about the maximum that one can achieve. Others have said, 'Concentrate on inhalation and exhalation', then you might, by mistake, experience that thoughtless state after about 20 years of practice. Others have said, 'Sit down, visualise the Kundalini, the Chakras, and merge your consciousness'. Very good too. Whatever be the method. It can only lead us so far and no further.

Some Zen masters do not allow you to sit for meditation practice for a long time a stretch; they think you become dull. After about half an hour you may doze off and become semi-conscious. They say you must keep moving every forty-five minutes, to overcome dullness. Get up, put a little more life into yourself, then meditate again. Swami Muktananda says, 'Sit down for 3 or 4 hours, it is only when you stretch it that far that you enjoy some meditation'. Wonderful. Patanjali happens to have mentioned in his Yoga Sutras, that control of mind may be had in several ways, such as austerity and inheritance. One can be a self-controlled person at birth, like Ramana Maharishi, for instance. Patanjali has mentioned the word Ashadam, meaning medicinal herb. From this, a huge cult has developed and smoking ganja has also become an aid to meditation. This drug has to be prepared and smoked in a certain way. As the effect of the drug takes place, whatever you are doing at that moment, will last for the duration. If you are laughing, you will laugh for ten hours. If you want to meditate, you sit there, bolt upright and take a nice puff, and that is all. So long as the effect lasts, you are going to sit there. Wonderful. Why not? You have no thought, no ego-consciousness, you are sleeping. This is why the whole chitta must become completely quiescent. How did Krishna deal with this problem?

sucan dese pratisthaapya sthiramaasanamaatmanah naatyucchritam naatincicum
cailaajinakuottaram

In a clean spot, having established a firm seat of his own, neither too high nor too low, made of a cloth, a skin, and kusa-grass one over the other. VI:11

tatraikaagram manah krtvaa yatacittendriyakriyah upavisyaasane
yunjyadyogamaatmavisuddhaye

There having made the mind one-pointed, with the actions of the mind and the sense controlled, let him, seated on the seat, practise Yoga for the purification of the self. VI:12

saman kaayasirogrivam shaarayannacalam sthirah samprakshya naasikaagram svam
disascaanavalokayan

Let him firmly hold his body, head and neck erect and still, gazing at the tip of his nose, without looking around. VI:13

First, 'Find a pure place with good vibrations', like this lovely Yoga School, with a beautiful carpet, incense sticks, lovely flowers, atmosphere etc, and you sit here. Now - 'Do not sit on the floor.' But, if you happen to sit down and one day something bites you once, afterwards it is not possible to meditate there. 'Do not sit too high up' - when you are trying to meditate, sometimes meditation may come, sometimes sleep may come. If you have not cultivated the habit of sleeping erect, then you may fall down. Sit on something soft - a grass mat or a deerskin and then a piece of cloth.

Look at Krishna's instructions, 'Sit with your body, head and neck erect in one straight line; look steadily in front of your nose. Do not look here and there.' Then the climax. 'Sit there and do not think at all.'

sanaih sanairupamedhuddaya dhrtigrhitayaa aatmasamstham manah krtvaa na kincidapi cintayet

'Little by little, let him attain to quietude by the intellect held firmly; having made the mind establish itself in the Self, let him not think of anything.'

It is wonderful. He gives us step by step instructions. We thought He would take us from here up to heaven. But suddenly there is a bombshell, 'Sit erect and do not think'.

This is the only problem. Instead of having a grass mat, I can have caution. Instead of having a tiger skin, I can have my own skin, that is not the problem. The problem is, how not to think! There is no technique which can break the barrier. Gurudev used to say that when he used the word 'meditation', what He actually meant was repeating a mantra and visualisation the form of God. Is this meditation? No, it is only visualisation and mental activity. As long as there is mental activity, there is no meditation. But that is all that we can do. You can try other methods or invent your own. The Guru, the Master, the great yogis, can help us to this stage. After that we have to find out where the source of thought is.

How does thought arise? Did you hear that noise ... What happened? There was a noise, some sort of vibration entered - the ear oscillated the eardrum and three little bones responded. This vibration was conveyed to some section of the brain. When and where did it become metamorphosed into a thought? The brain only receives sensations, vibrations from the different senses - when and where and how are these sensations decoded into thoughts? When you touch a glass, the fingertips pick up some vibrations. These vibrations are conveyed by nerves into the brain. Light falls on the glass and these light vibrations are conveyed to another center of the brain. Suddenly I know it is a glass of water. Where do these words arise? If I do not like water, but I like a glass of wine, where was that feeling formed? We can try various methods of arriving the knowledge of source of thought. Not according to what the psychologists and doctors say, but according to 'you'. Can I become aware of this thought formation within? What prevents it? What is the obstacle? Arjuna asks: Krishna, You have made it so simple. 'Sit erect and do not think'. I think it is impossible. Arjuna thinks it is

impossible, because the nature of mind is to be restless. 'How am I going to control it'? Then Krishna says:

asamsayam mahaabaaho mano durnigraham calam abhyaasena tu kauntreya vairaagyena ca grhyate

Undoubtedly, O might-armed Arjuna, the mind is difficult to control and restless; but by practice and by dispassion it may be restrained. VI:35

Why I am not able to control the mind? Firstly because I am in a hurry, and secondly, I want to control the mind, but I also want other things. I want to enjoy myself, I want to join the Yoga class, I want to sit down and go into Samadhi. Three fourths of my heart want worldly enjoyment and one fourth wants to enter into Samadhi. It is very difficult, says Krishna. On the one hand, there must be 'continuous persistent practice' and on the other, there must be 'a weaning away from pleasure hunting.' Vairagya cannot be translated directly - it is dispassion, etc., but it also means no pleasure-hunting.

Gurudev expresses this very beautifully. He says, 'Detach the mind from the word attach it to God.' This is vairagya and abhyasa. This is dispassion and practice. On one side, I go on practising, attaching the mind to God - on the other, I am not loosening my grip on the world. So I will be torn, tortured. If I detach myself from the world and do not attach the mind to God, then I will become restless and neurotic. The two must go together. To detach the mind from the world does not mean that I will not drink a glass of water, or sit on a soft cushion. If I say, 'I must have a bed of nails,' then I am getting attached to the bed of nails. If I do not like to see anything beautiful, I have probably cultivated a liking for something ugly - which is a double loss. Pleasure seeking must disappear - at the same time, the mind must be more and more attached to God. And Krishna assures us:

paartha naiveha naamutra vinaasastasya vidyate nahi kalyaankrtkasciddurgatim taata gacchati

O Arjuna, neither in this world, nor in the next world is there destruction for him; verily, who does good, O My son, ever comes to grief. VI:40

Do not worry. 'Oh, I started practicing Yoga and meditation late in life. If I do not get God in another ten or fifteen months, may be I will die.' 'You do not die. I am the immortal Self. I am the Immortal Atman.' So, even if in this incarnation I do not reach Self-realization, never mind, just carry on. We are assured by the Divine that no effort in the right direction is wasted. So we go on striving, birth after birth, live after life - until we reach Perfection.

Lecture 8

In the Gita, Krishna gives us a comprehensive aspect of meditation. We can only go up to a certain stage. What is that stage? Krishna clearly enunciates it. You cannot capture God. The word Self-realisation seems to suggest that you are going to create the self - because, to realise is to make real. But is Self-realisation to make the Self real? No. The fault is in the expression itself. We are not going to make the Self real or make God real. We are going to purify ourselves.

upavisyaane yunjyaadyogamaatmavisuddhaye
Let him, seated on the seat, practise Yoga for the purification of the self. VI:12

It is very important to get this clear. How is this self-purification done? We discussed earlier that the problem of our life is 'me' and selfish desire. We have discussed the answer to Arjuna's question, 'Why does somebody say that you are a fool, that you did something wrong, if everything is done by Divine Will? Then, what is sin? Sin is kama - not only lust in the sexual sense. Sin is all craving, all desire. Therefore, in describing the genesis of desire, Krishna throws a very beautiful hint. It is up to you to take up this hint and work upon it.

dhyaayato visayaanpumsah sangastesupajaayate sangaat sanjaayate kaamah
kaamaatkrodhobhijaayate
When a man thinks of the objects, attachment for them arises; from attachment desire is born; from desire anger arises. II:62

When does this lust or desire arise in our mind? When a man meditates upon an object. Why does he meditate upon an object? Have we ever asked ourselves this question? Obviously, we only think of an object associated with happiness, pleasure, enjoyment.

The next question is: how does the mind know that there is enjoyment in having that object, in possessing it, in being near it, in coming into contact with it? In this contemplation of the object of enjoyment, a link has been established. The mind has fixed a label upon it and then wants a repetition of that pleasure. If the mind did not interfere in the first instance, naming it, regarding it as pleasure, giving it a value, it would not go back to it.

Take for instance a natural appetite for food. There is hunger - it is natural - and so, immediately the hunger is appeased, the whole thing is finished. It is not forgotten, it was never registered as a pleasure. But take for instance, sex. Why does one brood over it? Because sex has the label of delight, joy pleasure, attached to it. Only the mind has given it a value far above its inherent value - and probably it has no inherent value. Why does it become an obsession? Because of the interference of the mind.

You know Jesus said that unless we become like little children, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Those of you who are mothers, who have breast-fed your children, know that the baby is not terribly worried to see you naked, is it? The baby is not excited, is it. And yet, why is it that the very same thing, the very same

part of the human anatomy become exciting for a young man? A piece of flesh has no value, unless it is linked with thoughts of past pleasure. Unless we become like that little child and treat this whole body as a lump of flesh, our mind is not innocent.

It is when the mind has a mental image of a past experience of pleasure projected on to an object, that the link is established. Then desire arises, otherwise there is no craving in the heart of man if this process is cut somewhere. If there is no dhyana on objects of enjoyment, and if that dhyana is cut, then there is no craving.

Meditation is vital to our life, because it is only in meditation that we come face to face with this structure within. Can I discover for myself, can I actually perceive where a light wave entering the eyeball through the retina and passing into the visual centre, is converted into a woman? How is this conversion done? Where are these sense stimuli converted into words, thoughts, ideas? Once you know this, it is then that you can switch a thought on and off at will. One problem is over; we have found the switch. But this is not meditation, it is not God-realisation, nor Self-realisation. We have solved one vital problem - the mind does not work automatically any more.

Again a very important pronouncement in the Gita - there is a natural affinity and antagonism in nature. You may be the most wonderful Yogi on earth, but the electricity does not think so. So, immediately you try to handle a the wire - the hand pulls away. All this is natural, quite natural. If you leave it at that, there is no image in the mind. My hand pulls away from this wire, not because it does not like the wire, but because of its natural tendencies. Here, there is no desire or hatred, there is no craving to take the hand away, there is no hatred for the wire, there is just a natural function.

Again and again, please recall to mind the behaviours of a little baby of less than six months old. That baby is God. There may be a couple of devils hidden inside, which will develop later on when it grows of course, but the baby is divine; it has no enemy, no friend. It does not regard anyone as superior or inferior. It does not hate anyone, it does not love any one specially. This is the purest state - the state of total innocence. In the state that we find ourselves in now, and being conditioned to this state of non-innocence, it is no use deceiving ourselves that we can attain to this state of babyhood. For, what happens now? I think that I have attained to this state of babyhood, innocence. I can as well think I am a multimillionaire. It is only thinking, it does not happen in actuality.

So, when you and I assume innocence, we are only thinking we are innocent. Am I innocent or not? Who can tell? Can you tell me if I am innocent or not? If you do, you are being foolish, projecting your own idea upon me. I must look within and find out.

Since my eyes can only look outside, since my senses can only flow outwards, I am looking at this object - prejudiced by an image formed earlier, a previous

experience. No matter what has happened to this object in the meantime, I still go by the previous label, called prejudice. Bernard Shaw said that the only sensible man in the world is the tailor. Every time we go to him to have a suit made, he takes our measurements a new; the rest of the world says, 'When he was a little boy, he was already a fool. Once a fool, always a fool'. Good heavens, he might have changed since then. That image in your mind which you have preserved so carefully and which you worship daily, that is the image to be broken. In meditation, I discover that all my life is conditioned by this memory.

This does not mean that memory is bad and absent mindedness is good. Please remember that, in the Bhagavad Gita, one of the definitions given for the word yoga is 'karmasu kaushalam' - super efficiency in all activities is Yoga, not dreaming, not wool-gathering, not absent-mindedness. If you are inefficient, you are inefficient, not a Yogi. If you are a Yogi, you will be extremely efficient. Absent-mindedness is not transcendence of memory. When you think it is a contact that is going to create a craving, meditation enables us to switch off breaking the contact. To put it even more plainly: if I, as a disciple, see my Guru, I have complete and total memory of that relationship. In our relationship, although there might have been unpleasant things, memories I want to throw away, if I sift again - put it through a sieve, examine it thoroughly, I see that these memories lead me upwards, are spiritually uplifting. So I cherish them. But when other memories come back and I realise, 'Oh no, this is negative thought', I switch off. That is not absent-mindedness, it is a deliberate transcendence.

Therefore, meditation is important. Where is this link, where is this conversion made within me? Where are these sensations converted into ideas? And then, where does this idea get the label of pleasant, unpleasant, good, or good, wicked or holy? Can I actually feel it? Can I see this thing taking place within my mind, within my brain? If I can, then I have not it. From a sensation, a thought or idea is formed. This produces a feeling which then becomes a desire or craving. This problem must be solved. The mind must become totally innocent, free from love and hatred - because love and hatred are attraction and repulsion, and belong to the world of matter. My senses will react to these objects in strict accordance with the laws that govern matter. There is no harm in that, if I can stop the thing there, and realise that it is my senses-organs of perception and action, each moving amongst its own objects. When I see that it is the senses responding to the sense objects, then there is no attraction and repulsion deep down in my personality.

evam buddheh param buddhvaa samstabhayaatmaanamaatmanaa jahi satrum mahaabaaho
kaamarupam duraasadam

Thus knowing him who is superior to the intellect and restraining the self by the self,
slay thou, O mighty armed Arjuna, the enemy in the form of desire, hard to conquer.
III:43

Krishna says, 'Conquer this thing called craving. Arjuna'. Let us remind ourselves again that anger or hatred is only the other side of evening or desire. They are not two different things. Hatred is born of attachment. The more attached you are to someone or something, the more you will come to hate it,

sooner or later. You cannot have one side alone, you cannot have attachment alone, it must lead to hatred. So, this craving must be destroyed. How can it be destroyed? There is a chain - you break one link, you have destroyed the chain - and you are free. That is all you need to do. Krishna describes the chain very beautiful:

indriyaani paraanyaahuh indriyebhyah param manah manasastu paraa buddhiryo buddheh paratastu sah

They say that the senses are superior (to the body); superior to the sense is the mind; superior to the mind is the intellect; one who is superior even to the intellect is He (the Self). III:42

Indriyas or senses are superior to the outside world. Supposing I have been blind from birth, I can watch a beauty parade and meditate there with open eyes - it means nothing to me. Supposing I am stone deaf - an orchestra means nothing to me. In the same way, if our senses are dead, the world has no value, absolutely no value. Perhaps you remember that it was Shakespeare who said that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. That is what Krishna said in a different way, 'The beholder is more important than the object he beholds'.

I am not blind, I am not deaf, I am quite normal. I am sitting somewhere in a park, or on a bench, looking at all the people coming and going. Someone dear is dead or seriously ill. I am sitting there with open eyes, but my mind is terribly worried. If you have had this experience, you know that nothing interests you then - nothing at all. The mind has gone away. Has disconnected itself from the sense of sight. When my mind disconnects itself from the sense organs, the objects do not have any value. So, my mind is superior to the senses.

Greater than the mind is the Buddhi, though Buddhi is translated in so many ways as discrimination and reasoning etc. Buddhi is an alert, awakened intelligence. Now, what does a alert and awakened intelligence do in the case of, let us say, a normal non-yogic person? You can try this. Go to a supermarket with some friends. Go around the enter supermarket and afterwards, give them a piece of paper and ask them to note down what they saw. You will be amazed. They saw the same stalls, the same things displayed, but you will be surprised at the different list each one produces. What makes for this differentiation? The value that you attach to things. A lady might be interested in the jewellery or dresses, a little boy does not care about dresses, he is only interested in the latest toys. It is this Buddhi, this alert intelligence, functioning through the mind, using the mental faculties and the sense faculties, which picks and chooses. The choice is made by this alert intelligence.

I am looking at the mind. What is the mind doing? The mind is not interested in the object right in front of me; it is still interested in some image within. Who chooses that image? Who has given it the value to be there? In your consciousness, at one time, the alert intelligence had unfortunately put a label on this saying. 'It is an object of pleasure'. The mind has kept it as an image and preserved it. What must I do? Tell this alert intelligence: 'Do not look this side, turn back to the other side'.

Far superior to this buddhi, which is your own alert intelligence, is He, the Lord within. The 'I' does not enter into the picture at all here. Do you know why? The 'I' is a non-existent entity God made man in His own image. The next time you look into your mirror, will you ask yourself this question please, 'Is the image in the mirror real or not?' You cannot answer this question, as there is no answer. You cannot say it is not real, as you are seeing it. If you say it is real, I am going to say, 'Please give that image to me'. The moment you hand me the mirror, that image has gone, and my image has come. We are not interested in explanations, we are only interested in seeing that is what we call the 'I' is an image - here we have 'I' as a contraction of image. So, the thing called 'I' is an image of god within.

This image is planted in the Buddhi, is a small section of consciousness, and there it shines as 'I'. But we are not concerned with that. We are concerned with the mirror and the reality. You hold the mirror in front of you, and the sense, the mind, the mirror, the Buddhi, which are turned towards the world, reflect the world, become worldly Reality is beyond all this. When the mirror is facing the world, the nuisance starts - the craving, the passion, and the delusion. If this mirror is turned to face the Reality within, then we are Divine. There is no craving any more, and once his craving is gone, you and I becomes totally and completely innocent.

yo maan pasyati sarvatra sarvam ca mayi pasyati tasyaaham na pranasyaami sa ca na
pranasyati

He who sees me everywhere and sees everything in Me, he never becomes separated from Me,
nor do I become separated from him. VI:30

When a person becomes completely innocent, totally devoid of craving desire, lust, such a person beholds God and God alone everywhere, and he says, 'He is not lost to me, and I am not lost to Him. He thinks of me constantly, and I think of Him constantly.' Why? Because there is this unity, oneness. When the 'I' is removed from our consciousness, it does not exist. We have created it out of our own image. When this 'I' is removed, then there is this total oneness, Cosmic consciousness. Krishna says:

ananyaascintayanto maam ye janaah paryupaasate tesaam nityaabhiyuktaanaam yogakshemam
vahaamyaham

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

'Arjuna, when a person reaches this stage, when he is constantly meditating on Me, constantly thinking of Me, then I look after his welfare'. If I had been there, I would have asked Krishna, 'If you only look after the good people, who looks after these wicked fellows?' God looks after even the wicked people Krishna says, 'I look after the person who is constantly thinking of Me.' The snag here is how is it possible for me to think of God constantly and yet be active in this world?

Krishna Himself says you must be active in this world. The whole universe is created on the principle of dynamism. Then, if I am going to be active in this world, if I am going to participate in the activities of this world, if I am going to be

efficient in this world. If I am going to deal with all sorts of people in this world, is it possible for me, at the same time to be constantly thinking of God? Krishna asks 'Why not? Because I and I alone, exist in all as the All.' This is very important, because the perception of the Omnipresence of God is not thinking that God is Omnipresent. The moment thought enters into any of these things, the Reality is destroyed. Reality is always distorted by thought. Reality can be experienced only in the absence of thought. If I think I am seeing God everywhere, I am bluffing myself.

In the Gita, there is the expression, 'He, the wise man, will look upon a nugget of gold and a stone with equal vision'. What does it mean? Give to every object the value that is inherent in it - no more, no less. Then you are able to see Oneness everywhere, because it is God and God Himself who is manifest as All-in-all.

In order to do this, Krishna has given us Vibhuti Yoga. When certain objects are mentioned - the sun, the moon, a holy man, a wise man, etc, your mind is naturally elevated. For example, take a holy man, and immediately you think of holiness. Eventually our thoughts must spread, until we realise that God is Omnipresent. One should beware of thinking that one is experiencing God's Omnipresence. When you think 'God is in all', you worry. If a bug is biting me and disturbing my meditation, I wonder if I should kill it or not. The important thing is to treat other human beings with love.

Our consciousness must gradually grow wider and wider in concentric circles, starting from where we are. Love your neighbour as yourself, then love your enemy, then love the animals and the mosquitoes, and then love the plants and water. Let the consciousness slowly expand until we are established in unity.

This is called Buddhi Yoga.

Lecture 9

For a simple and special reason, the Yoga that Krishna taught on the battlefield is known as Buddhi Yoga. Why? Because the Buddhi, the enlightened, awakened, alert intelligence is united with God, with the All-pervading Reality, with the Infinite, the Absolute. We are not trying to unite our bodies nor our minds with the Infinite; we are not trying to create the Infinite, because God is Omnipresent, is already there. We are not going to realise God. He is real. When the Buddhi, or the awakened intelligence faces away from God, from the Reality, the unreal appears to be real. It is magic. If you not believe it, all you have to do is to hold a mirror in front of you. As long as the mirror is facing you, it reflects you. The moment it is turned away from you, it reflects the furniture. So, if this awakened, alert Intelligence, Buddhi, is facing God. It will reflect Him. It will reflect the Reality. If it turns away from Him, it will reflect the world. That is where the ego is born. All desires are born because our Buddhi has its face turned towards the world, towards matter, towards the senses. It is so simple, isn't it? Let have no illusions. It is just a matter of turning away, not running away.

Yoga is this turning. Can I, with eyes wide open and my mind clear, turn within, not only within this body, but within everywhere? We may close our to avoid mental distraction, but this within is not here alone, it is within everywhere, within everything. Can I look within? Can I make this turning - this psychological turning, this inner spiritual turning, this vital turning? This is all that Krishna insists on, nothing more and nothing less. Unfortunately. All the other things seem to be easy, but this seems to be difficult. Hence, Krishna tells us in the Bhagavad Gita that this Yoga of an inward awakening needs nothing but our own sincerity, earnestness, and seriousness.

This Yoga is so easy. When we look within, all the superficial appearances disappear. Do they disappear? Again words, words, unless words, inadequate expressions. When you look at a screen in a cinema, does the screen disappear when the figures cover it? No. The screen is still there. When the scene changes, does anything happen to the screen? Nothing at all, it is still there. Are there figures on the canvas? No, no, it is still absolutely. There is mud, rain, dust, fire, filth, but when the projector is switched off, you see the pure white screen, nothing has happened. The Self, the screen, is still absolutely and eternally pure, the holy divine substratum of our Being, untouched by sin or suffering. Can I look through those figures on the screen? Must I look? When the show is in progress, you say, 'Look, what is happening'. The screen which was pearly white and beautiful now has a fire blazing on it. Let me see through that fire and look at the screen ... - the screen and the fire seem to be one. Brahman and Maya are one. God and illusion are one. Therefore, the sifting of God and illusion seems to be a trick. To sift the illusion from the reality when both are mixed up together, or when both are one, that is the difficulty.

You have heard of the origin of Zen Buddhism. One day, a great king came to Buddha and offered him a flower. Since it was a king coming to pay homage, the

flower was made of gold. It seems that Buddha just looked at it with a smile on his lips. One of his disciples, who was sitting there, also smiled. And so, Zen was born. Is it gold and flower at the same time? Can you look at it only as flower and not as gold, or only as gold and not as flower? That is the trick. That is our problem. Superficially, it seems simple, but when you come to grips with it, it is elusive. That is why it is called illusion. The world is illusion, not because it is not there, but because it is illusive.

The reality is clothed with unreality. The unreal covers the real, just exactly as the figures cover the screen. Scratch the screen and see what happens. You are scratching the screen, not the actors or the actresses. They are an illusion. To be able to see through this drama and to perceive the screen is Buddhi Yoga.

When someone says, 'God is within', they mean God is within everything omnipresently within. How am I going to realise this? There are two methods - Infinite expansion and Infinite contraction. Infinite expansion, in the form of self-sacrificing service to humanity, feeling that God dwells in all, will lead us there. Infinite contraction, in the form of self-denial and total self-surrender, will also lead us there.

Arjuna asks again and again: 'Does the Self know when it has been eliminated?'

tesaamham samuddhartaa mrtyusamsaarasaagaraat bhavaani na ciraatpaartha
mayyaavesitacetasaam

To those whose minds are set on Me, O Arjuna, verily I become are long the saviour out of the ocean of samsara. XII:7

'These great Yogis can only go thus far and no further, afterwards I pick them up'. Do we have to have a personal saviour or God to pick us up? No, you will not know when you are eligible for Self-realisation, God-realisation, Liberation or Freedom. You have to surrender. When you have really surrendered, you will not know whether the surrender is real is complete, is total. If you do know, then you have not surrendered. If I am able to say 'I am asleep', if I do not even know when I went to sleep, how can I know when the ego is lost? And unless the ego is totally lost, God will not be experienced. The Absolute cannot be experienced. The finite cannot experience the Infinite. But this is what we are trying to do. My finite mind is trying to experience the Omnipresence of God. If we try to reach out to the Infinite with finite instruments, what happens is what is happening now - trouble, mess, confusion, sin, and headaches. Only the Infinite can know the Infinite. It is here that we are caught. So, Krishna says. 'Look, go on striving, keep at it. When the time comes, I will liberate you'.

When Arjuna wanted to see the Cosmic Vision, Krishna told him:

na tu maam sakyase drastumanenaiva svacakshusaa divyam dadaami te cakshuh pasya me
yogamaisvaram

But thou art not able to behold Me with these thine own eyes; I give thee the divine eyes; behold My lordly Yoga. XI:8

'You cannot see Me with your own eyes. Your eyes are limited. Do not bluff

yourself.' This refers not only to the physical eyes. It refers to our mental eyes, and to the 3rd, 4th, or even 29th eye! The ego cannot perceive God. What ego perceives is not God. What the ego perceives is its own image. So, Krishna said, 'I will give you the divine eye'. The divine eye is the eye that sees the Divine, that is completely rid of any materiality. I cannot open that divine eye for myself. That is the goal of Buddhi Yoga.

manusyaanaam sahasresu kascidyatati siddhaye yatataamapi siddhaanaam kascinmaam vetti tattvatah
Among thousand of men, one perchance strives for perfection; even among those successful strivers, only one perchance knows Me in essence. VIII:3

Krishna says, 'Oh, you know, among thousands of people, one aspires to this realisation, that is not bad; but only one among thousands of such aspirants reaches the goal'.

That is the danger. The moment you think you have got it, you 'think' you have got it - that is all. That is what happens. It is not a matter of thinking. So, what must I do?

vihaaya kaamaanyah sarvaanpumaamscarati nihsprhah nirmamo nirahamkaarah sa saantimadhigacchati
The man attains peace who, abandoning all desires, moves about longing, without the sense of mine, and without egoism. II:71

This verse was Gurudev's favourite. You may say, 'I will go to some Himalayan cave, please send me money every month and I shall lead a very quiet and peaceful life there'. It looks very sensible; but it does not lead us anywhere, because the ego is asleep, the mind is asleep, the desires are asleep, vanity is asleep - all the inner qualities are asleep, and nothing is achieved.

At one time, we had a rule that the sannyasis had to keep moving all the time, and not stay in any place for more than three days. Krishna Himself, when He describes a great devotee, not only a sannyasi, says, 'He must have no home'. Be on the road all the time. Somebody kicks you here, somebody spits on your face there, somebody put a garland around your neck, but you go on regardless - that is the ideal state. This keeps us alert, kicks us at every turn. We do not have to invite trouble - there is enough trouble in this world for us. But I must be alert and know this is the world, this is the nature of the world - pain, death, suffering, sin, ignorance, sorrow, forgetfulness. It is only then that I become desireless, egoless, and without a sense of possession.

Again it is very difficult to understand this.

bahumam janmanaamante janaanavaamaam prapadyate vaasudevah sarvamiti sa mahaatmaa sudurlabhah
At the end of many births the wise man comes to Me, realising that all this is Vasudevaya (the inner Most Self); such a great soul (mahatma) is very Hard to find. VII:19

'After many births of striving, the wise man surrenders himself to Me'.

Surrendering to God is not so easy. What is this surrender? After many births of suffering and tragedies - because one tragedy does not awaken us - we go to sleep again and again. So, these things come again and again, birth and death have to come again and again. Who is a Mahatma? What is this Holy man, this noble man? He who knows that Vasudevaya is all, that God alone is all. One who reaches that state of realisation is extremely rare in this world. That is what our Master was.

It help us to understand our Master's life if we bear in mind this Sanskrit verse: 'bahunjaam janmanaamante'. After thousands and thousands of births of striving, man comes to this state - Mahatma. We may say, ' He must have had so many lifetimes of Yoga, and therefore he was born like this, but I am only starting now, I can do what I like'. This attitude only covers up our lethargy and ignorance. This ideal may be seen in the life of our master. To those of us who studied His life, who lived with Him, He was a phenomenon, far beyond our reach. We do not expect to be like Him, nor shall we see another like Him. There is only one sun in the world, and there is only one Sivananda in the world. But if you look at it from another angle, He was also born as you and I were born, He did not jump out of the clouds. His elder brother's wife said, 'Ah, He was very mischievous in His childhood' - like you and I, no difference here at all. But early in His life, the process of expansion had started. In India, the caste system was extremely rigid. It was unthinkable for a Brahmin to mix with an untouchable. Sivananda wanted to learn fencing, but there was only one man available to teach Him, and He was an untouchable. Sivananda went to him and learned fencing for a day or two, then his family forbade Him to go there. He was still a little boy and He had to obey the elders in the house; but the caste distinction had been broken. He returned to this man, the untouchable, and brought him flowers and clothes, because he was a Guru from whom he had learned for two days. He prostrated to him, much to the embarrassment of the poor fellow. What was interesting to me was that He had learned fencing only for a few days, but He remembered the movements for about fifty years.

Our master belonged to a fairly poor family. He had to earn a living and chose to become a doctor. Again you can see the expansion of the heart. Most doctors, if they possess some special knowledge, the first thing that enters their mind is 'I must make some money out of this'. His was a completely different attitude. He started publishing a journal 'Ambrosia'. In those days, He was not considered a great Yogi with a great mission, and if one looked at that medical journal, there was no spiritual message at all - just natural hygienic living. On the cover He had printed the picture of a strong man. In other words, if you read 'Ambrosia', you become like this - that was the message. It was extraordinary that He looked exactly like this picture forty years later. Sivananda was not interested in the fees. He only wanted to see His patients healthy and happy. A completely revolutionary attitude.

He then went to Malaya where He had the greatest expansion. It was in Malaya that His heart became one with everybody - the poor, the sick and the suffering;

but He felt that He was serving only a very limited number of people. A doctor tries to save somebody from pain, but the pain returns. Oxygen is given, but death comes - you cannot avoid it. You cannot avert pain. If I am hungry, you feed me, but tomorrow morning I am hungry again. Like the Buddha, therefore, He asked himself, 'Is there a way in which I can serve all - the healthy and the non-healthy, the sick and the non-sick, everyone.'

Had Swamiji only been a doctor, Dr. Kuppaswami, He could have made a fantastic name for Himself, but then we would not be gathered here today. People of every status in life and all communities, races and religions, gather under His banner everywhere in the world? Even though He was quite happy with His profession, both financially and spiritually, there was this question: 'I am tied down to a small circle. My heart is restricted. Can I break these professional barriers and realise the Omnipresence of God? Can I render some service to all humanity? Why must people fall ill at all and go to a doctor? Why can't the doctor prevent the sickness itself?'

There are people in the world who try help everybody. Am I qualified to do that? If I am sinking in the mud, can I offer to help you? So, when He renounced the world, Swamiji went to the Himalayas for a few years, where He practiced intense austerities. Even He had to do that, 'Ah, yes,' you say, 'What about this wonderful philosophy of yours that we must stay where we are and expand our hearts?' Quite right. But, if we are to serve humanity in the right spirit, perceiving God in all, then a certain period of retirement from the world becomes necessary, as a preparation for service. After this period, Swamiji emerged as a radiant sage, and from 1932 to 1963 He did not rest for one single day. Nobody asked Him to work. He was His own boss. Even in the later years when He could not walk, He would come to the office, or to satsang with a stick. When he could not do that, He started holding two people and walking. Later we bought a wheel chair and overnight laid a tar road from His kutir to the office. We used to push Him up and down this road, never mind what people thought. He had to be there, He had to serve - that was His attitude. He was such a wonderful man. His compassion was so great, His love so great, that we were all tiny tots when we went to Him.

Sivananda was a robust and healthy man in the late 1940's. When He was ready to have His food, He would take a little food from His plate and eat it. The rest He would put on another plate, and without rest or relaxation, He would take it from room to room, giving a little food to each person. He was much older than we were, yet He would walk in the blazing sun, His bald head covered with a cloth. It was remarkable, impossible to describe. Majestically He would walk on, give us these things and then say, 'Do not come out, it is very hot. Take rest, take rest.' It was a love, a compassion, which I do not think is possible to see. This love extended to all around, without limit.

Krishna Himself says in the Gita, 'Do not think that only the good in the world is a manifestation of God. If you do, you are butchering Reality again. God is not only what you consider good, but everything is God!' God is the Reality of all. One

day in January 1950, when someone came to attack Sivananda to kill Him, He was completely calm, and the next day He worshipped His own would-be assassin. To be able to see God in all, to be able to break that little wall, separating the good from the wicked, is very difficult.

The goal is to be able to live constantly in the fullest realisation of the Omnipresence of God.

esaa braahmi sthitih paartha nainaam praapya vimuhyati sthitvaasyaamantakaalepi brahma nirvaanamrcchhati

This is the Brahmic seat (eternal state), O son of Parthaa. Attaining to this, none is deluded. Being established therein, even at the end of life, One attains to oneness with Brahman. II:72

This is the Brahmic State. This is Nirvana. One who sustains this spirit of Nirvana to the last days of his physical existence, is liberated and returns no more to this world of pain, death, sin, and suffering. This is the Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita.

May you all reach this grand and sublime goal in this very birth.

This goal can only be reached by bathing oneself in the dust of Holy Men's Feet. Only then is the ego completely wiped out, washed out. Only then is enlightenment possible. Only then is Nirvana possible.

All this comes from my Master, Swami Sivananda.

Whatever good thoughts were made available, have their origin in His Feet, enshrined in His heart.

They are offered at your feet in humble worshipfulness.