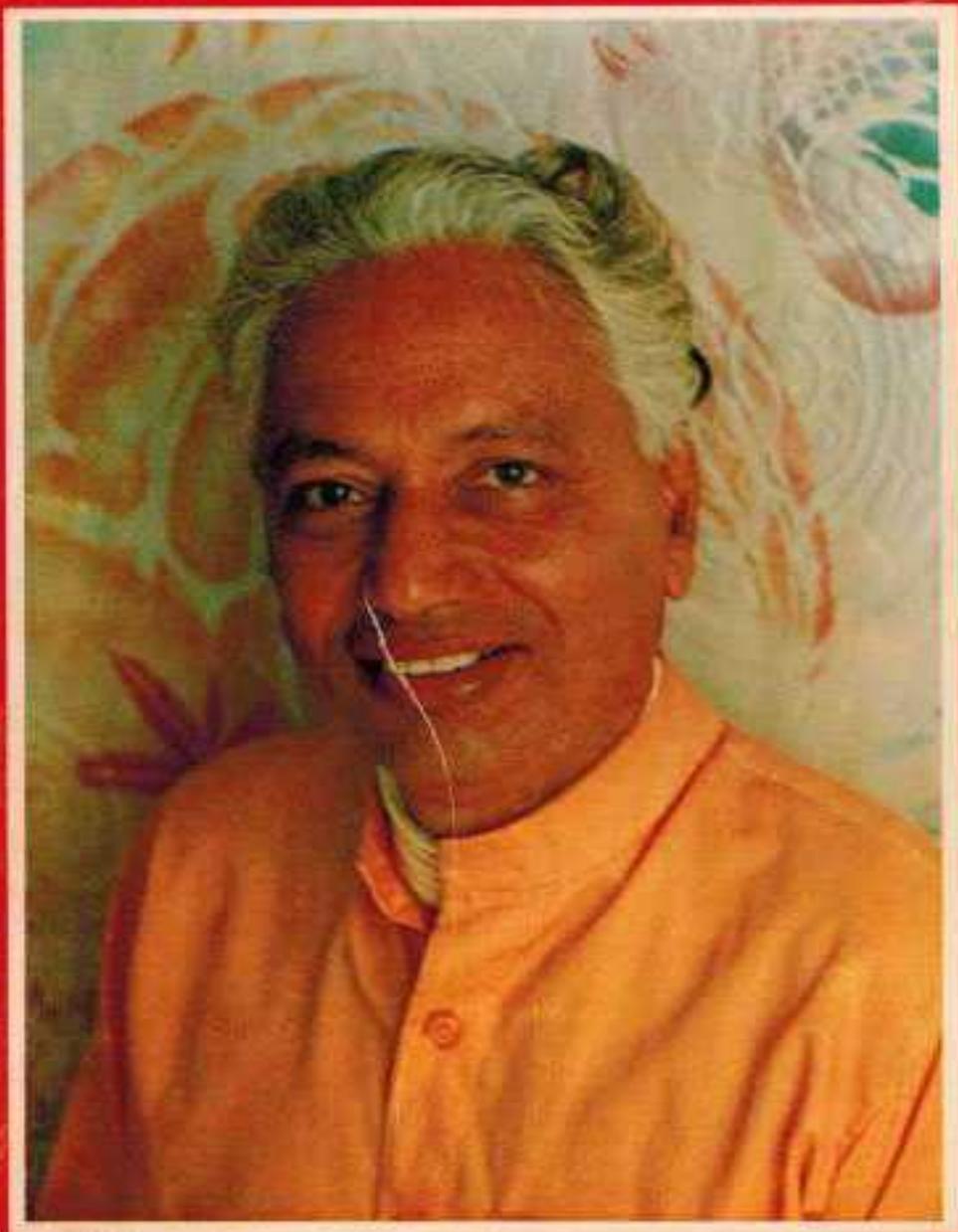


THE KINGLY SECRET



Swami
Venkatesananda

The Bhagavad Gita Chapter 9 The Kingly Secret

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The Bhagavad Gita
Chapter 9
The Kingly Secret

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Last talks

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1. The Time Machine

That was lucky, wasn't it?

The Lord God brought me a birthday present - a time machine with which I could travel right back to the day of my birth - and He said: "Well, my boy, here you are where you started, and you are free to steer the machine whichever way you wish to go." And, He was gone. It's a pity. For, if He had tarried a moment longer, I would have thanked him, and handed the machine back to him.

However, stranded in this strange thing called the world, I blinked several times. It is a funny place, I thought, and therefore was not frightened. Strange, or is it? Even as you blink your eyes, time marches on. The old man, my grandfather, taught me hymns in sanskrit; I loved them. Another grandfather chanted the Yajur Veda; his voice was musical, his personality gigantic, his vision broad, and his insight deep. He was unorthodox, and he insisted that nothing is holier than freedom of, though disciplined, thought.

As the machine flew on, I could hear celestial karnatic music. In the south indian village where I grew up, everyone had talent, and many were professionals. Vedic learning and music learning were tempting, indeed; and the time machine would have changed the course of my life into those channels. But, no! I press the accelerator on ...

To the english school in the neighbouring town. Nothing could take the place of my close association with terribly loving cool fire called T.B. Ratnachalam Iyer, who was often cruel to me, because I was his favourite pupil. His love was irrigated by my tears. He handed me the key to a fabulous private library. There I met Swami Vivekananda. There I met Swami Sivananda. There I met the great men and women of the world, ancient and modern. Not their person; their word. If they had been examination texts, I would have been first in the world. The time machine looked up - do I want to change direction and become a distinguished scholar and medalist? Oh, no; passmarks would do for the school examination, but a distinction was necessary for the test of life. Let us get out of school, and into the larger university, called the universe. Not mathematics and chemistry, but philosophy and biographies of great men alone would crown life with success. Carry on, time machine, exactly the way it was and it had been!

So, I wrote to Swami Sivananda. Still a student. Still raw. Still clay unbaked in the kiln of life. I stepped on the accelerator: "Come on, let us fly to Rishikesh and join Swami Sivananda's ashram as a sanyasin." The time machine was forced down at Madras; the plans were thwarted. Should the time machine break the obstacles? Oh, no; let it be as it was. There is a time for everything; and that shall be God's good time.

Into harness. Into service. Hard work. Difficult working conditions. In Madras. In Calcutta. In Delhi. The war. Food rationing. Famine in Calcutta. Misery all

round. Moral depravity. "Shall I skip them?" No, no: everything as it was, better that way. For, Delhi already felt close to the goal; Rishikesh, overnight's train journey.

Where are we? Here is the holy Ganga. Here is the sacred Hardwar. Hop! Rishikesh. Another gigantic personality, grander than my grandfather. Looks like the grandfather of the world, father of the creator; or, the grand father of the world. "Come back and stay here", said Swami Sivananda, the divine being whom I met at Rishikesh in 1944. The time machine winked at me: "Of course, you have rightly guessed!", said I, "All those ups and downs, all those successes and failures, all that pleasure and pain, all that good and evil - they have brought us here! I would go over the same ground a million times all over again, shedding tears of blood, facing the same unpleasantness and frustration, the same disappointments and lost hopes, if only one thing was guaranteed I would meet Swami Sivananda again!"

That was the end and the beginning. Swami Sivananda turned the globe with His toes; the world revolved around His Feet. The world, the same world I had run away from, was here again. But, no, it is not the same; it was under His Foot any way; we are safe. People have their own ideas of an 'ashram'. It should be a heaven on earth. It will be, if the people are not there; without people, what is an ashram, and, with people ... well, what is an ashram? When we sagged under the weight of assumed responsibilities and egoistic activities, Swami Sivananda had a unique way of rescuing us - viz., to pull the ground from beneath our feet. Dreadful, isn't it? But when we tumbled down in the Infinite, we awoke to the Guru's Divine Majesty. We were never allowed to be lost.

"But, we just entered the ashram," I howl with anguish. "Sorry," signals the time machine, "sixteen years are over!" The course is set. Should I alter it? Oh, no; let it be as it was. I hated to travel. There it is: the time machine caught up in a cyclone! From country to country. From house to house. Strange places. Strange faces. Oh, no; I couldn't call them strange; what is 'strange', after all, when nothing is familiar; no, not even my own Self!

The same world over again. The world I left behind when I went to Rishikesh. The world that flowed through the ashram. The world which I now travelled. But, what a difference. The first was a wicked, sinful hostile thing - base metal. The second was a melting pot. The third pure gold. The vision may not be clear and steady. But the intuition is: the world is the body of God, and all of us are little cells in it. To the extent we are in tune with Him, to that extent we are divine in essence; to the extent we are ignorant of Him, we are God-asleep; to the extent we are out of tune, we are restless. This was Gurudev Sivananda's spiritual alchemy, which He called 'Divine Life'. It was made in Rishikesh. But it had to be tested in Australia, South and East Africa, Madagascar, and Mauritius. "Would you like to avoid the mistakes you made?", signals the time machine. My answer is simple: "Let it be as it was; if I did not make those mistakes, I would not appreciate when I did not make them!" Life is an experiment. We learn as much

from our failures as from our successes.

Back in Mauritius, I hear a thunderous laughter. I get out of the time machine for an instant, to investigate. "So, you are back where you were!" said the Lord God. "Yes, Lord," I answered. "What next?" asked He. "Thy will be done," said I, and turned to discover the time machine had vanished.

2. Be Simple

Twenty-five years ago, a few south african devotees visited Rishikesh, and spent a few blissful weeks at the feet of Gurudev Swami Sivananda. He asked them to start a 'branch in Johannesburg'. It was called 'The Sivananda School of Yoga'. It functioned in rented premises till a few years ago. Now, under the able guidance of Sri Jyotsnamata and her husband Mr B. Vanderveeke, the school is a beautiful ashram, spreading the gospel of Gurudev.

This year's programme, during my stay at the school was light - and we studied the enlightening ninth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita. Krishna's message is intriguingly simple, tantalisingly enigmatic, and pre-eminently practical. But such is our complicated brain-structure and the devastating power of our culture that we resent simplicity, and deliberately make life difficult.

Why do we complicate our lives? We look to others to decide what is good for us in all aspects of our lives - lifestyles, relationships, religion, and so on. Looking to others for guidance is not bad in itself; if we realise that the others and their theories are at best sign-posts, they are useful. But we cling to theories as if they were truths. We forget that the problem plagues us, not them! Since the attention is diverted from the source of the problem within us, to the theories of others that may or may not be relevant, there is great confusion, unclarity, and hence continuing sorrow.

Krishna points out that God dwells in all as the not-so-obvious reality - not to tempt us to speculate what it may be, but to alert us to the need for proper investigation. We begin with the obvious - which is sorrow, unhappiness, disharmony, and conflict in our lives. All this is obvious, but their source is not obvious. If it seems obvious to you, you discover that you blame someone else, the environment, your karma, or the stars! You try to get rid of some, and get out of the others. But there is no end to sorrow. Its cause is not so obvious; and whatever it is, it keeps producing results - the sorrow.

Patanjali allows the use of thought and logic to arrive at the end of thought and the conclusion of logic. When these fail to recognise the not-so-obvious cause of sorrow, you learn the art of looking within, observing the source of sorrow. Only one thing seems to be clear: "I am unhappy," whether the cause is internal or external. If 'I' is absent, as in deep deep, unhappiness ceases too. But, then, what is 'I'? When you look for it, you cannot find it. If the 'I' is nowhere to be found, sorrow is nowhere either. This discovery leads to great joy. However, with the next experience, 'I' arises again. This time, it is not so deadly. You have the key to the problem. You can dispose of it quickly. When you find a firm foothold in self-realisation, the awareness in you is able to stop the sorrow before it arises.

It is simple, if you learn not to complicate your life.

3. The Kingly Secret

Is teacher or teaching all that important? This is a famous controversy. The great master Sri Shankaracharya makes a shattering statement in his delightful book Vivekachudamani: "The wise man does not need a scripture - he is already wise. And the fool does not need a scripture - he is not going to change." Hopefully, we are somewhere in between - undecided which way to jump. A similar view is expressed in the Yoga Vasistha. The master, Vasistha, asks: "Is a guru going to help you attain self-realisation? No. Self-realisation does not depend upon a guru. It is self-realisation." Enlightenment has no other means. Enlightenment is not some kind of destination reached by taking various forms of transport. Then, what are we doing here?

Vasistha, however, adds that, although enlightenment is not reached by resorting to teacher or teaching, it is not had without them. Teacher and teaching act as catalysts. They are necessary, but not to be depended upon. The self is already real, but we are ignoring it. The teacher and the teaching remind us that there is a mist, hiding the truth within ourselves. In this state of ignorance, it looks as though the self itself is unreal, and stupidly we do not go any further. We do not ask the most simple question: "How can the self be unreal?"

Not daring to ask, not caring to ask, we look for something, somewhere, outside. As long as we seek for something outside, the self is not realised; in fact, the seeking outside depends upon the unreality of the self. It is when we feel empty within ourselves, unfulfilled, that we crave external support. When we feel unhappy, we look for a back-scratcher: "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours, and we'll call ourselves friends." That is what we call friendship - appropriately friendship - if we are not careful, it will sink!

Because we feel we are lacking something, we look outside for an object of pleasure, an object that we think will fulfil us. Because we have no notion about the self, everything is hazy, we look for something outside, as if that will enable us to realise the self within.

The self is already real! Turn within, and you will see! Even if you doubt the existence of the self, you cannot doubt the existence of the doubter. Enquire into the nature of the doubter. If you dare, if you care to enquire into the nature of the doubter, the doubt ceases. We have never tried this. We have assumed that all this is inevitable and, on the basis of this self-ignorance, we have built our lives.

We need somebody at some time. We need a teacher and teaching at some time, to turn the whole process upon ourselves. Otherwise, teacher and teaching are unnecessary. We have heard the same teaching again and again. Why is it necessary to listen to the same thing over and over? Krishna said it, Jesus Christ said it, and My Guru Swami Sivananda said it again. It is the same old message. Swami Sivananda made it very clear: "I am not establishing a new religion or a cult; I am merely reminding you of the truth that has been brought into the world

by so many great masters. It has only been adapted to your needs, and couched in terms which are intelligible to you." Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita: "I taught this imperishable yoga to Vivasvan - the sun; he told it to Manu; that same ancient Yoga has been today taught to thee by Me, for thou art My devotee and My friend; it is the supreme secret."

Where is the need for repetition? The need is felt when you and I realise that the truth that we have heard, has not been heard. We hear, but we don't hear. Our ears may be open, but spiritual truths are not heard with these lovely little things stuck on either side of our head. The ear with which truth is heard is in the heart. We even spell it h-ear-t. There is an 'ear' in the centre of our heart. It is when that ear begins to function, when spiritual truth is heard there, in the centre of the heart, that the truth becomes living truth. "The word made flesh." Word that becomes living, active. If the truth has become active in us, we don't need any teaching.

Yet, for most of us, hearing a talk, even physiologically, is rare. We only think we are listening. The mind is not cultivated enough to receive what is given, and examine it. If we observe the way the mind functions, we will realise that the mind is extremely selective. As words are heard, as ideas float in, the mind doesn't really receive what is heard by the physical organ of hearing. It immediately rejects, and without our knowledge, ideas are blotted out. The ideas that we don't remember after a talk are the ones we are not interested in. The mind is always sifting - accepting something, rejecting something else. Even if we have trained our minds in concentration, which is merely an intellectual training, and easily acquired, it is not enough. The biggest part of the personality, the emotional aspect, the heart, is shut. There is attention, but no affection. It is useless, a waste of time.

There is no yoga here. Yoga is integration, at-one-ment, harmony between body, mind, and soul - the entire personality. That is the reason why the teaching, the truth, does not become instantly activated, living. Is it possible to bring these three together? By means of what? This we do not know.

We have heard of the phenomenon called Shaktipat - direct transmission of the truth, non-verbally, and we have all experienced this in our everyday lives, though it passes unnoticed. When we look at someone we love, Shaktipat, happens instantly. When we look at a friend whom we have not seen for a long time, we just look. That is Shaktipat. You don't have to say, "I love you." The communication is non-verbal. Even if it is accompanied by some verbal non-sense, the essence is still non-verbal.

There was a great mystic in India, called Kabir, who put it in a different way. He said that it is as simple as catching a virus infection. If I have such an infection and even cough, you will get it. And Kabir says, "If such is the truth, do you think spiritual instruction is so weak that it cannot be transmitted non-verbally?" Ramana Maharshi gives us a hint as to how to be a recipient of this non-verbal

communication: silence your mind and think with your heart. Please watch. When affection is communicated non-verbally, the mind is silent. It is the heart that says, "I love you." That is called affection.

Is it possible then to love the teaching or the teacher to such an extent that the physiological organs of hearing are open, the mind is silent, and the heart is afire with affection? Then, non-verbal communication takes place, and the truth is instantly enshrined in your heart. Clarity! This is the inner light - insight. Then there is no more problem.

Until this happens, the great masters tell us to get together again and again and see what happens. One day, it is possible that the mind is charmed; one day, it is possible that the heart is charmed. But when the heart is charmed, maybe the mind is not charmed. All sorts of permutations and combinations are possible. And there are degrees of affection, and degrees of alertness. Given all these problems and difficulties, it is important that we get together as frequently as we can, and contemplate the same old message.

It is good to use a text as basis, for a simple reason. It is then possible to pick up your copy when you have time, and recapture the exalted mood. Therefore, we will look into the ninth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita. Why the Bhagavad Gita? Why the ninth chapter? Why not? One chapter is the same as the other, one text is the same as the other. If you are a real seeker after truth, you will find the same message in the Bible, the Bhagavad Gita, the Koran, or the Dhamma Pada.

Sri Krshna opens the ninth chapter with a flourish!

rajavidya rajaguhyam pavitramidamuttamam pratyaksavagamam dharmyam susukham
kartumavyayam (IX:2)

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

I am going to give you the knowledge that is the king of all knowledge, the kingly secret. Why all the fanfare? In order to tempt us to listen a bit more carefully. A kingly secret! Yet, an organisation in India has produced fifteen million copies of this book, but still it is a great secret. What can be secret in a book that has sold billions of copies? The words are clear. Hundreds of great men have discoursed on the subject. This is the verbal level. We have read it, and heard numerous commentaries - yet, it is a great secret.

It is not a secret at the verbal level, but it is a profound secret on the non-verbal level. The meaning of the words may be clear, the interpretation of the words may be clear, yet it is still a secret - so dig a little deeper. The meaning is a secret - not because someone has hidden it, but because we are too lazy to look, too lazy to investigate, and it needs investigation.

The teaching is purifying, and therefore, if our minds and our hearts and our lives have not been purified, the secret has not been discovered. How do we know

when the message has been understood? Talking about it means we have intellectually grasped the literal meaning of the words, but we may not have understood the message. Where does understanding take place? Under. The head is on top, and the heart stands under. The heart must understand. If we have understood, it becomes living truth, and we are instantly purified. Our heart, mind, everything is purified. If this purity is not found in our thinking, emotions, behaviour and life, then the truth has not been understood. It is still a secret, an open secret. It is open, intellectually and verbally, but closed non-verbally.

The non-verbal nature of truth is emphasised again and again in the Bhagavad Gita. Yet, ironically, we are going to talk about non-verbal communication.

rajavidya rajaguhyam pavitramidamuttamam pratyaksavagamam dharmyam susukham
kartumavyayam (IX:2)

"This is the kingly science, realisable by direct intuitional knowledge, according to righteousness, very easy to perform and imperishable."

You will yourself see this. Truth does not need demonstration. It is very pleasant. The truth that is going to be revealed is not hard, but easy. Why is it easy? Because it is you, we are going to talk about.

asraddhadhanah purusa dharmasyasya parantapa aprapya mam nivartante mrtusamsaravartmani
(IX:3)

"Those who have no faith in this dharma - knowledge of the self, O Arjuna, return to the path of this world of death, without attaining Me."

The word sraddha cannot be translated. Merely translating it as 'faith' does not make it clear. However, the rest of the verse gives an indication of the meaning. If sraddha is not there, we do not reach enlightenment or self-realisation. And if we do not reach self-realisation, we experience birth and death again and again. This does not necessarily mean reincarnation, but we are trapped in a world in which we experience a succession of happiness and unhappiness, success and failure, pleasure and pain. Something is born in us; something dies in us. Every day, we are born; every day, we die. Every hope is a new birth; every frustration is a death. This itself is enough reincarnation. We don't need more births and deaths.

If self-realisation is not there, we subject ourselves to this constant change. If sraddha is there, then naturally, in and through all these changes, we will recognise something that is immutable. Call it what you like, when this sraddha arises, in spite of success and failure, pleasure and pain, happiness and unhappiness, beginnings and ends, washes over us like water on a duck's back. If we have this sraddha, we let life flow in profound realisation.

4. Not-So-Obvious Truth

The truth or the reality in all scriptures is exactly the same. But, reality is not an object; you cannot see it. You can call it Christ, Buddha, God, but it is not an object, and cannot be seen. You can invent a million names, but they are only description. When do you invent a description? When you are so completely confused that you can not find words to express yourself. There is a little baby sleeping here. When it wakes up, it may respond to this talk in the most beautiful way - "Waah!" Perhaps that is reality, and the rest nonsense, a description.

Then, what are these scriptures? Their primary purpose seems to be preventing the mind from accumulating more dirt, so that one day, by the Grace of God, the mirror may be wiped clean. In the course of interaction with the scripture and the teacher, one day, you may suddenly realise, "It is so simple! Why did I not see it before?" Until this realisation arises, keep groping, running from pillar to post, even from teacher to teacher. It is nice. The travel agents must live, the airlines must earn some money, the tourist industry must prosper. One should not be too selfish. Keep roaming. There is a description of a good student in the Bhagavatam - he gathers truth as a bee gathers nectar, from flower to flower. Why not?

But the wise teacher, though he may load you with verbiage, will at some time, tell you that, what you are seeking, is yourself. Who is the seeker? The same. The seeker and the sought are exactly the same. It may not make sense at present, because we are fixed in the idea that our problems originate outside ourselves. Therefore, the truth remains a great secret - rajavidya rajaguhya - because we have never bothered to look where the problem arises - in ourselves.

Occasionally, we are tempted to turn within; but the occasions are very rare and momentary. We want to turn within, to meditate, find out why we are miserable, reacting to the world in the way we do. But the next moment, memory jumps up: "I am a good man, but someone insulted me; so I had to respond." The attention is gone, the introversion is gone, and we are distracted again. If we are wise, it will not take long to discover that our moments of happiness lie between two experiences of excitement or craving. One craving subsides and, before the next craving arises, there is a little experience of happiness within ourselves. We think we have enjoyed something, but that is all that happens. However, the mind does not allow us to remain there. It immediately says, "The pleasure came from there - the object; I must have it again." And craving starts again.

The simple truth that all our problems are self-created, and all solutions must be self-discovered, remains a complete and total secret, hidden for all time to come. We don't have this sraddha - faith. Faith, coupled with intense energy - living faith. The word faith has been mauled and used in totally irrelevant contexts. Without defining faith, Krishna points out how to discover it within one self:

asraddhadhanah purusa dharmasyasya parahtapa aprapya mam nivartante mptyusamsaravartmani
(IX:3)

"Those who have no faith in this dharma - knowledge of the Self, O Arjuna, return to the path of this world of death without attaining me."

If that faith is there, you must reach the self. If you have that faith, you will discover the kingly secret, and become pure at heart, and in mind. If you are not growing in purity, faith is not there.

Rajavidya ragaguhyam - kingly knowledge, kingly secret. What is this kingly knowledge, kingly secret? Rajavidya might also mean 'king amongst sciences' or 'that knowledge which only kings - they whose desires have been fulfilled - can understand', only those who have mastered themselves can understand this knowledge. A king is a ruler over himself.

When this secret chamber is opened through sraddha, living faith, what does one see?

maya tatamidam sarvam jagadavyaktamurtina matsthani sarvabhutani na caham tesvavasthitah
(IX:4)

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

The entire universe is pervaded by this reality in a not-so-obvious manner, in an unmanifest manner. The reality is there all the time, everywhere, in a not-so-obvious manner. And there is the secret. All that we value in life is not so obvious. That he is my friend is not so obvious. His hair is obvious, his shirt is obvious, but friendship is not obvious. That we love each other, is not so obvious. That we hate one another, is not so obvious. That I am miserable, is not so obvious. Nothing that is of importance in our lives, is the obvious. The obvious seems to be the least important. The obvious, metaphorically speaking, cloaks the un-obvious, and the un-obvious is the reality. The not-so-obvious is the reality.

Even if we do not proceed any further with this teaching, this much itself may be of tremendous use in our daily living. When someone says, "I love you," remember, it is not so obvious. Cool it! Then we will see if there is also the not-so-obvious response. Otherwise we may throw the obvious - the body or whatever - into the not-so-obvious. Jump in blindfolded.

The reality exists everywhere ... but it is not so-obvious. The reality is like space, and the obvious like wind, the movement of air in space. This is easily understood by those who are educated in modern science. Quantum physics is knocking at the door of this truth, the immateriality of matter. We are just dancing subatomic particles or waves of energy. We are not so solid after all. The obvious is not the reality; the un-obvious is! According to quantum physicists, even these waves of energy are just a process. Not something which exists, to which you can point a finger, but just a process. So, the confusion is complete!

The not-so-obvious is the reality in all that seems to be obvious. This is immediately relevant to us, whether or not we are seeking the ultimate or self-realisation. With the help of this formula, we may be able to examine our

experiences, whether pleasurable or painful, and come to an understanding, which might liberate us from their grips. When we are tempted to be quite sure of the source of our unhappiness, whether physical or mental, we can remind ourselves that the obvious may not be true.

Let us enquire into it, go into slowly, investigate and see if it is so. Here we are given the key to wise and enlightened living. If we are interested, we can proceed further, and investigate until we arrive at the reality that is hinted at.

The entire universe is pervaded by the divine presence, but it is not obvious. All beings exist in the divine presence, but in a not-so-obvious fashion. They seem to live in space, but they do not live in space. For instance, I am occupying this seat, which means that this seat is not available for anybody else. Can you say the same thing of space? Can space be occupied? The occupier is himself space. What is the relationship? It is exactly the same as your face occupying a mirror. Has your face entered into the mirror; has it been imprinted on the mirror? We use a nice word, 'reflection'; yet, here it is meaningless. When you hold a mirror to the sun, the sunlight is reflected; but when you hold a mirror in front of your face, does the mirror reflect your face? It does nothing at all. The poor mirror is totally blameless. In the same way, space is totally blameless, the divine presence is totally blameless, absolutely pure.

maya tatamidam sarvam jagadavyakta murtina

The entire universe is pervaded by this divine presence, like space. And, of that space, all things are born. And things are born in space, exist in space, and dissolve in space. It is a beautiful vision. We are all born of the not-so-obvious. When a young man and a young woman look at each other, something not-so-obvious happens within, and we are born of that. In exactly the same way, the entire universe has grown out of that not-so-obvious divine presence. In that space, all these not-so-obvious things arise, exist, and dissolve. You and I are probably nothing very much except space. They say that we are more water than anything else. That may be why, when confronted by a problem, we take the line of least resistance; we try to escape as water tries to escape. We are made of water ... and water is nothing but oxygen and hydrogen combined - gas. We are full of gas and ultimately space.

I used to think that as a solid creature of 150 lbs, there would be a whole room full of ashes left after cremation. Then I heard a song by a South Indian mystic describing the end of the human body as nothing more than a handful of ashes. I thought that this was merely a figure of speech, until I came to Johannesburg, and was taken to the crematorium. The caretaker explained to me how it worked. I saw a little pan and asked, "What is that for?" He said, "In case people want some ashes, I scrape them up and put them there." I said, "Such a big body and only that much?" He replied, "Even that much can be collected only if they push in the coffin also." The rest evaporates; the rest is space. You are space, my friend, mere space.

But this space is filled with the divine presence whose nature is Chit Shakti, full of consciousness, awareness; not blind energy as quantum physicists seem to think. It is this awareness which becomes aware of a world, of other beings, of the infinite variety of creatures. This awareness itself is the creator, and this awareness itself you are.

maya tatamidam sarvam jagadavyaktamurtina

Like space, this divine presence fills everything. Why are we told this? So that we may endeavour to investigate the reality, investigate how the obvious has come into being. How the material universe of infinite diversity - colourful, beautiful, dreadful, pleasant, horrible - how this universe arises. If God is good, and we have all risen in Him, to live and eventually dissolve in that divine presence, what is the meaning of unhappiness or sorrow? Has God created these things too? How does this world of infinite diversity arise, and how has the infinite diversity of experience come into being?

There is one way in which the truth concerning this can be discovered - by contemplating the reality as we emerge from sleep each day. The world comes into being every morning, as you and I wake up. It seems to be the same world as the previous night, only because the present mind thinks so. Obviously a lot of changes have taken place, not only around the world, but in our own bodies, but we are unaware of them, because it suits our present state of ignorance to presume that we are exactly the same today as we were yesterday. It is convenient.

But a new day is a new birth, a new arising of the universe, and a new opportunity to make, mend, build, and realise. If, by God's Grace, by Guru's Grace, you have the presence of awareness to observe how the world arises then, as you come out of sleep, it is possible to understand what is called witness consciousness, choiceless awareness, pure and undifferentiated. This is what they call the self - not myself, or yourself, but the self. That awareness is the self, the self of all.

We have the opportunity to discover this truth during the course of the day, but it usually doesn't register. It is possible, however, when we come together, and express our feelings, to realise: "The feelings that I have, you also have. You are I." It is pure awareness, which functions as one person there, and the swami here. It is just one awareness. Just as in a garden, where shrubs, plants, and trees, are but an outgrowth of the earth, so these physical bodies are nothing but moving outgrowths of earth. Yet, the awareness that is common, is common to all.

This is the awareness which awakens first thing in the morning. Obviously, it was there even during sleep - it did not come into being - but it was veiled by the veil called sleep. When that veil is lifted, pure awareness shines. Suddenly, something becomes aware of itself - I am. It lasts only for a few moments, and

there is already consciousness of division. It is not pure awareness, but an awareness which is aware of itself - but still not as Swami Venkatesananda, or any particularised personality. When that arises, the whole circus begins. "I am so-and-so, and I am lying in this bed." Our life of lying starts from there. The moment you become aware of the fact, "I am lying in bed," you are already lying, and the rest of the day is filled with lies. "This is mine" - land mines and sea mines - all kinds of explosive mines.

It is very interesting. Only five minutes before, if the whole world had disintegrated, you would have passed away happily. Yet, the moment the veil of sleep is lifted, the whole circus begins. Two people are sleeping in the same bed, side by side, comfortably, peacefully. They are not fighting or quarrelling or insulting each other; but, the moment they open their eyes, it begins: "You are my husband; you are my wife." It is no longer, "I am," but "I am someone's wife or husband." That is what is called creation. It is that creation that matures into happiness and unhappiness.

How is that poor little God responsible for this? The divine presence being everywhere, is there in you, in me, in all these infinite creatures. This energy is laden with consciousness. Inevitably, therefore, there is interaction. One type of interaction, you call love, and the result is happiness. Another type is called hate, jealousy, or fear, and the feedback is unhappiness. That is all. This is what is meant when we say that the world is a mirror which reflects us. If we look at the world with love, it reflects happiness. It is as simple as that.

Just as space is not polluted by us, is always pure and indivisible, even so is this divine presence, unpollutable and pure. What is called you, what is called me, is but one small particle floating in that infinite space called the divine presence. It is not so obvious; but, if we begin with what is obvious, and examine the not-so-obvious sources of the obvious phenomena, then it is possible to free ourselves from self-created problems, and eventually arrive at the grand discovery of this most profound and kingly secret.

5. Simply One

There doesn't seem to be any complication in life. Space remains space, no matter what is done in that space. Space is not consumed or transformed, although we may think so. Thinking is an imaginary complication. It is thought that thinks there is complication. We cannot even assert that thought has brought about complication. Thought tempts us to think there is complication. Otherwise, the truth is quite simple, as simple as space. What was, is, and will be - which is the name of God in hebrew. No one can bring about a fundamental and radical change in that which was, is, and will be. We can think all sorts of thoughts, but we cannot transform what is. We can only imagine that we have brought about complexity, within the simplicity that is. Thus, sanskrit texts describe the world process as 'leela' or play. Nothing has really happened; yet, we think a lot has happened.

This 'happening', on a micro-cosmic scale - us, has also happened on a macro-cosmic scale. The Bhagavad Gita tells us that everything comes out of the invisible unmanifest. Yet, try as we will, we cannot visualise how we could have come from the unmanifest. But, if we look into our own biography, we arose from some invisible power between our father and mother - subtle, unmanifest - yet we were conceived. We are merely conceptions, thoughts, or notions in our parents' minds! And, at the other end of the spectrum, this enormous being is pushed into the furnace, and a few grains of ash emerge. We start there, and we end there.

Likewise, according to the latest scientific theory, once upon a time, everything emerged - from God?, and later, the whole thing will collapse into itself. First, there was an explosion, then there will be an implosion, and the entire universe will be reduced to a pin-point, called a 'singularity'. What is wrong with calling it Brahman? That singularity, Brahman, or pin-point of incredible density, will again, in its own time, explode spilling out all this that you and I see.

All this is description, and no description is ever the same as that which is described. Truth is indescribable. It is so indescribably simple that every description complicates it.

Here in the ninth chapter of the Gita, we are led into this magnificent mansion of simplicity. What exists is one - like space. The infinite diversity seems to exist in space, merely because we think in terms of diversity. Even if we think we can think of unity, as long as we think, we will think ourselves out of our own thought. It is a strange feat. Those of you who have tried to meditate a bit more seriously, may have experienced this enormous wholeness or totality. But, there is still the 'me', observing and experiencing this totality.

Fantastic! Thought has the power to exclude itself. And yet, here in the ninth chapter, Krishna tells us, "Please exclude thought."

Thought, if you have observed it in meditation or contemplation, always excludes itself and creates an object. And yet, Krishna tells us to exclude thought if we want to find the truth. Otherwise, we keep describing experience, thus creating duality, and that duality multiplies itself into infinite diversity, leading to conflict and confusion all the way through. Space is indivisible; yet, we create fantastic descriptions of that space. East and west! We are quite certain that this is east and that is west. But, move a little, and you discover that east and west meet in you. You play a double role; you are the divider, dividing east from west, and you are the meeting point.

It is the mind that creates all this. There is no such thing in reality. Krishna goes on with the revelation of the secret: there is one, infinite, indivisible totality. We can call it consciousness, awareness, Christ-consciousness, the Buddha, but we are all looking at the same thing, and describing it in accordance with our own prejudice or cultural background. If you are a quantum physicist, all this appears as dancing energy. If you are a philosopher, you create more and more theories, suffering endless torture. If you are a mystic, you create a new religion or cult. Enough fighting in this world! In accordance with our own point of view, we see the same thing in our own light. That is all that is possible, and there is no harm in it.

If we perceive this truth, we have seen the whole truth. It seems to be a paradox. The mind cannot see the totality; the ego cannot see the totality. Yet, when the mind dies, when the ego dies, who sees what? God sees himself. He must be very clever. But there is a rear entrance, a tradesman's entrance, which is much easier. To understand directly that what we see is but one point of view, and, even so, there are innumerable points of view in seeing the totality. Whatever experience we have, even if it is magnificent and intuitive, it is just our experience. Even so, there are countless points of view and experiences.

If we are able to hold this feeling in our consciousness for a few moments, we will be instantly humbled, instantly enlightened in one sense; there will be no burden of philosophy on our shoulders, no burden of scripture and no burden of the world's unhappiness. Since we are just one small point in the cosmos, "Lord, the rest is your job." We instantly feel extremely light and humble.

That is all that is possible; and that is possible. We learn to look upon everything in this universe as part of this totality. Differences exist. If I look at myself in the mirror, the hair on my head is a confused mixture of white, grey, and black. Nice. Even so in this world. Yet, somehow the entire thing is one.

Yet, the unity, the homogeneity, is not obvious; the truth is not obvious; all that is worthwhile in this life, is not obvious. Therefore, along with humility comes an insatiable quest, which ends only in the ending of the ego. The seeker is swallowed in the seeking, and we see the king of the universe. The seeking ends in 'see-king' - the king of the universe. We are told that this truth is not obvious, in order that we may investigate. What is obvious, is our own world, the creation of our own mind. But, that the world around us is our own creation, is not so obvious. One has to work at it. Our cultural heritage, our education and training, have created this muddle in the brain, and therefore, the simplest truth seems totally un-obvious. Constant investigation is the only key.

Krishna goes on to a scurrilous attack on humanity:

avajananti mam mudha manusim tanumasritam param bhavamajananto mama bhutamahesvaram
(IX:11)

"Fools disregard Me, clad in human form, not knowing My higher Being as the great Lord of all beings."

They don't recognise my transcendental nature. Possibly, it means that we do not recognise the not-so-obvious divinity in one another. My Guru Swami Sivananda used to emphasise: "See God in all." And Baba Muktananda also used to say: "Treat one another as God." Not so obvious. This thing sitting in front of you is called Swami Venkatesananda. But, if it collapses now, would you still call those ten grains of ash Swami Venkatesananda? No, you would just blow them away. Where was this thing sixty-three years ago? How did something that was not, come into being? It puzzles the intellect; so, you create a soul. I'm not saying that the soul does not exist, but not in the sense which we are asked to believe. It exists, perhaps in a very different way. To use biblical language, it exists as an image in the consciousness of God.

What appears to be is merely an outer garb; what appears to be human form is nothing but an outer appearance; and, an appearance appears to appear only to one to whom it appears. Otherwise, it is not there. You are the reality; and, even so, are all others real. The same reality that is in you, shines in all.

Why then do we call each other by different names? Convenience. And, in order that there may not be terrible confusion in this convenience, we are given different shapes. There is no harm in any of this, as long as it is not forgotten that it is that one divine being that dwells in the hearts of all. Contemplate the indwelling presence. That indwelling presence is exactly the same in all beings.

The eyes see, but having created eyes with which to see, the Creator also put lids on them. Here we seem to have some freedom: it is possible to keep the eyes open and see, and it is possible to close the eyes, and - I'm not going to say

'not see' - 'see' what we want to see! If we have our eyes open, we see what is. If we have our eyes closed, we create our own seeing, our own vision. This is a very peculiar trick of the mind. We have the freedom to keep our eyes, the inner eye of insight, open, observing, enquiring, seeking constantly for this un-obvious truth or reality concerning ourselves and our relationships, concerning what exists, what is; and we have the privilege of shutting our eyes, and creating our own reality. The Creator has created eyelids; if you want to close them, close them.

If we close our eyes and try to walk, we find that everything on our path is wrong - the door is in the wrong place, the chair is in the wrong place - everything is wrong. That is our life. There is no end to blame. Everyone else is wrong. But our eyes are closed! If we open our eyes, the whole world is open space. These two possibilities exist in God's creation.

What happens if insight does not function?

moghasa moghakarmano moghajnana vicetasah raksasimasurim caiva prakrtim mohinim sritah (IX:12)

"Of vain hopes, of vain actions, of vain knowledge and senseless, they verily are possessed of the deceitful nature of demons and undivine beings."

There is no condemnation here. Simply, people who don't want to keep their eyes open, walk along a dark path. With their eyes closed, they bump into this, and they fall over that. They fight here, and they curse there. That is all. They complain against one thing or the other throughout their lives. The only person they do not complain against is the undertaker. All their hopes end in frustration. Even self effort becomes futile if insight is lost.

But, it is not as though the blind do not see. They see, but it is their own creation. When we are blind spiritually, it is not that we do not see - we see, and that is the danger. We see a separate reality, a reality created by our own stupidity, our own ignorance, our own blindness. This is one path. But, those who pursue it, find life continually frustrating. Their life is a nightmare of endless unhappiness.

There is a lovely verse in the Yoga Vasistha which says: "That world which, to an ignorant man, is hell, is itself heaven to the enlightened." This very world is transformed into heaven in the eyes of the enlightened. And, the sage Ramana Maharshi was fond of this verse: "If you have the vision of wisdom or God-consciousness, then you will see God, and God alone, everywhere." My Gurudev Swami Sivananda often used to sing a lovely song: "O Lord, come and dwell in my eyes." When God dwells in our eyes, it is inevitable that we should see God, and God alone, everywhere. But, if in the words of Jesus Christ, "Our

light be darkness," then we create our own world, and that world is full of suffering and sorrow, confusion and conflict. Krishna does not say we should not go that way. He merely says that, if we take that path, this is what will happen.

mahatmanastu mam partha daivim prakrtimasritah bhajantyananyamanaso jnatva
bhtitadimavyayam (IX:13)

"But the great souls, O Arjuna, partaking of My divine nature, worship Me with a single mind - with the mind devoted to nothing else, knowing Me as the imperishable source of beings." The holy ones take the same path, only with eyes open. It is not as though the holy man has one path, and the unholy man another. It is the same path; only the unholy man has his eyes closed, and the holy one has his eyes open. The road is exactly the same. The great ones live exactly as we live; they also eat, drink, sleep, they laugh and they cry - everything. Krishna even goes so far as to say that the wise man must live in exactly the same style as the unwise man, but inwardly unattached. Yet, it is not something which can be exhibited. The difference is un-obvious. The difference between what is called the divine path, the path of light, and the path of darkness, is un-obvious. Only the one who is walking knows whether his eyes are open or not. The path is the same; the process of walking is the same. Life is the same for all, whether we are holy or unholy. There is no difference. The holy ones walk with the inner eye open; they know that God pervades all in a not-so-obvious way. And therefore, they constantly seek God, seek reality, knowing that in everything is this unobvious truth.

The moment the unobvious is abandoned and the obvious is resorted to, we create another problem. The obvious becomes the focal point of relationship. The unobvious relationship is one of oneness, and therefore not a relationship at all. God alone exists; the self alone exists. The self is one. If the entire universe, according to scientists, 'implodes', all is one. We are all one. And, in order that this realisation of oneness may not be disturbed, the holy one keeps his eyes open, constantly seeking the non-obvious reality in all that is obvious. Doesn't he love? Of course he loves. But, even as he says, "I love you," he is enquiring, "Who am I, and who are you?" If in that enquiry, 'I' disappears and 'you' disappears, there is love. When there is an obvious relationship - "I love you" - it is God's Grace if it lasts until morning. It is brittle; not even fragile, but brittle.

One must constantly remember this simple factor: there is an un-obvious reality pervading this entire universe, and that is the reality. The appearance appears only to me, and this is all I am capable of in this state of consciousness. But, constantly looking for the unobvious reality, I am ever alert, wide awake, and therefore become divine. Divine because the insight is bright; divine through constant seeking.

6. The Eye of Insight

It seems so simple, so easy to be holy. It merely involves keeping our eyes open - not only the physical eyes, but the internal vision. Put thus simply, it seems to be almost natural. We are only asked to be awake - and we are awake, aren't we? What are the difficulties? As long as light shines, there is sight. And yet, throughout this teaching runs the 'not-so-obviousness' of the reality.

As we begin to question more, we discover that there is a very curious distinction between an external light and the light of insight. If the insight is there all the time, then we are holy; it's as simple as that. But, what is the distinction between that light which is fixed on the wall, and this light of insight? In the light on the wall, you are able to see the other, which is other than the light. And, the light being luminous, doesn't need another to illumine it. It illumines itself and the other.

But, this doesn't seem to be the case with insight. When insight is focused on 'the other' - external phenomenon, or even on what is called the mental state, it itself remains not so obvious. One is unable to experience the existence of this insight. Why is its presence not experienced as clearly as the wall light? The wall light illumined the other as well as itself; but, in the case of insight, there seems to be a deadly choice - either the insight is aware of the other or aware of itself - as in the case of a yogi in samadhi. Why is it that this focusing agency functions on the 'either-or' principle?

We may not find a decent answer to this, unless we affirm to ourselves that, in a not-so-obvious manner, the one divine presence fills and pervades all things.

maya tatamidam sarvam jagadavyaktamurtina matsthani sarvabhutani na caham tesvavasthitah
(IX:4)
"All this world is pervaded by Me in My unmanifest aspect; all beings exist in Me, but I do not dwell in them."

When that truth sinks deeper and deeper, we might discover that there are moments when the inside-outside division becomes almost non-existent. This seems to be directly related to the transparency of the mind. The more dense, cluttered, and opaque the mental substance, the more difficult to gain even momentary insight. Therefore, Krishna, while describing the meditational technique in minute detail, says that the practice is merely for self-purification.

When the mind is purified by right living, right thinking, right meditation, and service, it becomes transparent, and that transparent mind instantly abolishes the fictitious distinction between inside and outside. Until then, it seems to be very real. When this distinction disappears, the distinction between you and me, between this and that, also disappears. These distinctions have been created by a mind cluttered with thoughts. As long as we think we are distinct and separate entities, it will be impossible for the mind to conceive of another reality. We may dream funny dreams, but when we wake up, we will not perceive them as the

reality. We have accepted this, our waking state, as real and as long as the mind sees something as real, it cannot see another thing as the reality. Likewise, what it sees as reality, it cannot see to be unreal.

This is why great sages have said that the world is mere thought. The mind is committed to the idea or feeling that 'I am I' and 'you are you'. Therefore, when Krishna asks, "Are we one or are we many?", we suddenly realise that oneness was a thought that arose in the mind, and diversity was also a thought in the same mind. This is one type of jugglery, and that is another type of jugglery. This is one type of foolishness, and that is another type of foolishness. Then, what is the mind?

mahatmanastu mam partha daivim prakrtimasritah bhajantyananyamanaso jnatva
bhutadimavyayam (IX:13)

"But the great souls, O Arjuna, partaking of My divine nature, worship Me with a single mind - with the mind devoted to nothing else, knowing Me as the imperishable source of beings."

With a mind that contains nothing else, with a mind whose content is the sole reality called God. Is this possible? Only if the intelligence has been awakened, the heart and mind are thoroughly purified, utterly transparent, and it is realised that, whatever is thought of by the mind, is the reality converted into a thought by the mind. The mind plays these tricks like a kaleidoscope, but this play in no way alters the reality of the Reality. However one turns the kaleidoscope, the number of glass pieces and reflectors remains exactly the same, whatever the pattern you see. Thus, when we dream, we may see a million people, but all those million people are only inside the brain.

So, what is diversity and what is unity? These are thoughts that arise in the same mind. The light that illumines this mind is insight, and all that the mind observes is nothing but this insight focused in various directions. This insight itself derives its luminosity from God - because it is unable to be aware of its own source. How can the knower know himself; how can the subject know itself? It is not its own object; it is a seer, and not a seen. This insight, which is shining, which has no within and no without, no distinctions at all, intuitively becomes aware of its own reality - which is God. As long as this insight is allowed to function without distortion by the mind, without the mind diverting its focus to the objects of the world, holiness prevails. Holiness is as simple as that.

If your mind is not prepared to accept this, you may think that the yogi is a terribly selfish person - always looking within, not concerned with anything outside himself. But to him, there is no inside or outside - all experiences happen 'there', where insight arises. It is when one forgets this that he begins to relate to the world in a distorted way, pursuing pleasure, and running away from pain. In this distortion, selfishness arises. Why would selfishness ever arise in one whose insight is constantly brilliant? Selfishness arises directly from the loss of insight. The mind which is clouded, cluttered, impure, and therefore opaque, creates the illusion of division. In the case of the yogi, whose attention is focused on the insight, that problem will never arise.

But there is one problem: what about this body? It has to have something to drink, something to eat. What about life? Life being what it is, activity is inevitable, and activity brings us into relationship with other people.

Krishna gives us a formula - until it becomes the reality, it will remain a formula. Since God is described as the not-so-obvious omnipresence, the obvious - mind and thought - are directed toward the not-so-obvious in a formularised way; whatever instruments you use, and to whomsoever your doings are directed, all are God. There is nothing in the universe except the divine. This truth is not seen by the opaque mind. But, when this opacity is removed, and the mind becomes transparent, insight shines, and reveals this truth, in an intuitive, non-dualistic way.

However, until this happens, affirm that that which you call your father or mother, your husband or wife, friend, enemy, dog, cat, tree, stone - all sentient and insentient beings - is also that same spirit. Everything in the universe is filled with the same energy, the same intelligence or consciousness. Your action, the objects that you use, the persons to whom your actions are directed - all are nothing but manifestations of God. It is a remarkable truth; and, until it becomes a realisation, it is a remarkable attitude.

Though I am saying this, it is only when you see such truth exemplified in someone that you really appreciate it. I saw it in Swami Sivananda. I never saw Him treat anything as non-divine. Even in the act of closing His spectacle case, there was love. He would take His glasses from His face, fold them neatly, gently, sweetly, and put them inside the case as if they were a little baby. One did not hear a sound. And when He walked, though He was big and tall, no one heard His footstep, it was so gentle and soft. In all this, the divine presence was felt; there was great reverence for life; everything in the universe was living and bubbling with the energy of God. That realisation is beyond our conception now, and therefore it is necessary to cultivate the attitude of adoring this omnipresence at all times.

Krishna continues with another interesting feature: for everything there is a 'why'. Why do I do this? I want your affection, or I want to go to heaven. Either I want some benefit here, or I want some benefit elsewhere. Even in doing what they call duty, religious people have the motivation of going to heaven.

*traividya mam somapah putapapayajnairistva svargatim prarthayante te punyamasadya
surendralokamasnanti divyandivi devabhogan (IX:20)*
"The knowers of the three Vedas, the drinkers of soma, purified of all sins, worshipping
Me by sacrifices, pray for the way to heaven; they reach the holy world of the Lord of
the gods, and enjoy in heaven the divine pleasure of the gods."

But, why do we want to go to heaven? Heaven is only a holiday, and the scriptures are like the travel agents' brochures! We look at those brochures, and we are tempted, "My God, fantastic!" But the actual conditions there may be quite different. The flies and mosquitoes are not mentioned, the wind and the heat are

not mentioned, and it is definitely not mentioned that the moment my pocket is empty, I must go home. But this the Bhagavad Gita tells us:

te tam bhuktva svargalokam visalam ksine punye martyalokam visanti evam
trayidharmamanuprapanna gatagatam kamakama labhante (IX:21)

"They, having enjoyed the vast heaven, enter the world of mortals when their merit is exhausted; thus abiding by the injunctions of the three Vedas, and desiring objects of desires, they attain to the state of going and returning."

We struggle hard, performing righteous deeds and religious rites, and we earn a holiday in heaven. But, when our merit is exhausted - the travellers' cheques are finished - we must come back here. We wake up, and find that the holiday in heaven was like a long dream. It was a nice dream, but we wake up in the same miserable world.

ananyabcintayanto mam ye janah paryupasate tesam nityabhiyuktanam yogaksemam vahamyaham
(IX:22)

"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."

Why do we do all that we do? Why are we engaged in charitable, philanthropic works? For popularity, name, and fame, or because we want to be happy. Why do we engage ourselves in religious activities? Because we want to be happy. We can be happy, but only for a short while. Then, we may wake up, and find ourselves in the same mess.

But, it is not that we must take a different path. The path of the holy, and the path of the diabolical are not different. Life is the same! But in one case, insight is shining brightly, and in the other, the eye of insight is closed. We are all living, doing exactly the same thing. The yogi does not eat through his ears and speak through his nose. These are ridiculous visions. The yogi is an absolutely pure human being. He does what you and I do - he eats, sleeps, walks, talks, engages in religious activities - but without motivation. In the truly holy man, action does not need a motivation. Since everything is holy, everything divine, no motivation is necessary.

Unless this truth is well grasped, it is not possible to understand the verse just quoted: ananyakcintayanto mam - they who contemplate Me, think of Me constantly, and think of nothing other than Me. Is that possible? Is it possible to live a full life, yet think constantly of God and nothing else? Tesam nityabhiyuktanam yogaksemam vahamyaham. God takes care of the welfare of such people. One moment's reflection enables us to realise that. Whether or not we think of God, our welfare is guaranteed.

We are living on account of this supreme power. We are breathing on account of this supreme power that pervades the entire universe. Our welfare is already guaranteed by this omnipresent divinity, omnipresent, not-so-obvious reality. It is on account of this Grace that we are able to see, speak, hear, and think. Merely by becoming aware of this tremendous truth, we are freed from our own motivations. We live fully and vigorously, doing all that has to be done, but

without a 'because'. And that is instant freedom.

When these two are combined, contemplation of the omnipresent God is not contradicted by activity. We are able to be intensely active, yet constantly aware of God's existence.

7. Isolation Is Sin

The yoga of the Bhagavad Gita enables us to live life without being trapped. It is when we are trapped in limitation that sorrow arises. When we feel, 'I am this body' - not seeing that it is part of the totality, then sorrow arises. If that foolish idea is not there, it is quite possible to go through life experiencing all that has to be experienced, and doing all that has to be done, without 'sinning'.

Self-isolation is sin. Whether we call ourselves holy or unholy, any type of self-isolation is sin. Once we have isolated ourselves, sin and suffering are inevitable, the suffering arising out of the isolation. Because of this initial foolish and ignorant isolation, I begin to love you or to hate you, and from that love or hate, sin arises, sorrow arises. I love you, and if you are with me, I am happy. If we are separated, I am unhappy. I hate you, and I would very much like for you to disappear from the face of the earth. So, when you bump into me in the supermarket, I'm distressed.

It is the foolish idea that we can live a life of isolation that is responsible for sin and suffering, and this isolation is the function of thought. Isolation is not a fact, but the idea that you and I are one, never seems to arise in the mind. Why? Because thought is a divider and the thought, 'I am this body' divides everything else from me. The 'me' being isolated, creates divisions amongst whatever is seen. From that arise likes and dislikes, giving rise to sin and suffering.

It seems to be quite simple; but, remember that this chapter of the Gita commenced with the enigmatic statement that the truth is not so obvious. Something is obvious; but, like pain, you cannot possibly isolate it from the experiencer who experiences the pain. Thinking about it, it seems to be obvious; and, because you have made it obvious - by your thought, it slips through your fingers. This is the difference between the obvious and the unobvious, manifest and the unmanifest. The obvious is capable of being grasped by the senses or the mind, and that which is grasped, is obviously more limited than the grasping instrument. If we are able to think of God, then that God is smaller than our thought. Otherwise, how would we know his extent? What is meant by the word infinite? When I use the word infinite, I am half an inch more than infinite!

To think that we can grasp truth, already destroys it. Truth or reality can only be established by ceaseless investigation. In the Yoga Vasistha is a story of a great seeker who engaged himself in thousands of years of penance. The Lord appeared in front of him saying, "Ask for any boon." He replied, "Give me an unending boon." And the Lord said, "Be forever enquiring into the nature of truth." Forever enquire into the nature of truth, because, if you grasp the truth, it is truth no longer. To put it differently, what we call the world, is God seeing through the eyes and the ears and the tongue and the skin. What you call thought, is God conceived or grasped by thought. So, there is nothing other than God.

The very enquiry into the nature of this truth is the truth. In the Upanishads,

there is a story in which a young boy asks his father, "Father, teach me what God is, what the Infinite is." And the father replies, "It is quite simple. It is this world, your life breath, your eyesight - all these." Is it that simple? It is. If we would really investigate the nature of sight, we would become enlightened. What is it that enables us to see? We see light waves or vibrations. How is that conglomeration of vibrations turned into a swami? Investigate this. You will enter into deep samadhi, and come to the realisation of truth.

Krishna tells us:

ananyascintayanto mam ye janah paryupasate tesam nityabhiyuktanam yogaksema vahamyaham (IX:22)

"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."

We think God-realisation is so difficult and, thinking it is so difficult, we have made it so difficult. Thought wants to prove itself true. But, God-realisation may not be so difficult. God is real, whether we consider him real or not. The self is real, we are real, whether we know that we are real or not. Whether we accept that there is a God or not, God exists, because that we are.

Therefore, this God-realisation ought to be extremely easy, except that the not-so-obvious is not capable of being grasped. But, if we continue to investigate this fantastic thing, we will realise it.

Hence, Krishna tells us: "Don't worry about going to heaven; don't worry about acquiring or renouncing things here." What is renunciation? Have we left something somewhere, or are we taking it with us, gloating over our tremendous act of renunciation? What is acquisition? What is renunciation? Do we take anything from here when we go? Therefore, what is the sense in acquisition and protecting what we have?

What is all this? When we look for an obvious reality, we create our own reality by our own thought. Reality is not something which is speculative - it 'is' - and must be enquired into. When we learn the supreme art of investigating every phenomenon, we are in God. Not taking anything for granted, keeping our hearts and minds open, and investigating everything, we have realised God. It is then that we can fulfil the marvellous statement: "They who think of Me constantly, their welfare I guarantee." Yet, everyone's welfare is guaranteed; what will happen is already guaranteed.

If we have the courage and intelligence to investigate life, we discover that all that is needed at a given moment has already been created years ago. The wheat for the bread that I had this morning grew specifically for me three years ago. This does not mean that we should go into hibernation, but simply realise that all is provided already. This is the heavenly manna sitting right in front of us. Why look for other than this? Everything that you and I need has already been created. By investigating this phenomenon, which is not so obvious, we can keep our

minds, hearts, intelligence, and awareness, so brilliant, that we are on the right track all the time. There can be no wrong track in this world - from what is commonly considered good, we can learn with proper investigation, and from what is commonly considered evil, we can learn, if we investigate properly.

The expression - *ananyascintayanto mam* - can be translated as "you should not think of anyone else." To some it sounds as though you must think of Krishna and Krishna alone - no other 'gods'. But, it is these people who are the creators of gods. If we do not accept that there are many gods, why would we think this? But, to prevent even this misunderstanding, Krishna introduces an argument:

ye' pyanyadevata bhakta yajante sraddhayanvitah te' pi mameva kaunteya yajantyavidhipurvakam (IX:23)

"Even those devotees who, endowed with faith, worship other gods, worship Me alone, O Arjuna, by the wrong method."

If we happen to worship or adore others as God, there is no harm in it. That which is obvious, is our own mental creation. In the Upanishads, there are indications that we can worship our father as God, our mother as God, our guru as God or our guest as God. And Baba Muktananda said to treat each other as God. But, the moment we become aware of something 'as God', in the sense that this is the infinite, not-so-obvious reality in the universe, then we are on the right track - not merely to offer some flowers to a statue, but to treat that statue as God. From the obvious, which is the statue, we are investigating the nature of God. "This looks like a stone, but I am worshipping it as a symbol of God. What is this God?" When we keep the spirit of enquiry sharp, it is never ending.

There is a simple example to illustrate this - the black widow spider. The male and female carry on a pre-nuptial dance; but, once mating takes place, the female eats up the male. That is precisely what happens in God-realisation. We go on seeking and seeking, investigating and enquiring into the nature of God. "What is God?" Is there an answer to that question? Yes; but, when the answer arises, the questioner is not there! Swami Sivananda wrote a very beautiful poem:

Ignorance knocked, wisdom opened the door. And lo! Ignorance ceased to be.

Ignorance cannot face wisdom. Darkness cannot face light. Even so, the ego cannot face God. The ego seeks to find and know the ultimate reality; but, when it comes to the end of that enquiry, it is gone. The assumed isolation comes to an end. Even in seeking there is isolation. It is only because we originally isolated ourselves that we begin to seek. That has come to an end. Worship anything as God, but keep alert and aware, enquiring constantly into the nature of truth, and you will come to that one and the same being. Krishna tells us, "I - God - am the one that absorbs the offerings of all, whatever they bring with devotion."

patram puspam phalam toyam yo me bhaktya prayacchati tadaham bhaktyupahrtamasnami prayatatmanah (IX:26)

"Whoever offers Me with devotion and a pure mind - heart, a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or a little water - I accept this offering."

If you adore God with whatever you have - and here God means anything - through this, you will realise the omnipresent being.

Here we have complete and total freedom to worship the supreme in any way that we like, with anything that we like, so that eventually we learn to look upon all as God, and offer everything to him.

There is a beautiful verse near the end of the Gita:

yatah pravrttirbhutanam yena sarvamidam tatam svakarmana tamabhyarcya siddhim vindati
manavah (XVIII:46)

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

God dwells in all. The entire universe is arisen in God, as dream objects arise in us. Whatever we do, we offer that as worship to this omnipresent God who is the source of all beings. It is not what we do, or what we offer, but our feeling that matters. Whatever we give to anyone, if it is given with great affection and love, in that, there is God; in that love, there is God. It is love that heals, it is love that builds, it is love that promotes everything in this world. And, if that love is there, whatever we give, to whomever, becomes an offering to the infinite God.