

In this stanza we have Krishna's first direct statement on the technique of Self-Perfection and, as such, a very careful study of it will be extremely fruitful to all students of the Geeta.

The three pairs of opposites mentioned here are distinct experiences at the three levels of our mortal existence. PAIN AND PLEASURE are the "intellectual" awareness of experiences unfavourable and favourable; GAIN AND LOSS conceptions indicate the "mental" zone where we feel the joys of meeting and the sorrows of parting; and CONQUEST AND DEFEAT indicate the "physical" fields wherein at the level of the body, we ourselves win or let others win. The advice that Krishna gives is that one must learn to keep oneself in equilibrium in all these different vicissitudes at the respective levels of existence.

If one were to enter the sea for a bath, one must know the art of sea-bathing or else the incessant waves will play rough on the person, and may even sweep him off his feet and drag him to a watery grave. But he who knows the art of saving himself --- by ducking beneath the mighty waves, or by riding over the lesser ones --- he alone can enjoy a sea-bath. To hope all the waves to end, or to expect the waves not to trouble one while one is in the sea is to order the sea to be something other than itself for one's convenience! This is exactly what a foolish man does in life. He expects life to be without waves --- but life is ever full of waves. Pain and pleasure, gain and loss, conquest