

COMMENTARY ON THE BHAGAVADGITA



SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The Srimad Bhagavad Gita, one of the sacred scriptures of Sanatana Dharma, is considered on par with the Vedas. Adiguru Sri Sankaracharya, in his classical commentary on the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, says, {Ü{dYm {h dXmP\$no Y'© àdYfmbj U... {ZdYfmbj UfM: The Veda speaks of twofold Dharma—engaging in actions and renunciation of actions. He further says, àm{UZm² gmj nV² AäYK{Z...I QghVw.Y...g Y'© This twofold Dharma is the tool which directly promotes the prosperity as well as the liberation of all living beings.

With the flux of time, this Dharma got corrupted and the Supreme Lord incarnated as Vasudev to re-establish it. The compassionate Lord taught the Dharma to Arjuna through his immortal song the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, which was later on brought out by Sage Vedavyasa in his monumental work, the Mahabharata. Sage Vedavyasa testifies to the authenticity of this sacred Gita, saying:

JrVmgwVrVmH\$fm{H\$'YQj..emO{dnVaj..&
QmndQjsnÜZm^nQ 'w nÜm{Ü{ZgV/m..&

What is the need of studying other scriptures when we have the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, which has directly come from the sacred lips of Lord Sri Krishna? Therefore, one should engage oneself in the study of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita.

The Srimad Bhagavad Gita is read all over the world, and has also been translated into many languages. Signifying the supreme glory of this divine scripture, Sadgurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj says, “Just as the dark, unfathomed

depths of ocean contain most precious pearls, so also the Gita contains spiritual gems of incalculable value.” Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj, the scholarly saint of our Ashram, dived deep into the ocean of this sacred scripture and culled sublime and soul-stirring spiritual truths. Sri Swamiji Maharaj most graciously shared his wisdom treasure with all through a series of talks given in 1989, and made seekers eternally indebted to him.

We are immensely happy to bring out the book *Commentary on the Bhagavadgita* by Pujya Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj as our worshipful offering on his 13th Punyatithi Aradhana. We hope that earnest seekers and students of philosophy will be benefited by this book.

May the blessings of Lord Krishna and Sadgurudev be ever upon all.

—The Divine Life Society

PREFACE

Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya

Glory to Lord Krishna, the World Teacher, who gave the immortal teachings of the Bhagavad Gita to Arjuna in the middle of a battlefield.

The Bhagavad Gita is a universal gospel which has been translated into many modern languages. It is a “Song Celestial” in seven hundred verses. Numerous commentaries have been written on this book, which are studied all over the world. The teachings are practical. They can be applied in all circumstances in one’s life.

Bharatavarsha is held in high esteem the world over due to the Bhagavad Gita. Mahatma Gandhi once asked the librarian in one of the biggest libraries in London: “What spiritual book do you most often issue?” The librarian replied, “The Gita.”

Mahatma Gandhi himself said, “I lost my mother when I was young, but the Gita has been a mother to me. In all moments of sorrow and dejection, whenever I opened the Gita and read one or two verses here or there, it consoled me.”

Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji, who was a leading disciple of His Holiness Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji, served Gurudev’s institution as General Secretary for almost forty years. Originally he gave a series of talks on the Gita in the early seventies, some of which I had the privilege of attending. Then in 1989, at the request of many devotees from both the East and West, Pujya Swamiji gave the 51 discourses included in this book.

Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj expounded this Great Book in a very easy way that even a layman can understand. In his discourses he gave numerous interesting incidents and brief stories which created great interest among the listeners. This wonderful book throws a flood of light on the subject and illumines our path. When the path is illumined you can walk steadily towards the goal. Therefore, study these discourses regularly and make your life sublime.

It is my sincere hope that this book has a wide circulation and that a large number of people will read these discourses of Pujya Swami Krishnanandaji and derive immense benefit.

May the choicest blessings of Lord Krishna ever be upon all.

Swami Vimalananda
President,
The Divine Life Society Hqs.

Sri Krishna Janmashtami
August 17, 2014

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Anu Gita	.	.	.	.	.	.	Anu
Bilvashtaka Stotra	.	.	.	.	.	.	Bilva
Brahma Sutra	.	.	.	.	.	.	B.S.
Brahma Vaivarta Purana	.	.	.	.	.	.	B.V.
Brihadaranyaka Upanishad	.	.	.	.	.	.	B.U.
Isavasya Upanishad	.	.	.	.	.	.	Isa
Katha Upanishad	.	.	.	.	.	.	Katha
Mahabharata	.	.	.	.	.	.	M.B.
Mandukya Upanishad	.	.	.	.	.	.	Ma.U.
Munduka Upanishad.	.	.	.	.	.	.	M.U.
Patanjali's Yoga Sutras	.	.	.	.	.	.	Y.S.
Purusha Sukta	.	.	.	.	.	.	P.S.
Rigveda	.	.	.	.	.	.	R.V.
Siksastakam	.	.	.	.	.	.	Siksa
Sri Caitanya Caritamrta	.	.	.	.	.	.	C.C.
Srimad Bhagavata	.	.	.	.	.	.	S.B.
Taittiriya Upanishad	.	.	.	.	.	.	T.U.
Yoga Vasishtha	.	.	.	.	.	.	Y.V.

Unless otherwise specified, all the verses quoted in this book are from the Bhagavadgita.

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**COMMENTARY
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Discourse 1

THE COLOPHON OF THE BHAGAVADGITA

Brahmavidyāyām yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvāde. These words occur at the end of each chapter of the Bhagavadgita. Those who do not know Sanskrit might not have even noticed this. Those who know Sanskrit just take it for granted and bypass it as something that needs to be recited at the end of each chapter, whatever the reason may be. But there is no redundant word in the Bhagavadgita. There is nothing that can be bypassed or considered as introductory, just to be glossed over. Even if there is a well-known apostrophe—*śrībhagavān-uvāca*—that also has a meaning by itself.

What does the Bhagavadgita teach? It teaches three things: *brahmavidyāyām yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvāde.* It is repeatedly dinned into our ears what the Gita teaches. The commentaries on the Gita say that it teaches karma yoga, *raja* yoga, *bhakti* yoga, *jnana* yoga, a synthesis of yoga, the art of living, and whatnot. But the Gita itself tells us what it teaches by a colophon, which is in three words only: *brahmavidyāyām yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvāde.* Actually, these three words mean theory, practice, and realisation.

There is theoretical physics, practical physics, and there is the technological implementation of it. Theoretical physics is the advanced conceptualisation of the fundamental structure of physical reality, in whatever form. Then, with this insight gained through a methodological, systematic study of the constituents of matter, matter becomes more amenable and

one can handle it more easily. An unknown object is fearsome. The more we know it and the more we become intimate with it, the easier it is for us to handle it for any given purpose.

Brahma-vidya is the science of the Absolute—that system of thinking which is enabled to comprehend within itself at any time the total structure of things. To conceive the Absolute is to at once take into consideration, in our processes of thought, all things connected with the object of thought—not only the inner constituents of the object as such, but also the relations that the object bears to other objects. The reality of a particular thing is not only in itself; it is also in that which determines it, restricts it, influences it, conditions it, defines it, and makes it what it is.

Every individual is an entity by itself. But this 'being an entity by itself' is not so simple a matter as it appears on the surface. As human individuals, we appear to be totally isolated persons, and we stand by ourselves, unrelated to things outside. We can be in our own rooms, unnoticed and unconnected to things. But, we are not unconnected to things. The physical atmosphere, the social atmosphere, the political atmosphere, and the psychological atmosphere determine us. So even if we are alone in our rooms, we do not forget that our individuality is conditioned by the presence of these laws of society, of government, of physical nature, and of the thoughts of people in general. Hence, our individuality is only a chimera, and total individuality by itself is not a possibility.

There is a relation of 'A' to 'B'. If 'A' was not related to 'B', we would not be conscious that 'A' is independent of 'B'. If we say an object is red in colour, it is not an independent perception of the redness of the object. It is, at the same time, a distinction that we draw between the redness and the other colours which are not red. If there was only redness everywhere, we would not be able to perceive the redness of things. There is

a distinction in the characteristic of a particular object which is red. That distinction lies in the fact that it is *not* what is not red. It is red, and it is not what is not red. The not-ness is a negative influence exerted on this object.

We are human beings, and we are not animals. Our not being animals is a conditioning factor even if we are individual human beings. The existences that are outside us are not actually outside us. They influence us. What I mean finally is that in the concept of this Total, or the Absolute, it is not enough if we just look at it as if it is clear to us. We have to probe into the structural pattern of the object in its relation to atmospheric conditions outside also, which determines it in quality as well as in quantity, so that to think in an Absolute fashion would be to recognise the total structure of the universe even in an atom, and to see the whole government in a single official. We can summon the entire government, if necessary, though no official can be called the government. In a similar manner, any object can draw sustenance from everything in the universe.

Brahma-vidya is the art and the science of educating oneself in the manner of correctly perceiving the world as such, including one's own self, in the totality of relations, so that no partial vision of things can be regarded as a passport to the concept of the Absolute. Mostly—or always, I may say—our perceptions are partial. They are limited to certain conditions. It is a condition related to a marketplace, a railway station, a bus stand, an office, a factory or a house. These are the things that limit our thoughts, but we do not rise above the apparent outwardness of these conditions and go inside to the relationship of these things to other things.

This is a very difficult thing to maintain in the mind, because the human mind is sensorily restricted. It is externalised in its nature, and total perception is neither externalised

nor internalised. It is a blend of the external and the internal, so that we stand in the middle, between our perceiving capacity and the object that is perceived. In a total perception of things, we are not in ourselves; we have transcended ourselves. Nor are we in the object; we have transcended the object. We are in the middle as the blend—a blending consciousness which brings about a harmony between the seer and the seen, or between any two faces of reality. In all situations, there are two aspects: the cause, or the causative factor, and the effect upon which the cause seems to have an impact. It is very difficult for us to see the relation between cause and effect. Mostly we see the cause as one thing and the effect as another.

Brahma-vidya is an intricate subject. It is not just repeating some words of the Upanishads or the Brahma Sutras or even the Gita. It is the entry of the consciousness into the very import of the teaching, which is suggested in many of the verses of the Bhagavadgita itself. *Mattaḥ parataram nānyat kiñcid asti* (7.7); *aham ātmā guḍākeśa sarvabhūtāsāyasthitaḥ* (10.20); *paśya me pārtha rūpāṇi śataśo'tha sahastraśaḥ* (11.5); *divyaṁ dadāmi te cakṣuḥ paśya me yogam aiśvaram* (11.8); *jñeyam yat tat pravakṣyāmi yaj jñātvāmṛtam aśnute, anādi-mat param brahma na sat tan nāsad ucyate* (13.12); *sarvataḥ-pāṇipādaṁ tat sarvato'kṣiśiromukham, sarvataḥśrutimal loke sarvam āvṛtya tiṣṭhati* (13.13): The Total has eyes everywhere, has feet everywhere, has hands everywhere, because it is neither a subject nor an object. In the total perception of things, we are not ourselves, nor are we other than what we are. We are something beyond both what we are and what is other than what we are. This is the final import, as it were, of the Brahma-vidya aspect of the Bhagavadgita.

But, as I mentioned, theoretical physics has to lead to applied physics. What is the use of merely knowing things? This knowledge has to be applied in practical life. In a similar

manner, this Brahma-vidya, which is the knowledge of the integrality of things, has to be put into daily implementation in our teacups, in our fountain pens, in our angry gestures, in our prejudices, in our desires, in our attractions, in our repulsions. In every situation, this Brahma-vidya has to be there. We have to be total and whole persons always. We cannot be whole only at some time, and a fraction at some other time. Will we be whole persons in our offices, and only a percentage in our houses? We are whole everywhere, but if we behave in different ways at different times, and convert ourselves into fractions of human personality, as it were, we are not living a wholesome life. It is not a holistic approach to things.

Brahma-vidya is to be applied in the Yoga Shastra, which is the daily application of our consciousness, our mind, our attitude, to anything in the world in terms of the lesson that we have learnt through Brahma-vidya. What is the purpose of this practice of yoga in terms of the wisdom that we gain through Brahma-vidya? It is *kṛṣṇārjunasaṁvāda*: the conversation of the soul with God. *Kṛṣṇārjunasaṁvāda* is the conversation of the soul with the Absolute. The soul speaks to the Absolute. Arjuna's envisaging the mighty Krishna is symbolic of the soul envisaging the Cosmic Being in its daily life.

Who can encounter the Absolute? Who can talk with God, unless we are flaming and blazing forth in the purity of our spirit as God Himself is? Unless we have transcended the limitations of flesh and bone and the limitations of the psyche which are conditioned socially, politically, etc., unless we are able to lift our consciousness above these limitations, how will we converse with God? Who can dare approach God, when there is no communicating medium between ourselves and God? The wavelength of our individuality and the wavelength of God are in such contrast that there is no mingling of these two factors. The radio station of God is sending messages.

We are unable to receive any message from God because our receiving sets here have a very feeble wavelength and, therefore, no message is received. The Yoga Shastra, or the practice of yoga, is nothing but the tuning of the wavelength of our receiving sets to the wavelength of the message that comes from God's broadcasting station.

This is Yoga Shastra; and the purpose of this is to contact God directly. There is no use of thinking God, praying to God, feeling God, and imagining that one day we will realise God. It is necessary to confront Him every day, if it is true that He is present in every atom, as they say. In every atom He is vibrating, as the sun is vibrating in the solar system. If that is the case, He is to be contacted just now. God is a *here* and a *now*, and not an *afterwards* or a *somewhere* or a *someone*. He is without these limitations of the concept of space and time. Contact with God is contact with timelessness, with eternity, with just-ness, now-ness and here-ness. Such is the import of the final teaching of the Bhagavadgita, where the soul communes with God in its realisation of the perfection that it has to achieve finally through the Yoga Shastra. This is the practice of the discipline necessary in this world in the light of the knowledge of Brahma-vidya, which is the theoretical education that we receive of how the world is made, finally.

First we have to know, then we have to do, and then we have to realise. A similar reference is made in the Eleventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgita. It is not enough if we merely see and know, but we have to enter into it. It is necessary for us to enter into God in our daily life. It is not enough if we are merely thinking as a kind of outer whitewash on our body. Then it will remain like a whitewash outside only, and it will not be part of our structure.

The entry into God's existence every day is the living of the divine life, and we should not think that this is a very hard

thing. Who can enter into God every day? Where is God? Is He in some unimaginable infinity? It is nothing of the kind. *Sarvataḥ pāṇipādaṁ tat sarvatokṣīṣiromukham, sarvataḥ śrutimal loke sarvam āvṛtya tiṣṭhati* (13.13); *mattaḥ parataram nānyat kiñcid asti* (7.7): Outside God, nothing exists. If that is the case, what is the distance between us and God? Distance is abolished. It is a distanceless, timeless contact. That is possible for us, provided that we open the gates of our personality, open the windows to the sunshine of the Supreme Being that is illuminating us perpetually, and melt our egos, which affirm that "I also exist together with God". The biblical fall of Satan is nothing but the story of the affirmation of the ego in the presence of God: "If you are there, I am also there." The devotee says, "God, Thou art, but I am also there to contemplate You." That devotee should not be there at all. Let that devotee melt, and then God possesses him. The ocean enters into the rivers, and the world melts into the consciousness which is a now and a here.

The Bhagavadgita is a Brahma-vidya, a Yoga Shastra, *śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvāda*. It is a theoretical understanding of the structure of the cosmos, the practice of yoga, and the daily contact with God in our practical affairs, which is true divine life.

Discourse 2

THE FIRST CHAPTER

VISADA YOGA, THE YOGA OF THE DEJECTION OF THE SPIRIT

The Bhagavadgita is a system of meditation. It is not a story that is being told to us of what might have happened centuries back. It is a concentrated spiritual guide which takes us from the very level in which we find ourselves at any given moment of time, and enables us to rise from that level to the next higher level, from the next higher level to a further higher level, and so on, in a graduated manner. There is no double promotion or sudden jumps in the teachings of the Bhagavadgita.

In a way, we may say that the Bhagavadgita starts with the worst of conditions that we can think of. What can be worse than battle? We know that the Gita was not taught in a temple or in a church or a monastery, which would have been the proper place for a teaching on Eternity. Is a battlefield the proper place for a teaching on timeless existence? The reason the Gita was taught on a battlefield is that a spiritual life is not merely an idealism of human aspiration, a possibility of future attainment, but a realism of the present moment. There is no use having ideas of a possible attainment in the future without appreciating its connection with the condition existing today. As it is said, we cannot jump out of our own skin. We are planted on the earth so firmly. Our feet are so sunk in the mire of this physical existence that whatever be the power with which the mind soars into the empyrean of the transcendent,

it will not allow us to forget that our feet are in clay. That is the reason why the situation that can be considered as most abominable has been taken as the venue for the teaching of that which is the best of all teachings. It is as if from hell we are rising to the highest heaven.

The conflicts of human society are presented in the First Chapter of the Bhagavadgita; and the otherwise very adventurous and enthusiastic spiritual seeker is likely to suddenly find himself or herself in a predicament which would be ruled by the emotions and sentiment rather than reason. Arjuna asked Sri Krishna: "Please place my chariot between the two armies so that I may have a purview of what I am facing." Sri Krishna could have done this and kept quiet. But he would not keep quiet. He uttered a few words that stirred the emotions of Arjuna: "Look at the Kurus arrayed in front of you!" If at the proper moment I utter one word, it will go so deep into you that you will never forget it. At a proper time I should say that proper word, like pressing a button at the proper moment. The name Kuru refers to the ancestral family from where the Kauravas and the Pandavas both descended. To say, "Look at the Kurus," is to say, "Look at the field which is filled with your own kinsmen, as you have all descended from the Kurus." The blood of the Kurus flowed through the veins of the Pandavas and of the Kauravas. It was a family feud, and the name Kuru stimulated sentiments of an emotional concord towards these kinsmen.

Even if we dislike one of our relatives for some reason, we cannot forget that person is related to us. The idea that "he is a relative and known to me, and very much intimate with me" will come up one day or the other, in spite of other factors that may make us dislike that person. This is because blood relations are so very intense in a biological sense. A mother's love for the child is due to the fact that her own biological stuff

is flowing through the child—and she loves herself, as it were, in her love for the child. In a similar manner is the love for relations.

Arjuna hated the Kauravas to such an extent that he did not want them to live. And then he thought, “But they are my kinsmen. These are my nephews, these are my brethren, these are my Gurus, these are my teachers; this is the set of people who have brought me up.” There was Bhishma, for instance, on whose lap Arjuna sat as a little baby, and there was Drona, who was the master archer and also the Guru of the Pandavas. It was because of the learning that the Pandavas received from Drona that they were able to stand on the battle-field. Ingratitude is supposed to be the worst of sins. Arjuna felt, “Am I ungrateful to these great warriors who are, first of all, my own relatives, and are most revered elders? There is nothing worse than ingratitude.” The name Kuru stimulated a biological sentiment of affection in Arjuna rather than the rational military spirit with which he wanted to enter the field.

I often feel that the First Chapter is the most important chapter in the Gita, while many people skip it because they think it is only an introduction, and start with the Second Chapter. In my book entitled *The Philosophy of the Bhagavadgita*, six chapters are devoted to explaining the First Chapter. No one else has written so much on the First Chapter. The point is, to understand where we stand now is more important than to focus on what we would expect to happen afterwards. Forgetting the present predicament is to become feeble at our base when we try to ascend further and further. Every step that we take in spiritual life should be a firm step. It does not matter if we take only one step, but it should be a firm step. If we hurriedly take steps, there is the possibility that afterwards we may have to retrace our steps. That should not be done. Even if years are needed to take these steps, it does

not matter, as long as the little that we have achieved is a firm and solid achievement.

When the spiritual seeker passes some years in self-abnegation, a determined spirit arises: "I have risen above all the desires of the world. I have had enough of all things. I am now here to fight the battle of life, to transcend the world, to face it, to overcome it, and then to go beyond it." The Pandavas facing the Kauravas is like a spiritual seeker facing the whole world. The objective sentiments are represented by the Kauravas, and the subjective sentiments are represented by the Pandavas. It is difficult for the subject to face the object entirely on the assumption that it is an alien element that is outside, because the world is not an alien element. The blood of the subject flows through the very fibre of the objective world. The individual is a content of the world and, therefore, all the realities of the world are also seen in the realities of the physical personality. There is nothing in us which is not in the outside world. We will realise later on that when we fight this battle of life and want to overcome the temptations and the errors of perception in the world, we are actually heading towards a battle against our own self. We will discover that the forces that we have to face and overcome in the form of an assumed externality of the world are actually in us, because all the faces of reality, positive or negative, that one tries to visualise in the outside world are in a miniature form in our personality.

The three *gunas* of *prakriti*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—constitute everything in the world, and they also constitute our physical personality. Even our minds are conditioned by these three *gunas*. Therefore, any kind of envisagement by the subjective consciousness in respect of the outside world would have to take into consideration the fact that the envisager is constituted of the very same elements that constitute the objective world, in the same way as the blood that was

in the Pandavas was also in the Kauravas. And so we feel a sense of fright, a sense of diffidence.

Spiritual seekers who are honest in their pursuit will begin to feel a sense of internal fear and tremor after years of spiritual practice, due to various questions that will arise which did not arise earlier because they had a wrong notion that the things they have to fight against are totally outside. The experience in spiritual meditation, living with Gurus, doing austerities in ashrams, etc., will slowly bring out the facts of the inner components of nature, and after years of living a monastic life or a spiritual life under a Guru, a fright of an unknown nature will take possession of the individual.

Questions arose in the mind of Arjuna: "Is it proper to stand against the very same constituents that are also the constituents of my personality? That is to say, can I fight against my own relatives? Is it ethically sanctioned?" In a family, is it permissible or ethical if one member attacks another member? The Kuru family included all the Kauravas and all the Pandavas, and in this attitude of military onslaught it appears as if a large family is fighting against itself, like a house divided against itself. Is this ethically permissible and of any practical utility at all? It looks like patricide, homicide, and any kind of 'cide', which is condemned in ethical courts.

Secondly, the spiritual seeker feels a doubt of another kind: "Am I deserting the world in my enthusiasm for God?" Advanced spiritual seekers will have such questions. "Have I not a duty towards people who are suffering? Am I to fly to God individually, allowing my own brethren, kinsmen and humanity to wallow in the mire of ignorance? Is it not my duty to be of some assistance to these sufferers?" A little bit of spiritual enlightenment is like a half-baked pot, which breaks when water is poured into it. It breaks the very determination of the spiritual seeker to reach God, and he would like to become a

saviour of the world, a worker for the welfare of mankind. He goes to foreign countries, establishes centres, has thousands of devotees, and feels a satisfaction that his mission is fulfilled. This is an extension of the logic of Arjuna's feeling that the world is too much of a reality to be bypassed so easily with the feeling that it can be attacked, subjugated and destroyed, because of the fact that it has a relation of kinship with oneself. "They are *me* and, therefore, I have a duty towards them; and my duty is not to oppose them, but to feel for them." This is one question.

Another question that arises in the spiritual seeker is: "I have practised meditation for twenty years, and have lived in an ashram for forty years. What is it that I have achieved, finally?" There will be a despondency of spirit. "If forty years have not brought anything, what is the guarantee that another twenty years will bring something? Perhaps there is some error." A very intelligent friend of mine who is living in a nearby ashram—who is practically the founder of that ashram, a veteran who worked day and night for establishing that ashram—came to me one day, after twenty years of hard work in establishing that ashram. I was going for a walk, and by chance he was walking behind me. He asked, "Are you also finding time to read the commentary on the Gita by Jnaneshwara—the chapter on meditation? Swamiji, do you really believe in these things?" He asked me, "Do you really believe in these things?" His mind had gone off a little bit, somehow or other. His enthusiasm for social welfare and for establishing a centre of Hindu revivalism possessed him to such an extent that his nerves broke down, he had a heart attack, and doubts arose in his mind regarding the existence of God Himself; and he is now in a broken condition.

This is not the problem of a beginner in spirituality. It is the problem of an advanced person in spirituality. The world

is not afraid of a beginner; it knows that he is a fly, so it does not care. An elephant does not care about a fly sitting on it, but if a lion comes in front of it, it will be conscious of the lion. Similarly, the world will not care to recognise even ten or fifteen years of *japa*, meditation, etc., because these *japas* are not going to touch even the skin or the fringe of the reality of life. But if we are determined, the world begins to feel that we actually mean to encounter it. Then it will show its teeth and claws, and will stir up the emotions which had been buried inside, and the renunciation that we resorted to will irrationally sink down into the sentiments of unfulfilled subconscious potentialities, and petty desires will manifest themselves. A person may be a well-to-do individual, coming from a rich family, and he may have renounced that for the sake of the pursuit of God. But after thirty or forty years of meditation, he may feel so starved and his appetite will increase so much that he will eat much more than he had eaten when he was with his family, and petty desires will arise for things like a wristwatch or a radio. He had been a well-to-do man, the son of a big landlord, but that does not matter because individual sentiments manifest themselves only when the social sentiments are suppressed.

When we are well placed in the midst of society and everybody respects us, we cannot know what kind of persons we are. Society should reject us or we should reject society, either one or the other, and then we will stand by ourselves. At that time, what we are in our basic subconscious will surface, and we will be neither rich nor poor; we will be just sentimental individuals like anybody else. Then the doubts arise: "This is not for me." "I have made a mistake in choosing the Guru. I will have to go to another Guru." "My meditations must have been wrongly manoeuvred." "What happens to me? When I die, I lose all things. This world is lost for me." "I have a father

and a mother who love me.” The little affection of those parents and relatives will sting like a scorpion when everything is cut off and there is nothing for us to stand upon. And, as I mentioned, silly desires, most irrational instincts, will take possession of the individual when he totally cuts himself off from society and becomes an itinerant monk or an austere individual, starving his sentiments. “What is the guarantee that I will attain God in this birth? It may be a great hope, but from what has happened to me over the last fifty years, I realise that I have achieved nothing. I have not taken even one step in the direction of God-realisation.”

The sentiments, the inner subconscious forces, take possession of the individual, and finding the weak point of the individual sentiment, they take the opportunity to ambush and attack him, and the advanced spiritual seeker becomes a petty individual who is practically helpless: “God has not come; the world has gone.” At a particular time we will either feel that the world has left us or that we have left the world, but God has not come. That is the situation in which we find ourselves—neither this nor that, as if in a vacuum—and it is at that time that we can develop a neurosis or have a breakdown, or develop a peptic ulcer or peculiar illnesses where the brain malfunctions and the mind becomes deranged. I have seen one swami who kept shaking his head. He said, “I have done meditation on the great truth of the presence of consciousness everywhere. I began to see consciousness in objects. This made me very happy. I went on concentrating on the presence of consciousness in everything. One day I suddenly got a bolt from the blue, as it were, and now I am feeling like this. Is there any remedy that you can think of?” I gave him some remedy which helped him, satisfied him.

Arjuna should be well prepared for all the psychological eventualities that he may have to face, rather than merely

being prepared for the physical eventualities. To fight with the mind is more difficult than to fight with people, as it is the mind that sees values in things and considers people as friends or enemies, etc. Who tells us that so-and-so is a friend or an enemy? It is the mind. Hence, there is a particular psychological reaction from ourselves that is the determining factor in defining our envisagement of values. Otherwise, we cannot know who is a friend and who is an enemy because a relationship of this kind, positive or negative, is a counteracting medium of the mind itself, which has some mould into which these values are cast, and if the susceptibility to react in terms of affection and hatred were not to be in our minds, we would not experience affection and hatred. There is some weakness in the mind which is submerged in ordinary social life, because when we are in a good society we do not always think in terms of affection and hatred, etc. Everything looks fine, and we are all well off. But when we are totally alone, the possibilities of the otherwise-ignored aspects of the mind will come up and tell us that we have totally ignored them, we have not paid our debts to them; the tax has not been paid and, therefore, we will not be able to move further. Arjuna asked: "Even if I face these people, and even if I am the best of spiritual seekers, what is the guarantee that I will succeed? I may conquer the world—or the world may conquer me. I may perish in this attempt." Arjuna himself put this question: "If somebody perishes in the middle, having attained nothing, what will be his fate?" Lord Krishna answers this in some other chapter.

Do we find ourselves in a helpless condition spiritually? We will not be able to answer this question unless we live an individual life. We should not be in society. When I say we should not be in society, I do not mean that we should sit under a tree or go into the jungle, etc. The mind should be dissociated from any kind of social contact. A person may

be sitting next to us, but we may not be socially connected with him or even be aware that he is there. It is like a railway station. We are travelling in a coach of the train. Many people are sitting in the same coach. Are we connected with any one of them? It is a society, no doubt. We are sitting in the midst of a large number of people, which is nothing but human society, but we are not even aware of the existence of these people and we do not care what kind of people they are. It is total detachment of our minds, for reasons which are obvious. So we can be in the midst of thousands of people and yet be unconcerned with them. Similarly, the detachment that is required socially is not actually a physical running away from Rameswaram to the Himalayas. That is not of any utility, finally, because it is the mind that works havoc, and not the body.

“Will I succeed? If I perish, what happens?” This is Arjuna’s question. Secondly, Bhishma, Drona, Karna, etc., are not ordinary people. They are ten times stronger than Arjuna, and Arjuna knows that. Nobody can face these people.

Before the commencement of the war (this is a little digression from the main point) when all were arrayed on the battlefield, wearing armour, with bows and arrows in their hands and swords drawn—everything was war-hot, and nobody knew what would happen the next moment—Yudhishtira put down his weapons, removed his shoes, put on a single cloth, a *dhoti*, and in the thick of the array went forward. Nobody understood what was happening to this crazy man; he was walking into the midst of his enemies, who had drawn their swords.

Arjuna said, “What has happened to my brother? Has he gone crazy?”

Duryodhana and others said, “Coward! Coward! The coward is coming. He is afraid. Seeing, us he is afraid. He is coming to sue for peace.”

Krishna said, "I am aware of what it is. He is neither a coward, nor has he made any mistake. He is following a great tradition of paying obeisance to elders."

We have to pay obeisance to our elders. This is one of the great dharmas of India. He went and prostrated himself before Bhishma.

Yudhishtira said, "Bless me for success,"

"Not as long as I am alive," Bhishma replied.

"Then what?" asked Yudhishtira. "When shall I have success? How will I defeat you?"

"This matter we shall discuss later on," said Bhishma.

Yudhishtira then went to Drona, and prostrated himself before him. "Please bless me for success."

Drona replied, "Nothing doing, as long as I am on the field."

Yudhishtira then went to Kripacharya, who said, "No success for you as long as I am here."

The world will tell us, "I am not going to leave you so easily like that." It catches hold of us, with all our sentiments and desires and longings and social relationships. The gold and silver, and the milk and honey of this world are not easy to abandon. There is a joy in being an important person in the world. There is a satisfaction in being a king, an emperor or a ruler of a country. There is a satisfaction in being a very wealthy person, a millionaire rolling in gold. Can we say these are not satisfactions? And if this temptation is thrown at us—suppose we are offered a gold throne—what will we say, my dear spiritual seeker? We will hesitate.

It is said that Satan showed a large field of gold and silver to Christ, and said, "Take this for yourself. Convert stone into bread, etc. You are a master. You have attained great *siddhis*. Now what further meditation? Stop it. Do some good work for people who are suffering." This was told to Buddha also, in a

different way, and this will be told to every one of us.

Arjuna was an epic representation of the internal chaos that one may have to face in the beginning of spiritual life. I am describing the initial stages of spiritual life, not the advanced conditions where we are receiving something positively: "Great confusion—I have lost everything. I have lost my father and mother. I have no friends here, and nobody talks to me. I am sick. I have achieved nothing. I have no guidance, no teachings. I will go crazy." A spiritual seeker may feel like that, and run about here and there. Sometimes, to save themselves from going mad, they go on travelling from place to place. That is also a way. If we are very angry, and take a long walk, our anger comes down. But, finally, these tactics will not take us anywhere. The reason is that we have not properly founded ourselves on the correct appreciation of values.

Whether to renounce the world or not renounce the world—who told us what is to be done? Has anybody told us that it is necessary to renounce the world? Something has been told to us by our elders. Something is told in some scripture. Is it because of the statement of some book that we are trying to kick the world out? Or have we got any actual reason for it? Is there a rational ground for our feeling that the world has to be renounced? I think very few people will give an answer to this question: What is the rational ground for our renouncing the world? Is it because we want God? We will find that this is a very horrible question, and we will not have a rational ground. Let the scriptures say that, let the Bible or the Gita say that, let the Gurus say that; nobody will help us here. When we are drowning, no Gita will come to our rescue. Nobody will come. Our own conscience will come.

Thus, Arjuna's difficulty is a spiritual difficulty; it is a spiritual crisis in which he found himself. In an epic manner, Vyasa describes this chaos of the spiritual seeker who was

otherwise very adventurous and who went forward to face the battle of life, but who immediately became diffident and threw down his weapons. “No *japa*, no meditation, no book-reading helps. I am unable to do anything,” Arjuna said.

In this condition, our only resort is the Guru. Fortunately, Arjuna had a good Guru; and, fortunately, he had the sense of feeling that it was necessary to surrender himself; and, fortunately, he knew that his egoism was not going to work any longer. Had his self-confidence continued and had he stuck to the wrong arguments that he put forth in the First Chapter, nothing would have come out of it. However, some *sattvic* karma rose up, and he felt that it was necessary for him to know what was to be done.

Arjuna asked Sri Krishna, “In this chaotic condition of my mind, what is my duty? I surrender myself to you, great Master. Please tell me.”

The answer of Bhagavan Sri Krishna is, “You understand nothing. You draw conclusions without proper understanding of the structure of life and your relationship to people or things in general. This is a very sorry state. How can you draw conclusions without proper premises? If you draw a conclusion based on a wrong premise, the conclusion is also wrong. Therefore, all that you have been told up to this time is without any foundation because you do not know either yourself or the world.”

What is the meaning of knowing oneself and the world? These questions will be answered gradually in the Second and the Third Chapters. The Second Chapter will tell us what we are, and the Third Chapter will tell us what the world is.

Discourse 3

THE SECOND CHAPTER BEGINS

SANHKYA YOGA

We look at the world only with our eyes, and judge things according to the report that is provided through the medium of the senses. All the information that we get of the world through the sense organs is therefore galvanised, and in many ways distorted. It is assumed that a person, as an individual, has to do something with this world. The business of life is, practically, an attempt to handle this world in some way—to harness it, and utilise it for one's own purpose.

Here is the essential point. We have to use the world for our purposes. Through scientific advancement and technological discoveries and inventions, we seem to be trying to use the world more and more for our utility. It is an object; it is a thing; it is a tool which has to be used for an externalised purpose—not for the benefit of the world, but for the benefit of another, who calls himself the human individual. Do we not mostly judge things in this manner? Everything has to be cast into the mould of our sensory and physical needs. We make remarks about things: “It is like this and it is like that.” These remarks are judgments that we pass on the things in the world based on evidence provided by the sense organs, which are entirely unreliable on account of their impetuosity. Due to this, the thinking mind, or the consciousness that is aware, is pulled out of its own roots. The activity of the sense organs plucks us, as it were, from ourselves, and throws us into the

winds of the outside world. We are distressed from morning to evening on account of a loss of self that we undergo, even when we do not actually know what is happening to us.

Every perception is a movement of the self towards an object. The consciousness has to charge the mind with an intelligence that peeps through the sense organs and locates objects, the world in front, in a particular juxtaposed manner. So our conclusion that we know something—we know the world or we know whatever it is—is triply conditioned: firstly, by it having to pass through the mentation, the psychic organ, the *antahkarana*; secondly, by the mind having to think only through the sense organs; and thirdly, by the sense organs having to visualise things as located in space and time. Thus, there is a threefold defect in human perception, which includes social relations and everything that we regard as ours or not ours. Due to this purely personal judgment born of human sentiment, Arjuna turned the tables around, and made an unexpected gesture of putting down his weapons. He said, “I shall not embark upon this otherwise well-praised adventure of a war with the Kurus.”

I hinted yesterday that the spiritual seeker mostly finds himself in this predicament when he cannot handle the world properly. In one condition of the mind, the world is an object of delight and enjoyment—as a property. In another condition of the mind, it looks like an obstacle from which the earlier we extricate ourselves, the better. We wish to free ourselves from all our entanglements in the world. But a third stage comes when the world reacts in an adverse manner upon the mind that has thought it to be a redundant tail, as it were, of its perception. Then it is that there is actually a humiliating coming down of the aspiring consciousness, and a last moment’s feeling that perhaps everything is over and nothing is possible. It appears that even the great Buddha had this

experience the day before his enlightenment. It was all dark. There was no light on the horizon. After years of austerity, he was crawling on all fours due to the weakness of the body. He thought the *tapas* was over and he had achieved nothing. There was a complete dejection of the spirit.

This predominantly spiritual despondency of a spiritual seeker is also called yoga. The First Chapter, which is nothing but a description of the weeping of Arjuna, is called Visada Yoga: the yoga of the dejection of the spirit. This dejection is not a morbid, melancholy mood of the spiritual seeker. It is a healthy realisation of the impossibility of an individual being to face this world of values alone, and the need felt for a higher assistance. It may be a Guru for one person; it may be God Himself for another. Therefore, in the utter helplessness of not being able to know what actually is to be done, Arjuna asked what was his duty par excellence. What was his duty in this world? This was the question of Arjuna, which he couched in various styles of expression according to the tradition of that time.

The answer of Sri Krishna is that all this is a kind of blabber which an ignorant mind resorts to for self-justification, under the impression that ignorance is bliss. "Neither do you know what you are, nor do you know what the world is. How do you make judgments of this kind, that you shall do or you shall not do? On what grounds do you make a statement that this has to be done and this should not be done? What is the rationale behind the ethics, morality, and the justification for any kind of action in this world? What is the ground on which you base your argument for embarking upon a particular project of this type or that type? Is it merely an impulse of the instinct, or the force of the sense organs, or the appetite of the biological organ? Or is it a well-reasoned-out structure that you philosophically constructed for the purpose of rising

high into the sphere of a spiritual conclusion? Neither do you know yourself, nor do you know the world, Arjuna; yet, you speak as if you are a wise person: *prajñāvādāṁś ca bhāṣase*.”

This wisdom that Arjuna seemed to lack, due to which he wrongly judged the situation that he was facing, is called *sankhya*, which is a well-known term in philosophical circles. “You lack *sankhya*—that is, the wisdom of life. This is your malady and, therefore, everything that you have said is all a medley of chaos. Your arguments are not couched in a proper logical style, and your conclusions are not drawn from valid premises. Your premise itself is wrong. The premise is nothing but the report of the sense organs and the demand of the instinct, which is conditioned by love and hatred. From this you have to rise through *sankhya*.”

There is a philosophical doctrine called Sankhya, which counts the categories which constitute this world. It is derived from the word ‘*sankhya*’, which means computerising, counting, calculating and methodologically coming to a conclusion as to the number of principles that constitute this world. What is this building? We look at it, and it seems to be a mass indivisibly presented before us. But it is not an indivisible structure. It is made up of small constituents—brick and mortar, and steel and whatnot. The world is not as it appears to the eyes; it is a whitewash that we see, as the inside bricks and the cement are not visible to the outer perception. Sankhya goes deep into the categorisation of the principles of the universe, and starts its argument from the very consciousness that tries to make any investigation at all: Who is it that is trying to make an investigation into the nature of the world? Who is it that wants to know anything at all? It is me. Now, what kind of me is it?

Without going into further details of this complex subject, we may conclude that we are essentially consciousness. This consciousness is the *chaitanya shakti*, or the *chaitanya*

purusha, which is indivisibly present, and not divisible under any circumstance. The Sankhya takes up the stand on the presence of an indivisible consciousness it calls *purusha* in its own terminology. The essence of the matter is that consciousness is indivisible, and it cannot be cut into pieces. There cannot be a fraction of consciousness, because any assumption of it being possible to divide consciousness into parts would imply the introduction of a consciousness even to know that such a division has been made. Consciousness has to be there even between the two parts, which is to say that consciousness is everywhere. This is the fundamental principle beyond which we cannot go, and deeper than which there is nothing. *Sā kāṣṭhā sā parā gatīḥ* (Katha 1.3.11): This is the end and the substance of all arguments, whether philosophical or empirical. But, Sankhya has a point in regard to our obstinate feeling that there is a world outside us. Even if a person is paranoiac and wrongly conceives things and sees things which are not there, it is not enough if we simply dub the person as sick. A practical method has to be adopted in treating the mind and setting it right for the purpose of correct perception. So the world may be there in this manner or in that manner, that is a different matter. Our perceptions may be wrong, and we may not be able to understand the world correctly—granted. But what is it that we are seeing in front of us?

Sankhya calls the objective character of perception as *prakriti*, and the subjective consciousness which perceives is called *purusha*. So the Sankhya divides reality into two phases, or blocks of power—consciousness and matter, subject and object, *purusha* and *prakriti*. Experience is supposed to be engendered by a contact of consciousness with *prakriti*. *Purusha* comes in contact with *prakriti*. It is very interesting to notice here that there can be contact between two dissimilar things. Consciousness is never an object; *prakriti* is never

a subject. The contradiction between these two principles is obvious. How can we bring about a rapprochement between the subject and the object, which stand poles apart? How does the mind, or the individual consciousness, experience that such and such thing is there, or the world is there?

The analogy of the Sankhya is well known. Consciousness never becomes an object. It never actually enters the object. It appears to perceive as if there is some object—such as, a crystal that is perfectly pure looks as if it is coloured when a coloured object is brought near it. Pure crystal is colourless. It is resplendent pure light, as it were; and if a red flower, for instance, is brought near it, it will appear as if the whole crystal is red. It looks as if the crystal has become red. This analogy from the Sankhya extends to the field of the explanation of human perception—how the world is seen as such by the individual consciousness. The world is never correctly known at any time, just as there is always a dissimilarity between the coloured flower and the crystal, notwithstanding the fact that the crystal has apparently assumed the character of the object. A red-hot iron rod looks like fire, not like iron. It is glowing white with heat, yet that glow which is white heat is the fire; and there is something there which is not the fire—namely, the iron rod. The impact of the heat on the iron rod is such that the rod has ceased to be there practically, though it is there really. In a similar manner, objects assume a reality, as it were, though there is no reality in them; they are pure transitoriness.

The world is movement. It is a fluxation. It is a continuity of bits of force tending in some direction, and never does a single bit of matter rest in itself as an undivided something. *Prakriti* continuously changes its characteristics. It is a continuity that is a flow consisting of three strands—namely, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Like a wheel that moves when the car moves, there is a cyclic movement of *prakriti* through the *gunas* of *sattva*, *rajas*

and *tamas*, and it is not a solid object. There is no such thing as solid objects in this world; there is only fluxation. A person may appear on a screen, while the person is not really there. Thousands of small frames of film have moved with such rapidity that the movement could not be caught by the eye. The speed of the movement exceeds the capacity of the eye to perceive the individual frames, and so we see someone there, and not the individual frames that have passed at the rate of about sixteen pictures in one second.

Likewise, we see that we are solid objects—the building is solid, the earth is solid, I am solid, you are solid—but the apparent solidity is just like the solidity of a person on the screen, while the person is not really there. It is a continuous rapid movement of frames that gives the illusion of a solid person standing there, the illusion arising on account of the incapacity of the eyes to catch the movement. High-frequency radio waves are moving right here, but our ears cannot hear them. The rapidity of the movement of the waves cannot be caught by the crudeness of the eardrums; therefore, even if television waves and radio waves are dashing upon us just now, we can see nothing and hear nothing.

Similarly, consciousness makes a mistake even in the perception of *prakriti*, which is otherwise just a movement. The apparent solidity or the stability of a particular object, which the consciousness takes for granted, is due to the consciousness itself entering into the fluxation, as it were, for the time being. And a limited piece of this large flux of matter appears as this solid entity, the solidity actually coming from consciousness itself which is the real solidity, which is indivisible. Therefore, the perception of the world as a solid thing is a total illusion.

Prakriti, which is the objectivity of the *purusha*, that is, consciousness, is constituted of three properties, called *sattva*,

rajas and *tamas*. *Tamas* is inertia, pure inactivity; *rajas* is dynamism, distraction and action; and *sattva* is balance and harmony. The permutation and combination of these three *gunas* are the very substance of *prakriti*. The redness of a flower is a quality of the flower, but the redness itself is not the flower, whereas the three strands of a rope are not the quality of the rope, the strands themselves are the rope. In the same way, the three *gunas* that are mentioned—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—are the very substance of *prakriti*, and they are the very essence of movement in this world. These three *gunas*, by permutation and combination, create a situation of transparency in the cosmos, and the indivisible consciousness gets reflected, as it were, in this transparency, which is *suddha tattva*. It is the beginning of the process of the creation of the universe. It is a dream condition, as it were, where sketches of the future creation are drawn on the canvas of the mind itself. Thus, from the point of view of Vedanta terminology, there is a coming down of consciousness, which is Absolute, to the state of Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha and Virat, or in the language of Sankhya, *prakriti* becomes *mahat*, and *mahat* becomes *ahamkara*. Up to this level, from the top level to the Virat, or from the level of consciousness to *ahamkara*, there is a universal awareness. Virat is universally aware. Hiranyagarbha and Ishvara are universally aware. *Mahat* is universally aware. The *ahamkara* that is spoken of in Sankhya parlance is not the egoism of the human individual. It is the Self-consciousness of the cosmos itself.

Now, a tragic event takes place. The one indivisible *ahamkara*, or Virat, gets divided into a three-partite state, as it were—the object, the subject, and the connecting link between the object and the subject. These are known as the *adhibhuta*, *adhyatma* and *adhidaiva*. Thus, we see there is a world outside on account of the division that has taken place,

and we are set aside as subjects perceiving the object outside, not being aware that there is a connecting link between the object and the subject, which is called the *adhidaiva*. Then there is a continuous solidification of this objectivity into *tanmatras*, called *sabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa*, *gandha*, and the five elements, called *prithvi*, *apa*, *teja*, *vayu*, *akasha*; and we have come down into the solidity which is this earth.

The individual, who is the perceiver of this so-called external world, is also constituted only of the three *gunas*. The bricks out of which the world is made are the very bricks that also make our body. The mind is subtle matter and the physical body is gross matter, and this grossness and subtlety depend upon the extent of the rarefaction of the *gunas* of *prakriti* that have gone into the composition of this body. Nevertheless, whatever is in the world outside is also within us. So there is an organic connection between the subject and the object, and therefore, our judgments about things will not be finally tenable if we do not take into consideration our own involvement in the process of judgment. The mind of the judge plays an important role in making judgments. What kind of mind does that person have? Whether it is a disturbed mind, an emotional mind, a prejudiced mind, an impartial mind or a conditioned mind, it will determine what kind of judgment can be expected.

In a similar manner, this perception by the subject of the object varies from person to person, from individual to individual, among the eighty-four lakhs of species of creation, as they say. An ant's perception may not be the same as an elephant's perception, and so on. The judgment of values varies in accordance with the capacity to perceive in the case of different species of creation. The human being is one species, and he cannot take upon himself the privilege of knowing everything as if he is omniscient. He has only human eyes, and

therefore, he sees only human values, and can see nothing else in this world.

“So, Arjuna, you have made a mistake by not counting yourself as one of the persons in this world. The people in the world are not only outside; you are also one of the persons in this world. Hence, your judgment of people in the world includes judgment of yourself also, which you are not doing. You think the world is constituted of people who are totally cut off from you,” said Sri Krishna.

Ten people crossed a river, and the water was neck-deep. With great difficulty they waded across. After reaching the other side, they wanted to check whether or not all of them had crossed, so one of them started counting.

He said, “One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. Only nine are here.”

The others said, “How is it possible? Has one of us drowned? Oh, count again.”

Another said, “You stand there. I’ll count.”

Again only nine people were counted. Every time they counted, they found that one man was missing. They started beating their chests and crying that one of them had been drowned in the water.

A passer-by saw this and asked, “Why are you all crying?”

“Oh, one of us has drowned,” they replied.

“How many were you?”

“Ten.”

“But you are ten,” he said.

“Where are the ten? No, there are only nine. See!” He counted again, and again counted nine.

“You are the tenth!”

“Oh, I see! I am the person that is responsible for all these troubles,” exclaimed the man.

The world is not the maker of our troubles. Modern science, in its profound discoveries, has now come to the conclusion that scientific observations are conditioned by the instruments that are used in science, and even by the structure of the scientist's eye; and, therefore, all scientific perceptions are conditioned. Unconditioned knowledge of the world is not possible even for the best of scientists.

Thus, the movement of *prakriti* within itself in the form of the sense organs and the mind on the one hand, and the objects on the other hand, are taken by us as two different activities taking place. Actually, *prakriti* is cognising *prakriti*—*guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta iti matvā na sajjate* (3.28). One wave is dashing against another wave in the ocean, and two persons are not actually involved there. The structure of the sense organs and the mind is responsible for the kind of consciousness that is passing through that particular structure, and yet we should not forget that the sense organs and the mind are composed of the very same *gunas* of *prakriti*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—and, in different permutations and combinations, the objects are constituted of the very same three *gunas*. So when something is known, when we cognise or perceive an object, it is *prakriti* that is colliding with *prakriti*. Therefore, we are not doing anything. But we think that we are isolated individuals, sitting and judging things. No judgment is possible, individually. Therefore, nobody does any action, ultimately.

Sri Krishna's philosophy, finally, is that no individual action is possible. All action is cosmic action, as the very concept of individuality is ruled out in the light of this predicament of all perception being only a collision of the subjective side of *prakriti* with its objective side. Hence, who does anything in this world? It is *prakriti* doing within itself whatever it wants to do, as the rumbling within the bowels of the ocean may rise up as billowing waves on the surface, yet it is one activity taking

place. If something is happening in the Atlantic Ocean, it can be felt in the Arabian Sea, and we cannot say that there are two different seas working. It is one impulse working through different areas.

All perception—finally, all knowledge—is a conditioned observation of things through the mind and the sense organs on account of *prakriti* conditioning things subjectively on the one hand and objectively on the other hand. Thus, sensory perception cannot be regarded as correct perception. Even pure mental cogitation cannot be regarded as correct perception, because the externality characterising the object vitiates the validity of any perception. The error of perception of any kind is the introduction of space and time in the midst of the otherwise indivisible movement of *prakriti*—subjectively as *gunas*, and also objectively as *gunas*. Between two waves in the ocean there are gaps, but the gaps are filled with a basic fundament of the very same substance of the wave, and two waves which are different from each other are connected by a basic ocean. In a similar manner, individual perceptions in respect of objects outside are actually a dancing of the waves of the *gunas* of *prakriti* within themselves. The whole universe is a dance of *prakriti*. Neither you do anything, nor I do anything.

“So, Arjuna, you are unnecessarily racking your brain by trying to tell Me whether the war is to be undertaken or not, and what kind of consequence will follow, etc. How do you draw these conclusions, and on what grounds have you drawn these conclusions, not knowing the fact that your judgment in respect of the Kauravas, or the world as a whole, is misconstrued on account of your standing outside?” It is like the tenth man not counting himself, and therefore always finding that there is one person less.

The world is defective on account of our not being able to isolate and identify ourselves with the world structure. There

is no harmony between ourselves and the world of objects. There is a tension between the subject and object. The tension is caused by the vitiating habit of love and hatred, because the limited mind cannot love all things in the world, nor can it hate all things in the world. It is impossible. The mind works in fractions. A little bit of thought, of cogitation, arranges itself into a particular pattern at some time, and classifies objects as desirable or undesirable according to the condition through which the body and the mind pass. Therefore, the whole of perception is not given to the mind. We neither like the whole world nor hate the whole world. Thus, neither of these attitudes of ours can be regarded as finally tenable.

Psychological judgment charged with sentiment is no judgment. It should be a super-rational judgment arisen on account of the inference that the reason can draw on the basis of a universal substance that is there. The premise has to be universality, and from there we can deduce particularity. But we cannot rise from particularity to universality, because particulars cannot tell us that there is a Universal.

All logic in India is deductive in the sense that it takes its stand on the Supreme Reality first, as Sankhya has taken. The essence of thinking is consciousness; it has to be indivisible and, therefore, it should be Universal. So, there is a distinction between the approach of Western philosophers and Indian philosophers. The empiricists, such as Bacon and others, count things: "The sun rises in the east. The sun rose in the east yesterday, the sun rose in the east today. Millions of times the sun has risen in the east and, therefore, it must always rise in the east." This kind of conclusion is called induction. From many particulars, we gather a generalisation. But it may not be a correct conclusion because even if the sun has been rising in the east for millions of years, one day it may not rise in the east. For some reason the whole thing may change, and it may

rise in the west. Therefore, induction is not correct. Indian philosophy never relies on induction. It relies on deduction. The fundamental reality has to be ascertained first, and that is possible only by an investigation of the investigator himself. As Ramana Maharshi was fond of saying, “Whenever you put a question, tell me who is putting the question.” Therefore, go deep into yourself.

Arjuna could not do this. Sankhya is the knowledge of the structure of the world as it is really constituted, inclusive of the perceiving individual, on account of which fact there is no such thing as individual action at all. Therefore, there is no individual judgment either. Hence, whatever Arjuna had been saying was gibberish; it was nonsense. Now Arjuna says, “Please lead me onto the right path of action in this world, in the light of this great knowledge that you have given to me.”

“I have told you Sankhya, now I shall tell you yoga,” replies Sri Krishna. *Eṣā te'bhihitā sāṅkhye buddhir yoge tvimām śṛṇu* (2.39): “All that I have been telling you up to this time is the wisdom of the Sankhya, which is the knowledge of the structure of the universe as it is in itself, including you. Now I shall tell you how to live in this world—how to live in this kind of world in which you are also involved—and how to act in an impersonal manner, and not in a personal manner.” That is the yoga of action, which Sri Krishna subsequently gives.

Discourse 4

THE SECOND CHAPTER CONTINUES

HOW TO LIVE IN THE WORLD

Sankhya also implies the knowledge of the immortality of the soul. At the very beginning of Sri Krishna's instructions in the Second Chapter of the Bhagavadgita, emphasis is laid on the eternity of the soul. Deathless, immutable is the Atman: *avināśi tu tad viddhi yena sarvam idam tatam* (2.17). The word 'avināśi' means it is indestructible. Not only that, it is all pervading: *yena sarvam idam tatam*. The Atman is involved in all things, warp and woof. The deathlessness or the indestructibility of the soul implies the timelessness of the soul because that which is involved in time cannot be deathless, as time is the factor that kills everything. The process of time is the process of decay, transformation and final extinction.

Therefore, anything that is involved in the process of time cannot be immortal. Hence, the immortality of the soul also suggests the timelessness of the soul. And the timelessness of the soul implies the spacelessness of the soul because when time goes, space also goes. As space and time are two facets of empirical involvement, when one goes, the other also goes. We cannot think of time without space, as we always consider time as a kind of movement or succession in space; and, we cannot think of space without the process of time involved in it. Thus, the whole world is subject to mutation, transition, and the conditions involved in the very existence of space and time.

The Atman, or the soul of man, is not in space and time. The soul is not in space and time because it can know that there is space and time. The knower of an object is itself not the object. The consciousness in us, which is the Atman basically, is aware of the existence of such a thing as space and time; therefore, the knower, which is consciousness, cannot itself be involved in space and time. The knower of space is not in space. The knower of time is not in time. Hence, basically, essentially, the soul within is spaceless and timeless—*avināśi* and *tatam*—spread out everywhere, wider than space and more durable than time. This soul, which is deathless, is encased, as it were, in a perishable body. The human being is partly in the world of death and partly in the world of the immortals. We are involved physically, and to some extent psychologically, in space and time. We know very well that we have a location in space; we cannot be spread out everywhere. Also, there is a movement of our life in the process of time. We are born, we grow, we decay, and one day we perish. Therefore, this psychophysical organism, which is the human individual, is itself subject to destruction, notwithstanding the fact that it is a tabernacle of this deathless soul.

We think in two ways. We think in terms of space, time and objects, and we also think in terms of an aspiration for eternal existence. We know very well that we cannot live long in this world. Everybody has to pass away. Nobody can deny the fact that one day everybody has to go. In spite of this knowledge of the surety of the death of this body—the negation of this psychophysical individuality—we fear death. We do not want to die.

Who is it, actually, who does not want to die? The body cannot aspire for deathlessness because it is involved in the very process of dying, which is time. And the mind, which is psychophysical, is also perishable on account of its transitory

nature. So why do we fear death? Who fears death? Is it the body that fears death? The body is not even conscious; it is a physical substance. There is something in us which does not want to die. The desire not to die cannot arise in something which is subject to death in any way whatsoever. The desire not to die implies the possibility of not dying—hence, our aspiration for deathlessness. The fear of death implies the existence of such a thing as immortality. We cannot fear death unless we do not want to die, and the desire to not die cannot arise in the physical body or in anything in this world; it has to arise from something which is superior to all physical matter. That is to say, we have a root in eternity, which is the cause of our aspiration that takes us beyond all extension in space and duration in time. We would like to possess the whole world. We would like to become masters of the entire space, and we would like to live as long as time itself. This desire cannot arise in time. It cannot arise in space. It arises in something which is not in space, not in time, and which is not an object.

Thus, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna, “Don’t be a coward, saying that one day you will die and afterwards everything will be annihilated, saying that you don’t know what will happen afterwards.” The fear of death implies the futurity of the soul. We say that we must do good actions, we must be righteous, we must live moral and ethical lives. These injunctions cannot have any meaning unless the soul is deathless, because at any moment one can pass away. If tomorrow is the end of this individuality, all good actions also go with it. Therefore, all the injunctions for being righteous and good and humane become futile but for the fact that there is a possibility of the continuity of life after the perishing of this body. That is, rebirth of the soul is implied in the very injunctions to be good in this world, to do some service, and to have a worthwhile existence in this world.

The rebirth of the soul is also very interesting. The soul perpetually takes these successive forms in the period of time on account of it being necessary, in the process of evolution, to advance further and further in the experience of life. It is necessary for us to die in order that we may learn better lessons in a newer form of existence. Death is not the extinction of individuality. Death is only the shedding of a condition imposed upon consciousness for a given period of time, a condition which is not necessary eternally. We shall advance further. Just as a student rises from one class to another class, transcending the lower for the sake of attaining the higher by shedding the conditions of the lower class and entering into the conditions of the higher class, in a similar manner, consciousness within the soul is now conditioned in the physical body and in this physical world for the purpose of fulfilling certain desires which it entertained in previous births. When these conditions of desires are broken—that is to say, when they are fulfilled completely—the conditions necessary for the existence of this body in space and time are transcended automatically, and we enter into a new realm, a higher state of education, as it were, where a wider perception and a deeper insight of things is possible. This process of transmigration, metempsychosis, coming and going, will never cease as long as the soul does not learn the lesson that it is essentially eternal, and it becomes totally desireless.

The body is perishable: *antavanta ime dehā nityasyoktāḥ śarīraṇaḥ* (2.18). The soul is, of course, eternal—but, nevertheless, this body is perishable. How interesting! Eternity is enshrined in perishable clay, which is this body—two contraries indeed. *Prakriti* and *purusha* are very intriguingly juxtaposed in this experience of body-consciousness. As I mentioned yesterday, the artificiality of the soul assuming this body and becoming the body is as artificial as the assuming of

colour by pure crystal. We have become the body itself, and we think that we are only the body. As long as we are intensely body-conscious, the soul is only a theoretical construct. But this is not correct perception, in the same way as the redness that we see in a crystal is not correct perception.

Sri Krishna's argument goes on, from stage to stage. Firstly, the fear of death is to be ruled out because of the possibility of attaining immortality, and the whole process of evolution through birth and death being a journey to the finality which is the end of all transmigration. As the river will meet the ocean, the soul will reach the sea of all-pervadingness. Not only that, the performance of duty, which is the main subject of the Bhagavadgita, involves the consideration of the manner in which a human individual lives in this world as a combination of spirit and matter, soul and body, consciousness and objectiveness.

There is a duty imposed upon every person on account of the very involvement of consciousness in space and time. We have to do our duty, our *svadharma*. *Svadharmam api cāvekṣya na vikampitum arhasi* (2.31): "Considering the essentiality of performing your duty, at least from this point of view, you should not shirk doing what you actually ought to do." The duty as such is implied in our involvement in the atmosphere. The components of our psychophysical individuality actually belong to the world outside. The physical body is constituted of the five elements, the mind also is constituted of rarefied forms of *tanmatras*, and the sense organs are superintended by divinities like the sun, the moon, and others. In a way, we may say that we are living a borrowed existence. We have no independent existence in ourselves. The physical stuff belongs to the physical universe, the mental stuff belongs to the *tanmatras*, and the sense organs cannot even think and perceive without the operation of the superintending divinities

which control the workings of the sense organs. Inasmuch as there is such an involvement of the person in the divinities that superintend over the sense organs, and we also are subject to the conditions of material existence, which are the five elements, we have a duty of maintaining a harmony with these elements.

Duty is nothing but the maintenance of harmony with the atmosphere. We should not be in a state of conflict with anybody. The atmosphere in which we are living may be a family atmosphere, a community atmosphere, a provincial atmosphere, a national atmosphere, an international atmosphere, or it may be the atmosphere of the whole of physical creation. Whatever it is, it is an atmosphere with which we have to be in a state of harmony—that is, neither our body, nor our mind, nor our conduct in life should be in a state of conflict with the demands of other such existences which also require a harmonious existence. We should concede the same rights to other people as we concede to our own selves. The privileges and rights that we expect in this world are also the privileges and rights expected by other people.

Inasmuch as there is no superiority or inferiority among individuals, there is a necessity for a mutual concession granted to each other by way of a sacrifice. My asking for freedom should not in any way deter the asking for freedom by another person. That is, I should not deny freedom to another just because I want to be free. Therefore, a hundred percent freedom for an individual is not possible because if each individual wants one hundred percent freedom, there will be no freedom at all because there will be a clash of aspirations. So the freedom that we can have in this world is a sort of sacrifice that we have to make at the same time—that is, we cannot expect one hundred percent freedom, though we can have as much freedom as is possible under the condition

of others also having to be in a state of freedom. Hence, duty is the performance of that act which will maintain harmony in society and in the world. It also implies a sacrifice that we not only do something for the maintenance of life in a state of harmony, but we also conduct and perform a sacrifice in the form of not going beyond the limits of possible freedom.

Absolute freedom is not possible because there is nothing that is absolute in this world. Everything is relative; everything is hanging on something else; everything is limited by others. Our existence is conditioned by the existence of other people. The very fact that we are existing as individuals shows that there are other individuals. Hence, our existence itself is conditioned by the existence of others. Thus, we cannot have one hundred percent freedom. Nobody can have it. The whole world is limited to relativity. Therefore, in this condition of mutual cooperation that is required of the individual, it is incumbent on everyone to participate in the harmony that nature maintains.

The whole cosmos is nothing but a balance of forces. We may say it is a big electromagnetic field which tries to maintain itself always and will not brook any intervention from others. The moment we intervene or touch this electromagnetic field of the cosmos with an external attitude, it gives a kick; that is what is called the nemesis of karma. The karma that we speak of is nothing but the reaction of the universal electromagnetic field with which we are interfering every day as outsiders, as it were, which it does not permit. Under these circumstances, it is necessary to perform one's duty both from the point of view of the individual and from the point of view of human society and the welfare of all beings.

In India there is a great injunction called the *panchamahayajna*, the five great sacrifices which every householder has to observe. Firstly is *deva-yajna*, the acceptance of there

being superior divinities that control our destiny. Therefore, the worship of the divinities, the gods, is a pre-eminent duty of every person, and if we ignore the existence of these divinities, we will not be permitted to even exist in this world. We also have to be grateful to the great rishis and masters who have handed down the knowledge of the scriptures—the Vedas, Upanishads, etc. We have to be grateful to our teachers, our masters, who have enlightened us, and the greatest of masters are the rishis whose pronouncements come to us as scriptures.

There is also a necessity to be grateful to the people who permit us to exist as individuals in the same way as they exist as individuals. There is a mutual sacrifice among ourselves. If I have to exist, I have to see that you also exist. It is not possible to have conflict among individuals. Everybody has a desire to exist in a state of harmony. This necessity to maintain harmony among human beings demands a consideration and a humane attitude among people. We cannot suddenly get into a fit of anger. We cannot condemn people, we cannot criticise, we cannot subordinate a person and consider him as a tool or exploit him. Nothing of the kind is possible. No person is a tool in our hands, and we cannot exploit anybody. Nobody is a servant in this world; everybody is a master and, therefore, we have to treat everybody with respect. *Manushya-yajna* is the respect to *athithis*, guests, and people generally. We also have to be considerate to living beings who are not able to speak, such as animals: *bhuta-yajna*.

That is to say, this *pancha-mahayajna*, or the five great sacrifices enjoined upon every person, implies that we are in a world of divinity with life pervading everywhere and love ruling the cosmos. Hatred is not the rule; love is the rule. There is a power of attraction which is seen in every little atom and in every molecule, in every component of molecules, in every organism, and even in the whole solar system. The attraction

that one exercises on others is physically known as gravitation. Biologically it is known as health, psychologically it is called sanity, rationally it is called logic, and spiritually it is called Universality.

All these graduated appreciations of the Universal Being in particulars should be considered as the foundation of ethics and morality. A person is good to the extent that he is able to recognise the Universal in the particular. A person is divine only to the extent he is able to recognise Universal principles in particular individuals. This is the essence of *svadharma*, which Sri Krishna refers to. Apart from the immortality of the soul—which is the basic consideration and, therefore, we should not fear death—the other aspect of the matter is that we have to live in this world, performing our duties. As long as we are in this world, in this physical body, it becomes incumbent on us to perform the social duties, the personal duties, and the other duties mentioned. If we do even a little good in this world, it will be credited to our bank balance. One day or the other, we will find that interest has been accrued to it.

Nehābhikramanāśo'sti pratyavāyo na vidyate (2.40). No reaction will be produced by our actions if our actions are motivated by the consideration of a Universal principle existing between ourselves and the object which we are dealing with. And as long as this consciousness of a Universal presence between ourselves and others conditions and rules our behaviour, action will not produce a reaction—that is, karma will not bind us: *na karma lipyate nare* (Isa 2).

In the Isavasya Upanishad is the pronouncement *īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ* (Isa 1): All this is pervaded by the One Reality. Therefore, we should not be greedy. We should not try to possess things, because the idea of possession of property is also the idea of converting some part of the world into a tool for our purposes. As I mentioned, we cannot exploit anything.

If we perform action with this knowledge of God being present everywhere—that is, the principle of Universality ruling all things—we will be purified by our actions; karma becomes a purifying medium, and not a binding medium.

Furthermore, action is a must: *karmaṇyevādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana, mā karmaphalahetur bhūr mā te saṅgo' stvakarmaṇi* (2.47); *na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhatyakarmakṛt* (3.5). This refers to the action that we generally speak of, which includes duty, the performance of obligatory works. This injunction on action is born of the very structure of *prakṛiti*, which never ceases from moving further; and, all *prakṛiti* is potential activity. Even if we keep quiet and do not do any work, that consciousness of our not doing any work is also a work. Hence, nobody can be without any kind of action. Total inactivity is not possible because every cell of the body is active. The mind is active, the growth which the body undergoes is an activity, and even death is an activity. There is continuous movement in the cosmos. It is like a train moving eternally on the rails, and inasmuch as there is no inactivity anywhere on account of the involvement of all things in the processes of *prakṛiti*, we should make the best of things. Finally, in the state of the ultimate *puruṣa*, there is no activity, because there is no contact with *prakṛiti* and there is no flux or natural reaction. But until that time, as long as the *puruṣa*, or the consciousness of the Atman, is involved in this body, there is a reciprocal action of the Atman and the body.

The Atman illumines the mind and enlivens the body, and the body limits the experience of consciousness by subjecting it to the laws of nature. The laws of nature rule this world. This body is conditioned by every law that is applicable to natural phenomena; therefore, our *jivatva*, our consciousness, our very existence itself seems to be conditioned by geographical conditions, historical conditions, and forces such as gravitation, etc.

There is no gravitation for the soul; it is only for the physical body. The more are we externalised in our perception, the more devoted we are to the objects of sense, the more we think that we are the body, the more we are subject to the laws of nature, and the more is the way karma will bind us and compel us to work for the sake of participation in the work of *prakriti*. When we cannot consciously and deliberately participate in the work of *prakriti*, we will be forced to this by the very nature of *prakriti*, which is working inside us, which is working through us—and, as a matter of fact, we ourselves are embodiments of the three *gunas* of *prakriti*.

Our duty is to act in such a manner that action does not bind us. The consideration of the fruit of an action is contrary to the concept of duty. A person who expects something from the performance of duty has not performed duty. Duty is not a wage earner. A person does not perform duty because something comes out of it. It is a necessary obligation on our part to participate in the very structure of the cosmos. If our legs walk, they are performing their duty, but they do not get salary because they are walking. The limbs of the body work independently, and no limb asks for recompense or consideration from the other parts of the body. If the eyes show us the way to go and the legs walk, the eyes may tell us to give them something because they helped us by showing the direction. This does not happen because mutual cooperation is the essence of duty; and in mutual cooperation, no expectation of fruits is possible because the very fact of mutual cooperation brings all the fruits that are required.

Duty is also, automatically, a privilege. The gods in heaven know that we deserve whatever is necessary for our existence under the conditions of the duty that we have to perform. So there is no point in our working in this world, or doing anything, for that matter, under the impression that something

will come. The futurity of the expectation of fruits of action is, again, a concept in time. We feel that if we do something, then some future fruit will follow. The idea of the future is, again, an involvement of our consciousness in time. We have already been told that we should not perform any action with a notion of our involvement in space and time. Our consideration should be a Universal principle present in all things, and not our involvement in space and time. So we should not think that if we do something good today, tomorrow we will get some fruit. The idea of tomorrow should not arise in us because the idea of tomorrow implies space and time and, again, it is a bondage. The meaning of duty is very difficult to conceive, and even great sages are bewildered in understanding what it actually is. *Kavya'pyatra mohitāḥ* (4.16): "Even learned people, even masters with insight, are bewildered as to what action is, what karma is, and how it works. Anyway, I shall tell you how it works." Sri Krishna goes on further.

Discourse 5

THE SECOND CHAPTER CONCLUDES

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SOUL IN UNIVERSALITY

The impulsion to act arises due to the compulsion of *prakriti's* modes, which always revolve and rotate in a cyclic fashion. Like the incessant movement of the spokes of a wheel in motion, the *gunas* of *prakriti*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—keep perpetually moving and never resting. Inasmuch as everybody—myself, yourself, and all things—is constituted of these essentials of *prakriti*, the mutation which *prakriti* perpetually undergoes has a direct impact upon our individual existence, and we also undergo the same mutation. Whether we want to or not, we are forced to act in a particular direction. The whole point is: In what direction are we acting?

Action by itself is something like electricity, which is neither good nor bad. Action is a kind of impulsion in some given direction. The effect that action will produce depends upon the direction of the action. The direction depends upon the mind and the reason of a particular individual conditioning the movement—just as a driver steers the vehicle in a given direction though the engine does not know the direction in which the driver is making it go. *Prakriti* is like an engine which moves; therefore, when it moves, everything also moves, but the direction in which it moves depends upon the intelligence of the driver. In the case of the individual, it is the reason or the understanding, the *viveka shakti*, that is

responsible for the direction.

The direction can be twofold. It can be a movement away from the centre or it can be a movement towards the centre. All movements away from the centre are called centrifugal movements. All movements towards the centre are called centripetal movements. Our activities, our works, our performances of any kind may take us away from ourselves more and more, or they may bring us nearer and nearer to our own selves. That is to say, our works and deeds in this world may be either integrating or disintegrating. When we do work, we may feel exhausted, and feel we have had enough of everything; or we may feel energy, enthusiasm, and we would like to do more work. The energy comes from the integrating faculty operating behind our action. Our soul is the centre of everything. The more is the force exerted by our soul, the greater is the integration that is taking place in our action; it is a cohesive, harmonious action in which we get involved. But if the soul is practically dead, as it is in most people, the sense organs take the upper hand, and instead of the soul motivating the direction of the action, the sense organs start controlling the movement, and they pull us out of ourselves.

The sense organs have only one work, which is to take us out of ourselves and place us somewhere where we are not. That is to say, we are compelled by the sense organs to be continuously conscious of something which is not ourselves; and the more we are conscious of an object, the less we are conscious of ourselves. There is a loss of Self. This is called *atma-hana* in the Isavasya Upanishad. *Asuryā nāma te lokā andhena tamasā vṛtāḥ, tāms te pretyābhigacchanti ye ke cātmahano janāḥ* (Isa 3). The killers of the Self, as the Isavasya Upanishad puts it, are those people who ignore the very existence of the Self by not being conscious of its existence, and of the role it plays in their life and in the direction of their actions. They depend entirely

on the impulses of the eyes and the ears, and the sentiments or the feelings engendered by the power of the sense organs.

Here is the foundation, or the anatomy, of what we call action—individually, as well as cosmically. As I mentioned, there is a cosmic action taking place like the engine of a vehicle which does not know in which direction it is going. *Prakriti* is not concerned with the direction that we take in our action. It propels us to act, and we may go this way or that way. The direction that we take depends upon our intelligence—*buddhi sarathi*. In the Kathopanishad, our intelligence is called *sarathi*. Like Sri Krishna acting as the charioteer for Arjuna who was in the chariot, the *buddhi*, or the intelligence in us, acts as the charioteer in this chariot of the body, of which the rider is the *jiva*. This is the image that we have in the Kathopanishad.

Now, having said all this, we go to the great injunction of the Bhagavadgita: *karmanyevādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana, mā karmaphalahetur bhūr mā te saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi* (2.47). Our duty is to act—that is *karmanyevādhikāras*—but we have no right to expect any result or particular fruit to accrue from our action. From a cursory point of view, this looks like a very hard teaching, like a cruel employer telling a labourer to work hard without expecting any wages. But does God say that we should go on working and He will give us nothing? God is not a cruel master. The principle behind the obligatory duty incumbent upon every individual is the involvement of every individual in the structure of the universe, to which I made reference when I explained what Sankhya is. The whole universe is one single body, whose limbs are the modes of *prakriti*, and whose soul is the all-pervading *purusha*: *yena sarvam idaṁ tatam* (2.17).

Now, why is it that we should act? And why is it that we should not expect the fruits of action? This will be clear to us if we analyse the reason behind our action, and the reason why

fruits will not accrue as we desire. Our actions are obligatory on our part on account of our involvement in this psycho-physical organism, which is controlled by the movement of the *gunas* of *prakriti*. Therefore, as long as *prakriti* moves, as long as the *gunas* rotate and revolve in this cosmical process of creation and evolution, we also will be involved in that action. Thus, our activity is a participation in the universal action of *prakriti*; we are not acting independently. The Sankhya knowledge, which we have had an insight into earlier, tells us that, individually, we do not have any kind of prerogative because we are an organic part of the whole structure of *prakriti*, of which the ruling principle is the *purusha*.

Therefore, work is a must. We have to do; we have to act. But why is it that we do not get the result that we expect? The answer to this question is not in the Second Chapter. The answer is in a verse in the Eighteenth Chapter: *adhiṣṭhānaṁ tathā kartā karaṇaṁ ca pṛthagvidham, vividhās ca pṛthakceṣṭā daivaṁ caivātra pañcamam* (18.14). When we do something, we have a very narrow notion of what result will follow from our action. The narrow notion arises on account of our limitation to our body and social conditions, and our completely ignoring our cosmical relation. The fruit accrues according to the sanction of the involvement of ourselves in the cosmic structure, notwithstanding the fact that we have individually, so-called, initiated the action. The action that we perform is not a stereotyped movement in a simple manner, as we think. Our action is very complicated. It involves many factors. When we take a morsel of food, how many organs in our body act? The entire organism rises up into action. Even if it is only one raisin that we are putting into our mouth, the entire mechanism starts acting. Similarly, any action that we perform sets in motion the whole rotation of *prakriti*, and it will act and react according to its laws.

The physical body is the *adhithana* that is spoken of. The limitations of the physical body are also the limitations of our action. We cannot work like elephants. We can work only to the extent that the frail human body permits. There are many weaknesses as far as our physical body is concerned, and those weaknesses diminish the effect of the action that we perform. Hence, the *adhithana*, or the physical lodgement of our consciousness, limits the effect of the action to that extent.

Karta is the ego principle. When we do an action, the ego asserts itself in a particular manner. The manner in which the ego acts at the time of the performance of an action is entirely dependent on the desire which it has on the subconscious level or the conscious level, and the direction of the action will be motivated by the implicit desires. The ego is nothing but a bundle of desires. It has latent desires as well as expressed desires. So when it acts, it will act either for the fulfilment of a very obvious desire, or it will have a thought of the possibility of fulfilling some latent desire in the future. This will be a restriction on the nature of the fruit that accrues, because the restriction is nothing but the limitation of our desire. We cannot desire everything. We have only petty desires. Our desires are so small and so weak that the limitation of the desires, which condition the action of the ego, is another limitation, apart from the limitation of the physical body.

Kartā karaṇam ca prthagvidham. The instruments of action also limit our action. What are the tools we employ? A spade, a pickaxe, a gun, a hand or a foot are the instruments that we use. The limitations set by the instruments are also the limitations of our action. *Vividhāś ca prthakceṣṭā*: There are various other distractions in the mind at the time of performing an action. The mind is not very clear. Nobody's mind is very clear at the time of performing an action because there is suspicion and doubt; there is a fear of not succeeding, or that the right

step has not been taken, or that it is not the proper thing at the proper time. These kinds of distractions also limit our action.

Vividhāś ca prthakceṣṭā daivaṁ caivātra pañcamam. The last trump card that the Lord places before us is that the will of the Supreme Being is final. At the time of creation, the Supreme Being wills what kind of universe it has to be, and that kind of universe is characterised by certain abilities to provide us with the fruits of whatever kind they be. Therefore, we cannot expect something more or less than what can be available under the conditions of this particular universe willed by Hiranyagarbha, or Ishvara. Whatever be our individual will, it is prompted finally by the Ultimate Will. Though we may will a particular action, we cannot will the particular manner in which we will it.

It is said that a right action should be judged from four angles of vision. Firstly, the intention in doing a thing should be justifiable. We should not have an offensive intention behind our action. Secondly, the consequence that may follow from our action should also be justifiable. Thirdly, the very reason behind our intention—why we developed this intention to do a particular action—has a reason behind it which is superior to our psychological intention, and that also has to be justifiable. Finally, it should not harm any person. If our action does some harm to somebody, knowingly or unknowingly, it will have a reaction.

Actions done either knowingly or unknowingly will produce some reaction. Many times we feel that we have made a mistake unknowingly and, therefore, we should be pardoned. The law does not seem to think exactly the same way. There are one or two interesting stories in the Mahabharata and the Puranas. There was king who had many cattle, and in that country there was a Brahmin who had a cow. One day it so happened that the Brahmin's cow strayed into the herd

of cattle which belonged to the king. As was the custom of ancient rulers, charity of cattle and gold were given to people every day. One day the king gave some cattle in charity to a Brahmin, and it so happened that this stray cow was included. The Brahmin was leading this cow which was a gift from the king, and on the way the real owner came to know about it.

He said, "This is my cow. Why are you taking it?"

The reply was, "I don't know anything. It was given to me by the king."

The Brahmin went to the king and asked, "Why did you give my cow as a gift to somebody else?"

The king said, "I did not know that it was your cow. I never knew that your cow had strayed. Don't get angry with me. I will give you one thousand cows. Don't worry about this cow."

The Brahmin replied, "I do not want one thousand cows. I want only my cow."

It became a great predicament because the Brahmin who got the gift would not give it back. He said, "King, you have given it to me. Are you going back on your word?"

It is said that this peculiar moral crisis in which the king found himself made him a lizard in the next birth. What terrible punishment is this! This story is found in the Bhagavata. Sri Krishna touched the lizard, and it once again became the king.

There is also the story of Mandavya, the great sage. He was sitting in a corner, meditating. One day there was a theft in the treasury of the king. The priests and the army started searching for the culprit, and the thieves who took the treasure ran helter-skelter. Finally, they became afraid of being caught so they threw away the stolen treasure, and it happened to land near the sage who was meditating. The army found it, and concluded that the sage was the thief. They dragged him away and brought him before the king.

The king said, “Impale him immediately.”

In those days the king was the only judge, and he could pass any sentence. They impaled the sage on a spear. Mandavya was hanging there, but because of the great power of his meditation he did not die.

Finally his soul went to Yama, and he asked Yama, “For what wrong action of mine have you punished me with impalement? To my knowledge, I have never done any wrong action in my life. How has this kind of punishment been meted out to me? You have made some mistake!”

Yama replied, “You cannot recollect. When you were a child, you took a little broomstick and pierced a fly. Therefore, you have been pierced.”

“When did I do it?” asked the sage.

“You were about eleven years old,” Yama replied.

“Oh! You are punishing me for having done something without the knowledge that it was wrong. I was an innocent child. I did not know anything.”

“Innocent or not innocent, the law acts!”

Then, it is said, Mandavya furiously cursed the law and changed it so that in future, from that day onwards, no punishment would be meted out to anybody for a mistake that they committed before the age of fourteen years. This is Mandavya’s rule. Today there are judges to decide these cases. Anyway, the law of karma is very intricate: *gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ* (4.17).

The reason why the fruit of an action should not be expected by us is that it is not in the hands of any one person. It is in the hands of a big cabinet of forces, as it were, as I mentioned earlier, and, finally, the will of the Supreme. Inasmuch as the fruit comes from all sides though the action proceeds from one side, we should not concentrate our minds on the fruit of the action.

Because our desired fruit is not going to accrue from our particular action, and we are disappointed because somebody is controlling the destiny of our actions, what is the good of doing anything at all? We will keep quiet. We should not be attached to action with the desire for fruit, nor should we be attached to non-action: *mā karmaphalahetur bhūr mā te saṅgostv akarmaṇi* (2.47). Attachment can be positive or negative. Even if we look at a thing, it is attachment. If we do not look at a thing, it is also attachment. Either way, it is a question of the mind working. Hence, action is a must, and we cannot keep quiet just because our cherished desire is not going to be fulfilled and it is in the hands of somebody else.

Thus, we are placed in a very difficult situation. But the Sankhya knowledge, when applied to the yoga of action, becomes a discipline whereby we free ourselves from this chaotic way of thinking and the fear that our actions may go wrong or our inaction may not be permitted. The discipline that is yoga follows from the knowledge of the Sankhya: *eṣā te'bhihitā sāṅkhye buddhir yoge tvimāṁ śṛṇu* (2.39). In the Bhagavadgita, yoga means action and *sankhya* means knowledge. All action should be based on knowledge. But, our actions are not based on the knowledge of the Sankhya. The knowledge of the Sankhya is the knowledge of our organic involvement in the whole of *prakṛiti*, in the entire creation. We should not forget this point. But what do we do, actually? When we start doing anything, we have some ulterior motive and an object in front of us. Whenever we think of an object, we have a desire to go near it and possess it: *dhyāyato viṣayān puṁsaḥ saṅgas teṣūpajāyate* (2.62).

When we contemplate an object—which is the only thing that we are doing every day, as some object or the other is on our mind—we do not think of the Universal principle involved in the object. Very few can do that. We think mostly in the

exteriorised fashion of the sense organs working in terms of an object outside. The moment we think of an object, the desire of the sense organs increases. They want to possess it. *saṅgāt sañjāyate kāmāḥ* (2.62). The desire to possess that particular object many a time comes in conflict with a similar desire that others may also have to possess it. There is some land. We want to possess it, and another person also wants to possess the same land. There is a clash. So there is a possibility of our coming in conflict with other people and other forces operating in the world due to our clinging to a particular object or a particular set of objects; and when there is an intervention from outside, we get angry: *kāmāt krodho'bhijāyate* (2.62). When we get angry, our intellect ceases to function: *krodhād bhavati saṁmohaḥ* (2.63). When our intellect ceases to function, we become bewildered in our understanding; *saṁmohaḥ* takes place. *Sammohāt smṛtīvibhramāḥ, smṛtibhramśād buddhināśo* (2.63): We become idiots, as it were. Then there is a perishing of the very aim of the human individual.

There is a necessity, therefore, to maintain a balance in our attitude to things. *Samatvaṁ yoga ucyate* (2.48); *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam* (2.50). These are two definitions of yoga in the Second Chapter. Balance of attitude is yoga; dexterity in the performance of action is yoga. The balance that is spoken of as yoga arises on account of our being rooted in the *sankhya*, or knowledge—which is to say, we are cosmically determined, and not individually motivated. This is the fault that Sri Krishna found in Arjuna: “You lack *sankhya*!” When our *sankhya*, or knowledge, is absent, we do not have a comprehensive vision of the things involved. That is to say, we never think in terms of universals; we think only in terms of particulars. The balance that is required in the practice of yoga arises automatically from the knowledge of our involvement in the cosmic structure of things; and then we become able, very

dexterous and adroit in the performance of action. We will never make a mistake in the deeds that we do, because we have a comprehensive vision of the pros and cons of our actions. This is because our yoga, our action, is based on *sankhya*, or knowledge.

Such a person is a *siddha purusha*, a person established in perfect understanding. His understanding does not waver; it does not flicker. It is like the flame of a lamp in a windless place. Arjuna put the question: "What kind of person is this?" *Prajahāti yadā kāmān sarvān pārtha manogatān, ātmany-evātmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthitaprajñas tadocyate* (2.55): A person of stable understanding is one who wants not anything. Again, if we come to *sankhya*, or knowledge, the question of wanting is redundant in this world where everything is ours finally, and also nothing is ours, from another point of view. In a family of which we are a member, we cannot possess everything for ourselves, though everything is ours in one way. In a family we have the freedom to take whatever we want, yet we do not have the freedom to arrogate everything to ourselves. There is, therefore, a freedom together with a restriction.

The ability to perform right action is the same as the ability to maintain a balance of consciousness. No one can be an expert in the performance of action. Expertness means not committing a fault, taking into consideration all aspects of the matter, as I mentioned just now: the consequence, the intention, the reason behind the action, etc. An action that we perform should not be deleterious either to ourselves or to others. Sometimes we may ruin ourselves in the interest of the welfare of other people. Sometimes we may ruin other people in the interest of our own personal welfare. Neither of these things is permitted. Killing ourselves and killing another should be considered as equally culpable offenses. We have no right to kill ourselves, because as individuals we are as sacred

as any other person with whom we can interfere. This is the judicial point of view of the spiritual outlook.

A *sthitaprajna* is a person who has become stable in understanding because of the absence of motivating desires. *Kāmān sarvān pārtha*: He abandons all the motivation for desires toward particular ends. When we desire the acquirement of particular ends, we forget that we are ignoring the other factors which also condition the fulfilment of our desire, about which I mentioned just now. So there will be resentment from other parts of nature which we have ignored in our attachment to the particular limited objective, and then we will suffer because of our action. Hence, all aspects of the action—the past, present and future aspects of the action, we may say—should be taken into consideration, and then we will feel that our participation as a duty in whatever station we are placed in society will automatically bring the desired fruit from the cosmic forces, and we need not have to dig the earth in order to cultivate fields. God, Who is the Supreme, will see that our stomachs are filled and our thirst is quenched, and we need not even think of the morrow because the morrow will take care of itself. Thinking of the morrow is thinking in terms of time, and we have already decided that thinking in terms of time is to invite death because time is the killing medium in life.

The soul does not think in terms of space and time and, therefore, we should not invite this unnecessary suffering by expecting a result of a particular action. “Today if I do something, tomorrow I will get something”—this idea must go because there is no tomorrow for our soul. All teaching is centred in this involvement of the soul in our action. That is called *sankhya*. *Sankhya* is nothing but the continuous action of our soul in every kind of action that we do. If the soul is outside and does not at all participate in our activities, and if

our activities are only physical and sensory, then we will be like logs of wood in the ocean thrown here and there, not knowing which direction they will take.

That is a *sthitaprajna*, a person so established in yoga that he wants nothing because he has everything. When we have everything, we do not want anything. It is because we do not have everything that we have a particular desire for certain things. This *sthitaprajna* is one whose consciousness is established in the Soul of the cosmos and, therefore, he wants nothing. The question of wanting does not arise on account of his soul being everywhere: *yena sarvam idaṁ tatam* (2.17).

To him, this whole world looks like a dark dream, as it were. Where we see values, he does not see values; and where he sees values, we do not see values. For us, this world is the only reality, and God is a possible conceptuality. For him, God is the only reality, and the world is only a conceptuality. *Yā niśā sarvabhūtānāṁ tasyāṁ jāgarti saṁyamī, yasyāṁ jāgrati bhūtāni sā niśā paśyato muneḥ* (2.69): This world is a dream for him, while for us it is a hard, waking reality. For him, the Ultimate Supreme Essence is the final waking, but not for us who, like owls in the daytime, know not that the sun is shining. In the bright light of the solar orb, the owl sees nothing but darkness; similarly, in this dazzle of the Supreme Being everywhere, in this pervasive action of the soul of all things perpetually, we are totally blind. The very existence of it is obliterated, as it were. The soul's existence is completely obliterated from our perception because our perception is sensory, whereas spiritual perception is an insight into the soul. *Parāñci khāni vyatṛṇat svayambhūs tasmāt parāṇ paśyati nāntarātmān: kaś cid dhīraḥ pratyag-ātmānam aikṣad* (Katha 2.1.1). The Kathopanishad says that God has cursed us, as it were; Brahma cast an imprecation on every one of us by piercing the sense organs in an outward direction.

Why has he cursed us like that? It is an imprecation, the compulsion of the sense organs in the direction of what is not the Self. That is, the *anatman*, or the object, is so intense that we live in the world of the sense organs only. Therefore, we are in a world of death and destruction. *Anityam asukhaṁ lokam* (9.33); *duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam* (8.15). *Anityam* is the word that is used in the Bhagavadgita for what the world is. The world is not at all permanent, and we should not expect any permanent value in this world. It is engendered by sorrow from beginning to end. *Asukhaṁ lokam*, *duḥkhālayam*: This is the house of sorrow.

In a cloth shop, we can get cloth. In a cutlery shop, we can get cutlery. In a grocery shop, we can get groceries. But we cannot get what is not there. This world is the shop where there is sorrow—*duḥkhālayam*—and, therefore, we will reap only sorrow if we are tethered to the demands of the sense organs. The whole of yoga is nothing but the restraining of the powers of the sense organs, which compel us to think in terms of the *anatman*, and centring it in the Atman. It is a movement from the centrifugality of the sensory activity to the centripetality of the soul's contemplation on itself. *Tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe avasthānam; vṛtti sārūpyam itaratra* (Y.S. 1.3-4). These are Patanjali's sutras: When you are established in your own Self, the *vrittis* of the mind cease; but when you are not established in the Self, the mind operates in terms of the *vrittis* and compels you to know the world as an outside object, and at the same time compels you to want it or not want it. *Āpūryamāṇam acalapratiṣṭhaṁ samudram āpaḥ praviśanti yadvat, tadvat kāmā yaṁ praviśanti sarve sa śāntim āpnoti na kāmakāmī* (2.70). Who will have peace in this world? Only that person can have peace into whom all desires conceivable in the world enter, like rivers enter into the ocean. "Let there be millions of desires; I shall absorb them into myself, into the

Universality that I am, like the ocean.” Any number of rivers can touch the ocean, and the ocean is not tired of absorbing them. All the desires, together with the objects of desire, are melted down into this oceanic consciousness of the realisation of the *sthitaprajnata*. As the ocean is filled with the waters of all the rivers, so is the *sthitaprajna* filled with all the values that we can think of, earthly or heavenly. Most blessed is this state of being a realised soul—that is to say, a soul that has established itself in its own Universality, and therefore wants nothing, and therefore is the happiest person.

Discourse 6

THE THIRD CHAPTER BEGINS

THE RELATION BETWEEN SANKHYA AND YOGA

Eṣā brāhmī sthitiḥ pārtha nainām prāpya vimuhyati, sthivāsyām antakāle'pi brahmanirvāṇam ṛcchati (2.72). The Second Chapter of the Gita, which we have practically concluded yesterday, is the core of the teaching of the whole of the Bhagavadgita, which is elaborated in the subsequent chapters, from the Third onwards. Madhusudhana Saraswati, a commentator on the Bhagavadgita, has pointed out that the teachings of every subsequent chapter are a commentary on one or the other of the verses of the Second Chapter. The Second Chapter is pre-eminently important because the whole of the teaching is on Sankhya and yoga, whose basic principles have been explained during the past few days. If you can remember the details of the Sankhya and the yoga that we have covered during these days, as described in the Second Chapter, you would have noticed that it is a complete teaching on the highest way of spiritual living, wherein there is a rapprochement of the world, God, and the individual at the same time. The world, the individual and God are supposed to be three metaphysical principles on which it is that *acharyas* write commentaries, and on which it is that theories of philosophy are propounded.

This being the complete teaching, as it were, one who is established in this never gets confounded afterwards. *Eṣā brāhmī sthitiḥ*—virtually, the establishment of oneself in this

understanding, vouchsafed through the Second Chapter, as we have described, is an establishment in the Absolute. It is a rooting of one's consciousness in the total envisagement of values. "Therefore, O Arjuna, this knowledge that has been communicated to you up to this time is enough for you to get established in that Brahman. Once you are established in this, you will never have any mental confusion afterwards. Everything will be perspicacious, everything will be clear. You will see all things as if in a mirror."

Even if a person is able to remain in this consciousness only during the last moment of life, that will do. It is good that we maintain a consciousness of this reality throughout our life, day in and day out; but the compassionate Lord says that even if this is not practicable for us, at least if we are conscious of this state at the time of the passing of the breath from this body, then we are blessed. *Sthitvāsyām antakālepi brahmanirvāṇam ṛcchati*: He shall attain to Brahman. So we can understand the importance of the meaning of the Second Chapter of the Bhagavadgita.

After having heard all this, a question that usually arises in the minds of common people also arose in the mind of Arjuna. *Jyāyasī cet karmaṇas te matā buddhir janārdana, tat kiṁ karmaṇi ghore mām niyojayasi keśava; vyāmiśreṇeva vākyena buddhiṁ mohayasīva me, tad ekaṁ vada niścītya yena śreyo'ham āpnuyām* (3.1-2): "You have been telling me that all action has to be based on knowledge; and the very value of action seems to be dependent on the extent of the Sankhya knowledge in which it is to be rooted. Your emphasis seems to be on Sankhya—knowledge. Then why is that You are goading me to action? Sometimes You say Sankhya, sometimes You say yoga, sometimes You say 'do this', sometimes You say 'do that'; You are confusing my mind." It is a very clear teaching. There was no confusion in what Sri Krishna said, but it had not

entered the mind of Arjuna—as perhaps it has not entered the minds of many of us also. It cannot be remembered always.

Now Sri Krishna takes up the question of the relation between Sankhya and yoga, about which enough has been said in the Second Chapter. It has been mentioned again and again that all our activities have to be based on the knowledge of the Sankhya. But are they two different paths, or are they internally related to each other?

*loke'smin dvividhā niṣṭhā purā proktā mayānagha
jñānayogena sāṅkhyānām karmayogena yoginām (3.3)
na karmaṇām anārambhān naiṣkarmyaṁ puruṣo'snute
na ca saṁnyasanād eva siddhiṁ samadhigacchati (3.4)*

Sankhya and yoga, or knowledge and action, are mutually related in an organic fashion. When it was said that action has to be rooted in the knowledge of the Sankhya, the idea was not to bifurcate the adventure of life into two aspects. Sankhya and yoga are something like the two wings of a bird, or like the two legs with which we walk, or the two hands with which we grab and hold. They are complementary; and one being rooted in the other, or one being necessary for the other, does not imply any difference in the structure of Sankhya and yoga; it means that they are inseparable elements in the total perspective of life.

One cannot have merely an understanding of Sankhya in a theoretical sense minus involvement in the work of *prakṛiti*, or action; nor is it possible to be engaged only in action without its being rooted in the knowledge of Sankhya. If there is only an emphasis on Sankhya or only an emphasis on yoga, it is a one-sided emphasis in which knowledge remains a theory and action becomes blind. Unintelligent movement cannot be regarded as yoga. Yoga is an intelligently directed movement in a given fashion. We have already noted that the practice of yoga or the performance of action according to the mandates

of the Sankhya is a graduated movement in the direction of larger and larger dimensions of universal existence.

The universality principle rules all actions that we perform, and also the extent of understanding that we entertain in our minds. Merely because we do not do something, it does not mean we have freed ourselves from the impulse to action. *Na karmaṇām anārambhān naiṣkarmyaṁ puruṣo'snute*: Freedom from action is not achieved by a physical abstraction of oneself from the performance of action. *Na ca saṁnyasanād eva siddhiṁ samadhiḡacchati*: Nor by a mere act of renunciation of involvement in the world does one attain *siddhi*, or perfection.

We are involved in the world in a very, very mysterious manner. This involvement is actually the determining factor behind our correct way of approaching things. The involvement in the world is such that, as we have noted earlier, we are partly action bound on account of our psychophysical personality being constituted of the three *gunas* of *prakṛiti*. The mind is constituted of the *tanmatras*, and the physical body is constituted of the physical elements, so both the mind and the body are, in a way, tools in the intentions of *prakṛiti*, which is cosmic activity. Therefore, whoever has a mind or a body cannot totally abstain from action. It will be forced upon him because when the world moves, everybody in the world also moves. When the railway train moves, whoever is sitting in the railway train also moves. But yoga does not mean merely performance of action in a blind manner without understanding the rationale behind it. Reason is the philosophical aspect of action, and action is the implementation of reason. Both have to go together as complimentary aspects of a daily routine of our existence.

We have to pursue the course of *prakṛiti*, which moves in a process of evolution from lower stages to higher stages with the intention of producing the best species possible. Modern

biologists and anthropologists tell us that *prakriti*—or nature, as they call it—is experimenting to find the best species possible. Nature experimented with the earlier, rudimentary forms of species. There were amphibians, there were aquatic animals, there were wild beasts, there were mammoths, there were dinosaurs, and there were wild human beings. With none of these was nature satisfied. There is a gradual intention of *prakriti* to produce the best product which, at the present moment, seems to be the human individuality.

It is generally accepted that man is the apex of creation and his intelligence represents the final point that one can reach in the understanding of things. Yet, man has to become superman. The intention of *prakriti* is not to allow man to be only man forever. The superhuman character implicit in human individuality has to be manifest through further processes of evolution—births and deaths; and in this work of *prakriti* of producing higher and higher forms of species, it is incumbent on us to participate. The Taittiriya and the Brihadaranyaka Upanishads tell us that the higher species of beings, which are invisible to our eyes, denizens of higher realms which are above the physical realm and, therefore, remain invisible—the Gandharvas, the Devas, Indra, Brihaspati—live in a larger dimension of consciousness. Their power is equally great, and their happiness is a millionfold greater than human happiness. Hence, participation in the work of *prakriti* is actually our participation in the work of educating ourselves in the direction of a larger knowledge that is available to us and which is our heritage, one day or the other.

Therefore yoga, when it is interpreted as a compulsory activity imposed upon the individual, becomes a necessary participation on the part of the individual in the work of *prakriti* for the evolution of higher and higher forms of existence. But, human individuals alone are capable of practising

yoga. Subhuman species cannot understand Sankhya or yoga because there is a peculiar privilege, as it were, that is bestowed upon the human individual—namely, the worth of reason. There is a kind of mind instinctively operating in the lower animals also, but logic or reason is available only in the human being. That is, human reason can draw conclusions from existing premises, but animals, which are instinctive, cannot draw such conclusions.

The restlessness that we undergo in this world, and the pains that we suffer from, are the premises from which we can draw a conclusion that this is not a happy state of affairs and there must be a state of affairs which transcends this miserable state of existence. That we do not like to undergo pain of any kind, that we do not want to die, that we do not want any kind of sorrow, is a premise from which we can draw the conclusion that we are in a position to conceive the state where there is no sorrow, no pain of any kind, and not even death.

Thus, the prerogative of the human reason is that it is able to draw conclusions which far transcend ordinary sense perception. The senses cannot tell us that there is a possibility of the immortality of the soul. They can only tell us if there is an object of sense outside. But reason is not supposed to always play second fiddle to the sense organs. We have a higher reason and a lower reason. It is the higher reason that draws such conclusions which are capable of lifting us up from the ordinary experiences of life and enables us to have some premonition of the higher existences. The reason tells us that there is a possibility of attaining immortality. But the lower mind is completely conditioned by the sense organs. It is instinctive, and many a time we behave like animals when only the lower mind is predominant and is completely under the charge of the sense organs.

So we have two aspects of nature—the higher and the lower. In the Sixth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita we are told that the higher Self should rule the lower self. “The Self is the friend of the self and the Self is the enemy of the self” is what we are told in the Sixth Chapter. Which Self is the friend of which self, and which Self is the enemy of which self?

The higher Self enables the higher reason to infer immortal possibilities; the lower self is pure mentation and individuality. The higher Self is the friend of the lower self only if our instinctive action and our sensory activity are based on the inferences drawn by the higher reason. That is, in our daily activity we should not behave like unspiritual people. Even in the marketplace, our behaviour should be spiritual. Our higher Self should condition our lower mind which is purchasing vegetables in the market or going to the railway station, etc. It does not mean that we become different persons under different conditions. If this lower mind, which is the *jivatva*, is not able to accommodate itself with the demands of the higher reason which says that there is a possibility of immortal existence, then the higher Self becomes the enemy of the lower self—just as the law protects those who obey it but can be the enemy of an individual who disobeys it.

Hence, Sankhya and yoga represent two aspects of the behaviour of the human individual whereby there is participation in the work of *prakriti* in the process of evolution on the one hand, and there is an understanding as to where we are moving on the other hand. As I mentioned, Sankhya and yoga go together like two wings of a bird, as it were, and the bird cannot fly with just one wing. Merely abstaining from physical action is not inaction, because the mind may be acting. Our intention is the action. Our thought is the action. Our feeling is the action. The movements of our hands and feet are not action. If a person is inactive physically but is very active

through the mind, he is verily performing action. But if a person has withdrawn his consciousness from the clutches of the sense organs and is conscious of the world as existing in an interrelated fashion, though he is aware of the world, he is not doing any action. Therefore, the mind is the criterion behind the action or the non-action of the individual concerned.

Another injunction that we have in the Third Chapter is that all action is binding unless it is performed as a sacrifice: *yajñārthāt karmaṇo'nyatra loko'yaṁ karmabandhanaḥ, tadarthaṁ karma kaunteya muktasaṅgaḥ samācara* (3.9). There is a very interesting anecdote from Bhagavan Sri Krishna in the Third Chapter, where he says: *sahayajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā purovāca prajāpatiḥ, anena prasaviṣyadhvam eṣa vo'stviṣṭakāmadhuk; devān bhāvayatānena te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ, parasparam bhāvayantaḥ śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha* (3.10-11). When we were created by God, He created us together with an impulsion to sacrifice. Sacrifice means the cooperation that has to come from us in respect of other beings in the world. We have to necessarily cooperate with the demands for an equal type of existence from other beings also, whether they are superhuman, human or subhuman. We have to be in harmony with the requirements of the gods in heaven. We have to be in harmony with the requirements of other people in this world. We also have to be in harmony with the requirements of animals in the jungle; we cannot ill-treat them. We cannot ill-treat human beings or even ignore their existence.

Prajapati, the Creator, appears to have created individuals with an injunction that they will survive only by sacrifice. If we are not able to do any kind of sacrifice by way of cooperation with another, we will not be able to survive; our existence as persons will be annihilated. The survival instinct in every individual also implies the recognition of an equal survival instinct in other people. If we want to survive, others

also want to survive; and if we want to survive in a qualitatively good manner, others also would like to be equally good qualitatively. We would not like to be servants of somebody, which is to say that we qualify our existence and we would not be satisfied if we are merely permitted to survive. Would we like to survive like pigs or like persons who are ostracised from society? Therefore, permission to survive is not enough. The quantity of survival has to be qualified by another thing, which is the satisfaction that we gain. Hence, we have to be considerate enough in respect of other beings, including subhuman beings, that whatever be the manner in which our survival instinct operates, we must have the capacity to appreciate that the survival instinct operates equally in them. That is, we cannot interfere with the life of another individual. That is the meaning of cooperation.

We cannot consider any human being as a means to an end. Nobody is a means to an end; everybody is an end in itself. The whole universe is a kingdom of ends—which is to say, the whole universe is filled with Self. The end is nothing but that to which everything gravitates. The servitude that we are imposing upon some lesser individual is nothing but the manner in which we are trying to assert ourselves as an end, and using the other person as a tool. But that person is not really a tool; that person is also a self. The person has become a servant due to unfavourable social conditions; but when favourable conditions prevail, the self will rise up and assert itself as an end, and will want you to be a servant. So there can be an evolution and a revolution taking place in nature.

Therefore, Prajapati, when he created human beings, made it necessary for us to be in a state of harmony with other people, with the things in the world, and also with the gods in heaven. The gods in heaven are actually a theological point that Sri Krishna introduces into the concept of sacrifice—that

is, we will not be able to extend a servicing hand to others, nor will we be able to recognise the value in other persons and things, unless the gods in heaven permit us to have this consciousness.

What are these gods in heaven? This is very difficult to understand. The Vedanta philosophy tells us that every limb of the body is controlled and directed by some god. There are nineteen principles operating in the body. There are the five organs of perception or knowledge: the eyes, ears, nose, taste and touch. There are also five organs of action such as the hands, feet, speech, etc. The five organs of knowledge and the five organs of action total ten. Then there are the five *pranas*—*prana*, *apana*, *vyana*, *udana* and *samana*—which are the fivefold various functions of the breath in us which function in various ways in the body. So ten plus five is fifteen. Then we have the psychological organs—*manas*, *buddhi*, *ahamkara* and *chitta*—which perform a fourfold function. *Manas* merely thinks, *chitta* remembers, *ahamkara* arrogates, and *buddhi* understands. Fifteen plus four is nineteen—the nineteen principles operating in the body.

Ekonaviṁśati-mukhaḥ (Ma.U. 3) is the word that is used in the Mandukya Upanishad. This god that is operating through the individual has nineteen mouths—*ekonaviṁśati* is nineteen—so it is with these nineteen mouths that we come in contact with things in the world. That is, the sense organs, which are mentioned as nineteen, are the operating media conducted by higher divinities. The Vedanta Shastra tells us that the eye is conditioned by Sun, the nose by the Aswinis, the tongue by Varuna, the tactile sense by Vayu, the ears by the Dik Devatas, the speech by Agni, the mind by Moon, the *chitta* by Vishnu, the ego by Rudra, the *buddhi* by Brahma, and so on. So what remains in us apart from the contributions made by these gods? Considering the fact that even the physical body

is made up of the building bricks of the five elements, and the sense organs being conditioned by these gods, where are we existing individually? We are living a borrowed existence, as it were—physically, psychologically, socially, and in every way.

The ordinance of Prajapati is that we have to consider the fact of our mutual involvement with not only people outside, not only with nature as *prakriti*, but also with the gods in heaven. The gods will bless us. Actually, the blessing of the gods is nothing but the recognition of there being a conscious element connecting us with other people. The perception of an object through the eyes is not possible unless there is a super-intending conscious medium. For example, you are seeing me here. This knowledge of the fact that I am here does not arise through your eyes, though you are looking at me with your eyes and it appears as if your eyes are telling you that I am here. The eyes are physical eyeballs which can even be removed, so it is not the eyes that tell you I am here.

Then what else is it that tells you that I am here? You have not entered into me; you are sitting far away from me. There is a physical distance between us. If the distance precludes your knowledge of my existence here, and the eyes and the sense organs are physical in their nature and, therefore, cannot know that I am here, there must be something else which is consciously operating. The connecting link between me and you should be a conscious connection. There cannot be only a connection of space and time. There is something like space and time between us of course, but space and time are unconscious principles and, therefore, cannot become the media of your knowing that I am here. Even light is not a conscious element, so you cannot say that you know that I am here because of the light. None of these objects of your perception can be the media for your knowing that I am here. There is an unknown principle superintending all things, a permeating

principle—*yena sarvam idaṁ tatam* (2.17)—which pervades all things; it pervades you, it pervades me, and it also pervades that link between us.

Thus, the gods whom we have to respect and worship every day, by way of the ritualistic worship that we perform either in our house or in a temple, are nothing but an inner recognition of there being a higher principle than ourselves, than others, than even the whole world. With this knowledge, we live in this world by mutual sacrifice, mutual understanding and mutual cooperation among the world, ourselves and God. This is the principle of karma yoga finally, where we can be sensible human beings, worthwhile individuals in the eyes of not only other people but also in the eyes of the gods themselves.

This is a very intricate subject, and not everyone in the world can be taught this knowledge, because people are in different states of evolution. There are varieties of human beings. There are human beings who eat other human beings; they are called cannibals. There are human beings who are not as bad as cannibals, but they are intensely selfish and say, “Tit for tat. If you are good to me, I’ll be good to you. If you are bad to me, I’ll be bad to you.” There are others who will be good to you even if you are bad to them. Higher than this is the saint who lives a holy life of the consciousness of God. Still higher is the sage who is established in God. Hence, even among human beings there are levels, so we cannot give the same teaching to every human being, as it will not be possible for them to absorb it.

Those in the higher stage should not condemn people who are in lower categories and follow one view of life. This is what the compassionate Lord says: *saktāḥ karmaṇyavidvāṁso yathā kurvanti bhārata, kuryād vidvāṁs tathāsaktaś cikīrṣur lokasaṁgraham* (3.25). We should not think that we are superior to a child that babbles and crawls. Its existence is as

valuable and as meaningful to the cosmos as ours, so we must cooperate with it. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was like that. If a child came, he would behave like a child; if a sick man came, he would appreciate him; if a rich man came, he would appreciate him; if a dancer came, he would appreciate the dance; if a musician came, he would appreciate the music; if a scholar came, he would talk on philosophy. Whatever be the object in front of the sage, that is reflected in his mind. A sage never considers himself to be superior to others.

The world is not made up of superior and inferior items. In this large machinery of the cosmos, which part can be considered as superior and which part inferior? A nut and bolt in a machine is as important as a pulley or an engine. The wheel of a car is as important as the engine. Hence, those who are blessed with the knowledge of total detachment from involvement in objects, and are established in Sankhya and yoga, should encourage other people to move in the right direction, and should not condemn them. As a matter of fact, we should behave as other people behave.

The great sage does not put on airs. He behaves like a normal human being. He is not an opponent of the existing conditions of life. He is a reformer by the harmonising features that emanate from him, and he does not become a source of conflict. There is no condemnation or sense of inferiority towards others. There is a systematic method in the process of education that gradually takes the child up from the state in which it is; and the best teacher is he who does not tell what he knows but tells what is necessary for the student. He must be able to appreciate the condition of the student, the stage in which he is or she is, and his teaching should be commensurate with the degree of the knowledge of the student. Then only is there a rapport between the teacher and the student.

Digressing a little from the great subject of Sankhya and yoga, Sri Krishna says there should not be an airing of knowledge. The higher we are, the simpler should we look. The greater we are, the smaller we should appear to people; this is a saint. Nobody can know that the saint is a great man, because he does not appear as a great man. In this context, Sri Sankaracharya says in his commentary on the Brahma Sutras that he is the knower of Brahman, by looking at whom, nobody will know whether he is a fool or an intelligent man, whether he is a good or a bad man, or what kind of person he is. Nobody will be able to assess what kind of person he is. Such a person is a Brahmana, a knower of Brahman.

Let your knowledge be inside you, as a guide, as a lamp for others, but never use it to prop up your ego and then project your individuality through that knowledge. Let not your knowledge be broadcast. The light will shine by itself even if it is covered with bushes and, therefore, your existence itself will speak in a louder voice than the words that you speak. Your way of living, your thinking and feeling, your mode of behaviour is your teaching, so let not there be any parading of knowledge. Knowledge makes a person humble; and when you reach the highest knowledge, you become so humble you do not seem to be existing at all because your knowledge has pervaded the hearts and souls of all people. You become what the Bhagavadgita calls *sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ* (5.25), a person intent on the welfare of everyone. You are a friend of the higher and the lower, the good and the bad, the king and the beggar, the animal and the fool. You are a friend of all, and nobody will show teeth or claws before you because of your being a friend.

Let not anybody know what kind of person you are. Let the Almighty know, it is enough. If all the world knows what you are and God does not recognise you, it is nothing for you;

but if you are not known to the world at all and you are known to some central principle of the universe, that is enough for you. He who is last here will be the first in heaven, and he who is first here will be the last there.

Do not always occupy the front seat. You can sit further away. It is said that where the Ramayana Katha is going on, Hanuman appears as an old man sitting near the shoes. Live like a deaf and dumb man, like a man who knows nothing. This state of affairs, this kind of attitude of not exhibiting oneself—not being presentable in any manner whatsoever, looking like a deaf and dumb person or a person with no understanding at all—is the characteristic that the body assumes automatically when the knowledge heightens, like with Jada Bharata.

Jada Bharata was a great saint who is mentioned in the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana. He was the son of Rishabhadeva. He would not talk at all; people thought he was an idiot. He would not do any work. His brothers told him to tend cattle, but he would simply allow the cattle to go into anybody's field and eat the harvest. So they told him to remain quiet and not do any work at all. He would not talk. He was a very well-built person, but he looked like an idiot sitting somewhere in a corner. One day some dacoits caught hold of him. They wanted a person to be offered as a sacrifice to Kali, the *devata* whom they were worshipping. They thought that here is a well-built man who does not talk, so they took him. They tied him up and dragged him into the Kali temple, where they were about to offer him in sacrifice. When the sword was lifted by the priest, the Kali *murti* burst open, and the divinity rushed forth and grabbed the sword from the hand of the dacoits, destroyed them, and vanished. Can you imagine such a possibility? This is how the *shakti* which Jada Bharata maintained operated. It could draw energy from a stone. This is only a small digression from the main subject. Sri Krishna's

point is that a person who is wise should not show his wisdom too much before other people. Let him be humble. He may be an educating medium to others to take them higher and higher from the stage in which they are, and not suddenly make them jump into higher realms.

Prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ, ahaṅkāravimūḍhātmā kartāham iti manyate (3.27). We again come back to the main subject. As *prakṛiti* is doing all things—the *gunas* of *prakṛiti* are mutating in a cyclic fashion—therefore, it becomes obligatory on our part to act. He who imagines that he is doing the action is really in the state of highest unwisdom. From where then comes the question of our individually participating in a work? We are actually participating cosmically, as an agent of the cosmos, as it were—like an ambassador of a government does not act independently, and only represents the government which has deputed him for a particular purpose. Similarly, we become instruments in God's hand. We act like ambassadors of God. The ordinance of God is to be in our minds always, and we should never think that we are acting independently. Suppose the ambassador starts behaving as if he is an independent man, as if he is the government himself, then the whole purpose will be defeated. No individual has the right to project the ego to such an extent as to feel that he is doing or she is doing; and if anybody feels that way, that is the height of unwisdom. *Prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ, ahaṅkāravimūḍhātmā kartāham iti manyate*: This sense of agency, or doership, is our undoing.

We have learnt many scriptures, listened to many lectures, studied the Bhagavadgita and the Ramayana and the Bhagavata, but each one of us should get up in the morning and sit for a few minutes and feel: "How far has this teaching gone into my very blood and veins? How many times do I get angry?" The spiritual diary of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj is

a very, very important check that will keep us on track. “How much time have I idled away? How many minutes have I spent in unnecessary gossip and chat? How many minutes have been spent in undesirable company? How many minutes have I spent in telling non-truths, etc.?” These are the checkpoints in the diary that is to be maintained by us. Otherwise, the ego will again and again assert itself, and all our knowledge of the Gita will be buried underground because if whatever knowledge we have gained through our intelligence and through our understanding does not soak itself into our feeling, there will be no blending of our character.

Knowledge is the way in which we are living. Knowledge is not a theoretical book-learning. It is not a certificate from a college. It is the very way and behaviour in which we conduct ourselves in life—not only in respect of ourselves, but also in respect of other people, and perhaps even in respect of God Himself.

How difficult is this teaching! The comprehensiveness of the teaching is so profound that the fractional thinking that the mind is accustomed to will find it very hard to grasp. A total thinking is required of us in the understanding of the Bhagavadgita and the Upanishads, but we are always accustomed to fractional thinking. When we think of one thing, we do not think of another thing. It is necessary for us to think of one thing together with all other things, which are also related in a holistic fashion.

There is a modern system of psychology which has now discovered that the mind works in a holistic fashion. Though it looks as if we are thinking one or two thoughts at a time, the other thoughts which are buried or implicit, and which are not actually on the surface of the mind, have some impact on the present thought, and they condition us so that our actions are not entirely faultless. If our actions are motivated or directed

only by one or two thoughts, and we completely ignore the presence of other aspects of our thought, our actions will not be faultless. *Sarvārambhā hi doṣeṇa dhūmenāgnir ivāvṛtāḥ* (18.48): Every action is subject to some mistake. As where there is fire there is smoke, there is some mistake involved in everything that we do because whenever we act, whenever we do anything, we use a part of our mind because of the fact that we work on the basis of a notion of like and dislike. We have partitioned the world into two blocks: the necessary and the unnecessary.

Hence, the Bhagavadgita teaching becomes necessary for such fractional thinkers. A high standard of purification of the mind is necessary by the *yamas* and *niyamas*, as Patanjali puts it, and the Sadhana Chatustaya, as the Vedanta Shastra puts it. Suddenly jumping into the meditative techniques of the Bhagavadgita will not take us any further unless our mind is prepared for it and we are really asking for God.

Discourse 7

THE THIRD CHAPTER CONCLUDES

THE KNOWER OF REALITY

Tattvavit tu mahābāho guṇakarmavibhāgayoḥ, guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta iti matvā na sajjate (3.28). *Tattvavit* means the knower of Reality. Here ‘knower’ means the knower of the processes of the *gunas* of *prakriti* and their relation to actions performed by individuals. *Guṇakarmavibhāgayoḥ tattvavit*: One who knows the reality of the manner of the working of the *gunas* of *prakriti* in their relation to the actions of people is a *tattvavit*.

What does a *tattvavit* know? One with this insight recognises that all movements in the form of activities of any kind are only movements of the *gunas* of *prakriti*, whether they operate in heaven, on this earth, in the nether regions, or in hell. *Na tad asti pṛthivyām vā divi deveṣu vā punaḥ, sattvaṁ prakṛtijair muktaṁ yad ebhiḥ syāt tribhir guṇaiḥ* (18.40): Not in all creation, including the celestials in heaven, will we find a single entity which is free from the involvement in the *gunas* of *prakriti*. The celestials are more rarefied in their constitution and can penetrate through even solid objects on account of their inner constitution being *sattvic* in nature. We cannot do that; we are predominantly *rajasic* and *tamasic*. So in all creation, whether it is in heaven or on earth or anywhere, the activities that are seen among people are only the activities of the *gunas* of *prakriti*.

If two legs walk, it is an activity of two limbs of the body, though actually it is not an independent activity of the legs. It is an order issued by the entire organism of the body and the mind. The entire body is in action when the legs move. Whenever an individual works or does any action, even the least of action, a cosmic mutation in the form of the rotation of the *gunas* of *prakriti* determines his action. Therefore, the *tattvavit*, or the knower of Reality, is a cosmically aware individual.

When anything takes place or an event occurs anywhere in the world, the *tattvavit* knows that it occurs everywhere. Modern physics tells us that events do not take place in space. If they do not take place in space, where else do they take place? They take place not in time, not in space. That means to say, an event that occurs historically in this world—so-called historically from our point of view—does not take place in one particular part of the world. It is an agitation taking place in the whole world but manifest only in some part, like an ulcer or a boil. It may be a volcano or an epidemic or a war taking place in some part of the world, but it is engendered by the agitation of the total organism of the world.

Physics has now gone to the extent of realising that there is a continuum which is the ultimate reality of the universe, and it is not physical or solid in its nature. Solids can be converted into liquids, liquids can be converted into gases, gases can be converted into pure energy, and energy is not located in any particular place. Energy is not a localised movement; it is a continuum that is non-spatial and non-temporal. This is a subject in modern physics which practically takes us to the conclusions of the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita that all action is a cosmic action.

Thus a *tattvavit*, a knower of this reality of the mutations of the *gunas* of *prakriti* in relation to the activities of an

individual, knows that the *gunas* act on the *gunas*. All actions are nothing but the collision of parts of *prakriti* with other parts of *prakriti*. When the sense organs perceive an object, these *gunas*, as the sense organs, come in contact with the *gunas* as the object of *prakriti*. The forces of nature operate individually as well as externally. We noted previously that the sense organs are constituted of the *gunas* of *prakriti*, and are intelligently superintended by the divinities—the *adhidevatas*, which work in between the *adhyatma*, the individual, and the *adhibhuta*, the object. *Guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta iti matvā*: All this wonderful activity of the world, this great drama which is the history of mankind—natural or anthropological, or whatever we call it—is just a play of *prakriti*. It is not a particular event caused by any individual anywhere. We may say nature does everything, or we may even say God does everything.

Having known this, the knower of Reality, or the *tattvavit*, is *na sajjate*—is not attached to anything. He does not even hold an opinion on anything, because to hold an opinion is to pass a judgment, which is nothing but a localised notion that we entertain in regard to something; and no wise person can pass a judgment on anything in this world because to judge a thing is to eliminate factors which are invisible and uncognisable, and yet contributory to the occurrence of a particular event. Judge not, lest you be judged. If you judge a thing, you will be judged in a similar manner by the forces of nature. Whatever you do to the world, that will be done to you. Do unto others as you would be done by. *Ātmanaḥ pratikūlāni pareśām na samācharet* (M.B. 5.15.17): That which is not good for you should not be meted out to others either. This is an ethical consequence that we may draw from this scientific and philosophical conclusion that the *gunas* of *prakriti* alone operate in this world and they constitute all the solid objects—mountains and rivers and the solar system and

all our bodies, and everything we can think of in heaven or on earth. Knowing this, he is not attached to anything. He remains unbiased, unconcerned. He is a witness of the drama, just as the audience in an enactment of a drama is not attached either to this actor or that actor, knowing very well that all the actors perform a mutually correlated activity to produce a definite effect. Just as the audience does not get attached to any performer in a drama, so is the case with the knower of Reality. He is not attached to anything—*iti matvā na sajjate*. Totally unconcerned and wanting nothing does a knower of Reality live.

What is his attitude towards people who do not know this Reality? Ignorant people who behave very foolishly and get attached to things—what is his attitude towards them? This is suggested in the next verse. *Prakṛter guṇasaṁmūḍhāḥ sajjante guṇakarmasu, tān akṛtsnavido mandān kṛtsnavin na vicālayet* (3.29): Those who do not have an insight into the nature of *prakṛiti*'s actions get attached to particular objects of sense; but we should not disturb their feeling or condemn their outlook of life. We should not tell them that their outlook is totally wrong and that their perception is erroneous. Condemnation is something unknown to the knower of Reality. The teacher in a school does not condemn the ignorant child, or the student. An efflorescence of the mind of the student is attempted by the teacher, who is a master of psychology. Sri Krishna is a master of psychology and he acts as the best of teachers before a student like Arjuna, and thus he expects every knower of Truth to also behave as a good teacher of mankind, and not a judge of mankind. The teacher does not judge the student as good or bad, but as someone who is in a particular state of evolution from which he has to effloresce and flower into a larger dimension of knowledge. The teacher is sometimes called a spiritual midwife, in the language of Socrates. The

midwife does not create the child, but brings the child out. So is the case with the teacher. He does not thrust knowledge into the ignorant person. He does not interfere at all with the mind of the student, but enables the mind to undergo a transmutation by the dexterous psychological activity of the teacher, so that knowledge manifests itself automatically from the otherwise ignorant mind.

A person who taught Plato and Socrates once made a humorous analogy that even a buffalo knows geometry. How can he say that a buffalo knows geometry? For that, an illustration was given. Imagine there is a triangular field, and a buffalo is standing at one of the angles. At another angle there is a man with a bundle of grass, who calls to the buffalo. Will the buffalo come directly, or will it come through the other angle? It knows that this line is shorter than the other line; this is the geometrical knowledge of the buffalo. So, some knowledge is inherent even in a buffalo. A monkey knows that stones that are thrown will not hit it if it hides behind a tree. This is the monkey's logic. We cannot say that the monkey does not have logic. It knows how to grab the fruit that is in our hand when we are unaware of its presence. When we are aware, it will not come. When we are unaware, looking away, it will come; and if we pursue it, it knows how to hide itself. So there is an incipient wisdom present even in the lowest category of creation. Therefore, the wise one is he who acts as a good mentor and does not judge things as good or bad. He is a divinity itself. *Tān akṛtsnavido mandān kṛtsnavin na vicālayet*: The one who is *kṛtsnavit*, knowing all things, should not interfere with those who know things only partially. People who have only a fractional knowledge of things should not be judged as inferior by the one who has a complete knowledge of things; and no student is considered as totally unfit by a good teacher.

Who is a *tattvavit*? A knower of Reality, he knows the ways of the *gunas* of *prakṛiti* and their relation to the activities of people. How does he behave? This interesting attitude and behaviour of the *jnanin*, or the knower of Truth, is placed before us in two verses in the Third Chapter. It may look strange that these two verses, which do not fit in with the subject of the Third Chapter, are placed there. Only the Lord knows why He has put them there. Suddenly, He takes our minds to some height, which is actually not the theme of the Third Chapter.

Yas tvātmaratir eva syād ātmatṛptaś ca mānavaḥ, ātmanyeva ca saṁtuṣṭas tasya kāryaṁ na vidyate (3.17): There is no duty to be performed by that person who is satisfied with the Self. *Ātmany eva ca saṁtuṣṭas tasya kāryaṁ na vidyate*: There is no necessity for that person to come in contact with any external atmosphere in the form of activity, because he is rejoicing in his own Self. *Ātmarati* is one who is rejoicing, delighting in his own Self. He plays by himself, he delights with himself. He is in company with his own Self. The Upanishad also says that his friend is himself. His company is himself. His food is himself. He rejoices within himself. Such a person is called *ātmarati*—one who does not want anything because he is everything.

Yas tv ātmaratir eva syād ātmatṛptaś: He is one who is satisfied with what he is, and does not try to possess anything further. We generally try to be satisfied with our possessions, with what we have. So much land, so much money, so much reputation—on that basis we judge the quantity and quality of our happiness. But here, the joy of this *ātmarati*, *tattvavit*, is not dependent on these external factors of land, money, reputation, etc. It is rooted in himself. *Ātmatṛptaḥ*: I am satisfied with what I am and not necessarily with what I have. This is a *tattvavit*. *Ātmatṛptaś ca mānavaḥ, ātmanyeva ca saṁtuṣṭas*:

He is satisfied with himself. *Tasya kāryam na vidyate*: He has no duty to perform.

He does not have to depend on anything else in this world for his sustenance: *tasya kṛtenārtho nākṛteneha kaścana* (3.18). Such is the glorious ideal that the sage reaches, on having an insight into the structure of this world of *prakṛiti* and its relation to human activity.

Arjuna puts a question. *Atha kena prayukto'yaṁ pāpaṁ carati pūruṣaḥ, anicchannapi vārṣṇeya balād iva niyojitaḥ* (3.36): "This is an interesting teaching, and very enlightening indeed, but people find it very difficult to practise. People commit errors, blunders and sins, even if this teaching is poured on their heads. Knowingly, as it were, people commit mistakes. Though they are learned and have an insight into the knowledge of the scriptures, they are likely to take the erroneous path. What is the reason behind this mistake that human beings are subjected to?"

Kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajoguṇa samudbhavaḥ, mahāśano mahāpāpmā viddhyenam iha vairiṇam (3.37). Our enemy is our own self, the lower self, to which I made reference yesterday, which is conditioned entirely with the sentiments of love and hatred. In the verses of the Second Chapter, which we have already studied, it is mentioned how desire arises in terms of objects, and when a desire arises in terms of objects there is simultaneous anger in regard to that which is likely to be a hindrance in the fulfilment of the desire. Therefore, when there is a desire, there is anger, either potential or manifest. Even if it is not manifest, there is a susceptibility to anger in regard to a possible hindrance that may arise in the fulfilment of a desire. Hence, love and hatred go together. *Kama* and *krodha* go together.

Kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajoguṇa samudbhavaḥ. Born of the intense agitation of *prakṛiti's* nature, due to the agitation of

the *rajasic* quality of the mind and the intense disturbance on the surface of the psyche, there is the impetuous activity of the sense organs in the direction of other people and other things in the world, with whom we deal in a manner which is always partial and never wholesome. It is always partial because of the fact that we can never have a judicious understanding of the total structure of anything in this world. Our knowledge is fractional. We are not *tattvavit*; we do not know the relation between the *gunas* of *prakriti* and action. So we are pulled in the direction of self-destruction. As a moth flies into the blazing flame under the impression that it is beautiful, and is reduced to ashes, the flames of desire which burn through the sense organs compel the individual soul to fly to the objects of sense, thereby losing its understanding and, sometimes, its very existence itself.

This impulse has to be restrained. We should not get angry. Actually, anger is a sign of absence of even culture, let alone spiritual insight. An uncultured person gets agitated over silly things. His eyes become red, his lips start throbbing, and he starts showing his fist. This is not only a sign of a lack of education and culture, it is a brute's nature. Anger is the worst of enemies. Let it not take possession of you.

Hanuman got very angry in Lanka. Sita's predicament roused his anger to such an extent that he thought, "I should go from here only after teaching a lesson to Ravana." His mission was only to find Sita and tell Rama where she was; he was not entrusted with any other work. But this ambassador went beyond his empowered authority as an ambassador. He said, "It is best for an ambassador to do something more than what he is instructed, in the interest of the government. They have not told me to do that, but in their interest I will do it." So he rose up into a mountainous shape, and we know what he did. He destroyed the whole of Lanka by setting fire to it.

Afterwards he cooled down a bit. He began to feel, “What a wretched act I have done! Anger is the worst of enemies. How is it that I got into a rage of this kind and set fire everywhere, not thinking that perhaps Sita may also be burned? If this has happened, I shall not go back to Rama. I shall stay here itself, do *prayopavesha* and end my life.”

He is a hero who, knowing that fire-like anger is rising up, subdues it with the power of the will. Such a person is a hero, and not merely one who carries a weapon in his hand. *Kama* and *krodha* are the worst of enemies. They are hindrances in the spiritual advancement of the spirit because their main activity is to violate the very consciousness of universality through the sense organs that work on the basis of *kama* and *krodha*, desire and anger. How are we going to subdue these forces?

If we want to get a license or a permit, we can apply to the government in two ways. There is a method of approaching through the proper channels. The nearest official is approached and the application is submitted; and that person endorses it and gives to the next official, until finally the supreme authority endorses it and the permit is granted. The other method is to go directly to the supreme authority, if it is practicable and possible for us, and then an immediate order is issued and is communicated to all the subordinate officials automatically, spontaneously, instead of the routine, stereotyped method of rising gradually over a period of time.

So is the instruction of Bhagavan Sri Krishna in the manner of controlling these impulses of *kama* and *krodha*. We can go gradually from the lower level of restraint to the higher level, or we can touch the top and put the whole force down with one action. The stereotyped, procedural method is to apply the lower methods of restraint and gradually go up to the higher methods of restraint. A person who is subject

to intense passions and anger may do well to fast one day in a week. Or if he is more sincere and honest, he may miss a meal every day because then his impulses will know that if they start creating too much havoc, they will miss a meal, so they will be cautious in manifesting themselves. Restrain yourself through habits of food. Have only a *sattvic* diet, and not *rajasic* and *tamasic* diets. Fast one day in a week, or miss a meal every day. That is one method.

The other method is, as far as possible, to try to avoid the company of people who are not in any way going to be of help to you or are going to be a disturbance to you. Atheists and materialists or opponents of any kind may not be good company for you. Be alone to yourself. Try to be alone to yourself as much as possible, and be in the midst of people only to that extent as would be necessitated by the work that you perform. You may be a teacher, you may be a factory manager, you may be a medical person, or you may be professor, etc. You may be in the midst of society only to the extent to which you have to fulfil your obligations—not more, not less. When that performance is over, you may withdraw yourself. When the class is over, you need not go on chatting with the other teachers, etc. Reduce your contact with people to the minimum by a judicious analysis of the requirements of human society. Thus, diet is one method, and social contact is another.

The third is the study of spiritual books such as the Bhagavata, the Bhagavadgita, the Upanishads, etc. This should be done every day, in the early morning, so that you start the day with the noble thoughts of Vyasa or Valmiki or Bhagavan Sri Krishna or Jesus Christ or whoever it is. The intense nobility and the profundity of these spiritual teachings which have gone into your mind due to your *svadhyaya* in the morning will, to some extent, restrain your behaviour throughout

the day.

Lastly, there is meditation and *japa*. As much time as possible must be devoted to meditation and *japa*. The sense organs are weakened by these methods, and weak minds cannot wreak as much havoc and are not as rapacious as they are when they have strength.

Indriyāṇi mano buddhir asyādhiṣṭhānam ucyate (3.40). The forces of *kama* and *krodha* have a location in your body. They are the sense organs, the *manas* and the *buddhi*. Your reason, your mind and your sense organs are the instruments which are harnessed by the forces of *kama* and *krodha* to achieve their purpose. So the lower category may be controlled first, and the higher category afterwards. The sense organs may be restrained first by the means that I mentioned in brief. Then you can control the mind gradually by *japa sadhana*. As direct meditation is very difficult, the mind can be restrained by *japa sadhana*, *purashcharana*, etc. Then the *buddhi* is restrained by higher meditation.

This is a procedural method of the application from the lower orders to the higher orders. But there is a direct method of subjugating the sense organs, which is the rousing of the aspiration of the soul for establishing itself in Universal Consciousness. This is called the rousing of the *brahmakara vritti* in the mind. A *vritti* is a modification of the mind. Ordinarily there is a *visayakara vritti* in your mind. A modification of the mind in terms of the objects of sense is called *visayakara vritti*, but the modification of the mind in terms of Universal Existence is called *brahmakara vritti*. When you try to analyse the interrelationships of the circumstances of life, you will notice that everything is connected to everything else. Therefore, any particular passion or anger in regard to an object is not permitted. This kind of meditation, which is your attempt to locate or fix your consciousness on a universal

concept, will immediately put a check on the instinctive activities of the mind and, secondarily, on the impetuous activities of the sense organs.

*indriyāṇi parāṇyāhur indriyebhyaḥ param manaḥ
manasas tu parā buddhir yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ (3.42)
evaṁ buddheḥ param buddhvā saṁstabhyātmānam ātmanā
jahi śatruṁ mahābāho kāmarūpaṁ durāsadam (3.43)*

These last verses of the Third Chapter are like medicine, a prescription by a doctor, which you may repeat every day. The *indriyas* are strong, no doubt, but the sense organs being strong does not mean that they are the only authorities in the world. The mind is stronger than the sense organs. The intellect, or the higher reason, is stronger than the instinctive mind. Higher than the reason is the strength of this Universal Spirit, which you really are. So try to root yourself gradually by the process of self-analysis, through which you realise the interconnection of all things, on account of which particular love and hatred cannot be sanctioned in this world. There cannot be desire for something or hatred for something. *Kama* and *krodha* can be subjugated in this way by a direct push that you give from the top, from the Atman that is universal. When the order from the universal Atman is communicated to the *buddhi*, it communicates that order into the mind, and the mind communicates the order to the sense organs, and puts a check on their activities. *Kama* and *krodha* cease. This is how you may control these hindrances to spiritual practice. So concludes the Third Chapter of the Bhagavadgita.

Discourse 8

THE FOURTH CHAPTER BEGINS

THE AVATARAS OF GOD

We have studied three chapters of the Bhagavadgita. If you have listened to me carefully, you would have noticed that the compressed matter that has gone into the first three chapters lays the very foundation, as it were, of the whole spiritual teaching for mankind. As difficult it is to remember all these things, so difficult it is to make out the various facets involved in the teaching; and more difficult it is to put them into daily practice. The poor human individual with a frail intellect, with an even more frail body, with tensions which are political, social and of many other types—how will this individual be able to grasp this teaching? Where is the brain for it? It is difficult to intellectually comprehend the inner secrets hidden even in the first three chapters. So much has been said about practically everything. Nobody will remember all these things—except this tape recorder. It will record everything, but others cannot remember everything in detail.

This difficulty is likely to be felt by everyone, as ordinary human individuals are subject to limitations of every kind. Is the human individual to feel disappointed that, after all, it seems to be too big an affair and we are perhaps not fit, either physically or mentally, to face the profound realities of this world? Are we to be in a state of despondency and feel a sense of helplessness? No. There is a guiding hand operating through the cosmos. It is not merely a picture of problems

and difficulties and scientific interconnections that has been placed before us. The picture of the universe in terms of modern physics, chemistry and astronomy may be enough to frighten us out of our wits. We cannot even imagine what kind of world it is, with such width and such depth and such intricacies of inner composition. Such are the *gunas* of *prakriti*; such is *prakriti*; such is *purusha*; such are the involvements of consciousness and matter, and individuality, and whatnot. All sorts of things have been told. We seem to be as far from this lofty teaching as we are from the stars. Is it so?

The Fourth Chapter begins with a great consolation. The element of spiritual guidance is brought into the focus of the attention of the student. There is a perpetual guidance flowing from every part of the cosmos. The whole universe is composed of friends, well-wishers, who are eager to see that we are protected, that we are guarded and enabled to rise higher and higher, to more and more profound states of perfection. They are the directions of the heavens which are dominated and superintended by divinities called the Ashtadiggajas, the divinities of the four quarters, the gods who superintend over our sense organs and our mental psyche, the very *prakriti* itself whose *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are in our own personality, and the supreme *purusha*, which is implanted in the recesses of our heart. These are the highest friendly forces. There are no enemies in this world.

The highest possibility of help comes from a Universal intelligence which permeates through the entire material universe and all the fourteen *lokas*; and whenever there is disharmony among the parts of the cosmos, the power of God descends as an *avatara*. The incarnation of God is nothing but the cosmic intelligence operating through required media at a given time, in a given manner, for a given purpose.

*yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata
 abhyutthānam adharmasya tadātmānam sṛjāmyaham (4.7)
 paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām
 dharmasamsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge (4.8)*

At every juncture of experience, whether created knowingly or unknowingly, God manifests Himself, just as healing forces in the body work perpetually when there is disease in the system. If there is some illness in the body, the protective forces immediately gird up their loins and powers called anabolic forces stand against the catabolic forces which are intent on destroying the body. As gods and demons fight in heaven, the constructive healing forces fight, as it were, against disease-forming toxins—just as whenever there is even a little pain in the foot due to a thorn that has gone into it, the entire body descends as an incarnation of power to set right that element that has entered as something totally alien to the bodily requirement.

When does God incarnate? Is it sometimes, occasionally, always, or only in some ages? The word ‘yuga’ is used in this verse: *yuge yuge*. *Yuga* also means the fourfold cycle of time known as Krita Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga and Kali Yuga. These four ages of the time process are called *yugas* in Sanskrit. “In every *yuga* I manifest myself” is one meaning. We will find in the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana or the Vishnu Purana or other Puranas that the incarnation of God in some form—Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, and so on—took place in every *yuga*. But *yuga* also means a junction, a crisis, a situation where there is a conflict of forces, outwardly as well as inwardly. There is a necessity for the descent of redemptive forces, in the same way as the constructive redeeming forces of the body do not act only sometimes. They do not even sleep. The anabolic forces, or constructive forces to which I made reference, are perpetually working in the body to see

that health is maintained and the body does not deteriorate.

Just as the intelligence maintaining the human body works continuously, without winking and without sleeping, in order to maintain this psychophysical organism, in the same way, God acts in this world through manifestations which are myriad in number. *Santi sahasraśaḥ*—thousands and thousands are the ways in which God can reveal Himself for the purpose of bringing about a rapprochement of conditions, a harmony among conflicts arising in any way whatsoever. God can reveal Himself positively in the form of an amelioration of all the conditions causing pain to people, or negatively by the amputation of a limb of a body if that becomes unavoidable, which God does only under extreme cases in the form of battle, war, epidemics, cyclones, earthquakes, floods and tornadoes. All these come as incarnations of God. He may come as the beautiful butter-stealing child Krishna—so tender, so attractive, so beautiful and so adorable—or He may also come as the terrific tooth-and-claw Narasimha. Hence, we should not expect Him to manifest Himself only in the manner we like.

When a fever arises in the body, it is a very painful and very unpleasant thing that is taking place, but it is a healing process. A big war is taking place within the body, and a heightened form of energy rises up into action in order to drive out all the toxic forces. In this war, sometimes the soldiers in the battle who drive out the toxic elements also die. The warriors do not always come back hale and hearty. Many of them perish. The white corpuscles in the blood are supposed to be the warriors, and when they die there is pus in the body. That pus is nothing but the blood corpuscles dying in the war for the sake of our welfare. Soldiers die for the nation. Nations survive; soldiers die. In the same way, these poor white cells fought with the elements that came as toxins, and when the toxins were too

powerful—like Ravana and Kumbhakarna—many of these cells died, sacrificing themselves for the welfare of the body.

Similarly, the manifestation of God is with an ultimate purpose. It is not with an individual, motivated, localised purpose. God does not descend for your sake or my sake, or for this country's sake or that country's sake. There is no such thing as 'mine' and 'his' for God. The total intention of creation, taken in its completeness, is the intention of God. He wants the health and the harmony of the entire creation in the same way as we want the health and the perfection of the entire body. We do not want part of the body to suffer and part of the body to be healed by medical treatment. What is the good of it? If we are partially sick and partially healthy, we cannot be regarded as healthy at all. As a good medical practitioner, God takes the view that the entire body should be protected. It is not enough if only some limb is protected; and if for the sake of the protection of the entire organism which is the body, some part has to be eliminated, He will eliminate it—by a cyclone or something like that. But God does not always come as a disease or a threat or a Narasimha. He can also come as a friend, a well-wisher. *Suhṛdaṁ sarvabhūtānāṁ jñātvā mām śāntim ṛcchati* (5.29): "Knowing Me as the friend of all beings, you shall attain peace." A terror like Narasimha, or a fearsome force like Bhagavan Sri Krishna, yet the kindest, most merciful, most adorable, is the manner in which incarnations come.

"Whenever dharma declines and *adharma* rises up, I will manifest Myself." Dharma is the integrating force; *adharma* is the disintegrating force. That which keeps society, the world as a whole, intact as an organic completeness is dharma. Dharma is a cohesive force, a cementing element, even in the midst of the worst of diversities of being. *Adharma* is the opposite. It cuts into pieces all the unity that we can have anywhere—brother

fights with brother, the husband throws away his wife, the wife deserts her husband, the son sues his father, and nobody wants anybody. These kinds of terrible, diversifying situations can be the outcome of *adharma* working with great rapacity, which comes as Hiranyakashipus, Ravana and Kumbhakarnas, etc., or as destructive cosmic forces.

It is the intention of God to see that His creation is in a state of harmony and well being. I ask you to remember that the universe is made in the same way as our bodies are made, so the universe works in the same way as our bodies work. As the anatomical and physiological functions protect this body in a requisite manner, there is a cosmic anatomy and physiology, in the light of which the balance in the cosmos is maintained. For the sake of this there is the *avatara*, which is the coming of God for the sake of protecting dharma—that is, to establish the power of unity against the destroying and disturbing elements that go out of the centre. “Then I incarnate Myself.”

Whenever we feel some pain in the body, even in a finger or a toe, it means the whole body is sick, and immediately the healing forces start working. At once the centre of the universe acts, just as the centre of our personality acts when we start sneezing or we have a headache or a wound in the foot, etc. In order to illustrate the similarity of the cosmic structure and the human structure, the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita tell us that the universe is one person. Just as we are one person, the whole universe is also one person. He is called Mahapurusha, Supreme Purusha, Purushottama. How many people are there in this world? There is only one person. *Sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ sahasrākṣaḥ sahasrapāt* (P.S. 1): Million-headed, million-eyed and million-eared is that single Purusha. And where are those million heads and million eyes? They are here. Your head and my head, your eyes and my eyes, your legs and my legs are actually His heads and His eyes, through

which He is speaking and working. But the ego of the individual, which is a part thereof, asserts its individuality and cuts itself off from the healing forces that come from the cosmos.

God never breaks His promise. We may break our promises, but not God. Once God decides, it is decided forever. Like an eternally conscious invigilator, God-consciousness operates in this cosmos. God knows what we are speaking, what we are thinking, what we are feeling, what we are doing. Even the movement of a mouse in a corner of a house is known to that Centre of the cosmos. There is no such thing as private action in this universe. It has been beautifully said that we cannot touch a flower in the garden without disturbing the stars in heaven. Such is the organic connection. There seems to be a vast distance between the stars and the little flower in our garden, but the connection is such that the stars will know that a flower is being interfered with.

There is no such thing in this world as individual, private activity. In the same way, there is no such thing as individual activity in our body. Whether we see with the eyes or hear with the ears, speak with the tongue or walk with the feet, etc., it is not individual action taking place. It is one total action manifesting itself through the different limbs. Similarly, all this world activity, the great mystery of mankind—the coming and going of things, the destroying of empires and the rising of empires, and so on—all the drama that is being played in the form of this creation is a single action taking place. The whole world is doing only one thing; it does not do many things. In the same way, our physical personality does one thing in the form of seeing, hearing, touching, digesting, speaking, walking, etc. Though they appear as diverse functions, they are really not diverse functions; it is Mr. So-and-so acting.

God acts; and when God acts, dharma rules the world. Whenever dharma's force moves in the wrong direction by an

extreme step that is taken by individuals, a cloud of darkness hovers around the heads of mankind, and we become insecure. We do not know what will happen to us tomorrow. The thoughts of people are also supposed to determine the fate of everybody. If one man thinks, it is a very feeble thought; but if the whole of humanity thinks a single thought, it draws the attention of the centre of the cosmos—just as when the whole nation cries for something, the central government will open its eyes and take steps, while if one man cries, they may not bother much.

Christ is called the son of Man. Everybody is a son of man, so why should Christ be called the son of Man? It is the son of Man with capital 'M'. It is the descent of a divine force as a response to the call of the whole of humanity that cried for God. Otherwise, a person cannot be called a son of Man, as everybody is a son of man. This is my own interpretation of the biblical statement. Christ is also called the son of God. The bible refers to Christ as the son of Man, and the son of God.

Our thoughts and actions contribute, to a large extent, to the welfare or the suffering of mankind; and if they are very intense, they disturb the other layers of the cosmos such as Bhuvvarloka, Svarloka, etc. When the Rakshasas were harassing the Devas, the Devas went to Rudra and Brahma, and finally they beseeched Narayana to take some action. Similarly, the fourteen worlds will cry for a redeeming power to act. Then the centre of the cosmos will work immediately, in a positive manner or a negative manner.

The *avatars* of God are described in great detail in the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana. It is said that Narayana had twenty-four *avatars*, but that is only in a manner of speaking. There can be twenty-four million *avatars*. How many rays has the sun? We can say the sun has only one ray that, like a huge beam, inundates the entire earth in heat; or we may

say that there are millions of rays—*sahasrakirana*. Surya is called *sahasrakirana* because thousands of rays emanate from it. If we close our eyes and look at the sun, sometimes we feel radiance emanating in a millionfold way.

God may cast a single action or cast a manifold action, as the case may be. Fortunately or unfortunately, this doctrine of *avatars*, which is so important and so dear to the heart of man because it brings God to the very earth, is briefly stated in the Fourth Chapter of the Gita in only two verses, and afterwards it goes into some other subject—though this is well compensated from the Seventh Chapter onwards, where God's glory is abundantly described.

The society of people has to work in a state of harmony in order that it may survive; and the harmony that is expected in human society is of two kinds—a horizontal harmony and a vertical harmony. The horizontal harmony is called *varna* dharma, and the vertical harmony is called *ashrama* dharma. The social integration brought about by a cooperative action of people through the works that they perform from their own stations is a horizontal way of the working of dharma for the purpose of integrating the quantity of humanity. But the quality of the individual also has to be enhanced; it is not enough that we merely protect the quantity of people. That qualitative ascent of the individual already protected by the quantitative forces—this vertical ascent, as I called it—is *ashrama* dharma, which consists of Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sannyasa, where we reach the apex of social solidarity and spiritual integration.

This also is conditioned by God. *Cāturvarṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam guṇakarmavibhāgaśaḥ, tasya kartāram api mām viddhy-akartāram avyayam* (4.13). Everything taking place historically, or taking place only from the point of view of human individuals, may be said to be God's work; and yet, God does

not do anything, just as the sun is the cause of every activity in the world but is not regarded as doing anything at all. We cannot lift a finger if the sun is not shining, and yet the sun is not responsible for our lifting a finger. *Nādatte kasyacit pāpaṁ na caiva sukṛtaṁ vibhuḥ* (5.15): Neither is God responsible for the good that we do, nor is He responsible for the bad that we do. We are automatically rewarded or punished by a 'computer system' which He has set up in the form of these cosmic forces; and as the law automatically acts, our actions automatically act in the form of pleasure and pain. Therefore, the social setup—individual as well as collective—cannot be regarded as God's work, and yet it is, in a way, God's work because it is a tendency towards the growth of humanity towards God's integrating Realisation. Nothing that we do can be called God's work. It is our work; yet, without His sanction, nothing can take place. Thus, in a way, God has created the whole world and does everything, but, in another way, He has not created the world and He does nothing.

I went into great detail concerning the *avatars* of God because it is something very dear to the heart of man. That God comes to our house and rescues us from moment to moment, is this not a good and happy message?

Discourse 9

THE FOURTH CHAPTER CONTINUES

THE PERFORMANCE OF ACTION AS A SACRIFICE

Incarnation is the descent of God for the ascent of man. This has been briefly touched upon in two verses which we studied yesterday: *yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata, abhyutthānam adharmasya tadātmānam sṛjāmy-aham; paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām, dharmasamsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge* (4.7-8).

In two verses, the great mystery of incarnation has been stated. Still, this incarnation is a mystery. It is supposed to be a response of the cosmos to the demands of the individual, but only when the demand arises from the deepest recesses of the heart of the individual. Otherwise, the response will not come, just as a radio can receive the signals that come from the broadcasting station only if its heart, which is the receiving capacity, is on the same frequency as the broadcasting station.

When the heart cries, God is supposed to come. What is the meaning of the heart crying? We usually do not have such an experience in this world. Our hearts never cry, because we are—at least most of us are—not in such an urgent need of God. “It does not matter if He comes after ten days. I have the capacity to get on without Him for ten days.” Do we not have such subtle thoughts? Is it so urgent that He must come just now? It shows how shallow our hearts are, and how foolish our thoughts are, and how inadequate is our understanding of what God is. To say that God may come tomorrow or the day

after is like saying, “I can breathe after ten days. Today I need not breathe.”

God is a greater necessity than our daily diet. The only comparison that I can make is to the breath of life. We cannot say, “Let me breathe after ten days. It doesn’t matter if I do not breathe now.” Breathing is an immediate necessity. The necessity of God as an immediacy is not felt by the ego-ridden individuality, which feels self-conscious and not God-conscious. The karmas of the individual bind it so fast with the ropes of its own desires that even the coming of God may not be recognised.

Avataras of God, incarnations of God, are supposed to be a perpetual occurrence—not something that took place centuries back and something that will take place later on, after another few centuries. It is a perpetual occurrence, like the rays of the sun perpetually falling on the earth. There is a perpetual inundation of the earth by the light of the sun, day in and day out, somewhere or the other. So, in many ways, the coming of God into this world is an *avatara* for, without this, we would not be able to walk on this earth. We would not be able to lift a finger; we would not be able to digest our food; our lungs would not function; our hearts would not function; our breath would not be there; our brains would not be there. It is the coming of God in a particular form through our individuality, the cosmic operation through the individual in some form unknown to the individual, that is the reason for the very existence of the so-called ego-ridden individual.

The karmas which bind the soul are such intricate processes of relativistic association in this world that it is not easy to know what is actually happening when a karma binds. *Kim karma kim akarme’ti kavayo’pyatra mohitāḥ*: Learned people, very advanced in knowledge, are also bewildered as to what karma actually is. What is karma? What is *akarma*?

Many a time even people with great insight are also confused. *Kim karma kim akarme'ti kavayo'pyatra mohitāḥ, tat te karma pravakṣyāmi yaj jñātvā mokṣyase'subhāt* (4.16): Now I shall tell you what kind of thing karma is. *Karmaṇo hy api boddhavyaṁ boddhavyaṁ ca vikarmaṇaḥ, akarmaṇaś ca boddhavyaṁ gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ* (4.17): It is necessary to know not only what karma is, but also to know what non-karma or inaction is, and what wrong action is. Therefore, what is right action, what is wrong action, and what is inaction? It is necessary to know all these things.

Karmaṇo hy api boddhavyaṁ boddhavyaṁ ca vikarmaṇaḥ, akarmaṇaś ca boddhavyaṁ: Very difficult is this peculiar, intricate way in which karma works. There is no such thing as karma sitting outside on a tree. It is not a thing whose existence we can visualise somewhere. Just as we consider diseases to be a peculiar maladjustment of the physical functioning of the body rather than a thing that is sitting outside the body and existing separately, so also the karma is not sitting outside, waiting to harass us.

Karma is the peculiar automatic reaction set up by the cosmic forces in proportion to the action performed by an individual. The reaction will be exactly in proportion to the action that we perform. In a way, it looks like tit for tat—and in a crude way, we may say it is like that.

The world is supposed to be something like a mirror through which we see our own face. We see our contour in our relationships with the world. If we smile at the world, the world smiles at us; if we get angry with the world, it gets angry with us; and if we denounce it, it will denounce us also. It will treat us in the same way as our body treats us. We cannot know how the body acts and reacts in regard to our own individual existence. The body is not outside the soul. It is inseparably acting on our consciousness, which is our individual soul. Automatic

action takes place through the body, and that experience of an automatic reaction set up by the body is the pleasure or the pain that we speak of.

In a similar manner, there is a spontaneous action that is taking place in the cosmos when any activity, any action, takes place anywhere. The reaction is not created by somebody, such as God in heaven. God does not sit there and say, "So-and-so is doing something. I shall react in this manner." It is an automatic action of the cosmos. When something happens to some part of the body, an automatic reaction is set up by the entire organism in relation to the particular event taking place in the limb of the body. There is no third person who pushes the button.

The difficulty in understanding what karma is arises on account of our difficulty in knowing what our relationship is with the world at all, and finally, with God Himself. There is an inveterate habit of the sense organs to compel us to feel that the world is totally outside, and God is very far away. Even the most learned in scriptures cannot escape this difficulty of suddenly feeling that the world is outside and God is away, and is not as near as their skin. This erroneous apprehension of the relation of oneself with the world and God is the cause of the reaction set up by what reality is in the form of the world or God, and this error itself is a karma.

The wrong apprehension of our relation to the world and to God is the karma that we perform. Our consciousness is our action. Actually, the physical movements are not action. How we modulate our consciousness, how we direct our thoughts, and how we feel things around us—this is the action that we are performing day in and day out. Every moment we feel something, and think something, and understand something. This psychological activity perpetually taking place inside is the perpetual action in which we are engaged, and this is

also the reason for the perpetual reaction that is being set up. Karma is supposed to get accumulated in our psyche, in the sense of a propensity of the reality outside, to give the individual that has motivated this wrong action his due. And if this impact goes on continuing again and again—if we persist in wrong thinking, wrong feeling, and wrong understanding—the cosmos persists in giving us a blow again and again, in the same way that if we persist in having a wrong diet and living a wrong life, nature will persist in tormenting us with varieties of illnesses.

The piling up of impacts coming repeatedly from the cosmos on account of our repeated wrong actions every day becomes thick—like a cloud, as it were. Inasmuch as it is a force that is acting upon us from the cosmological side, karma cannot be regarded as a substance. The action engendering a reaction from another source is a kind of experience, and the karma residuum which causes rebirth, etc., is also a potentiality for experience in the future. The repeatedly occurring impact of cosmic forces upon individuals becomes thick like a cloud, and it becomes what we call the unconscious, subconscious and conscious levels of the mind. These three layers are: the thick and turbid residuum at the bottom, like the thick layers at the top of clouds; a slightly thinner layer further down; and a thinner layer further on, like the layer which slightly illumines the sunlight even in the rainy season when the clouds are thick.

The thickest part of our karma is in the *anandamaya kosha*. This is what psychologists called the unconscious level. The slightly thinner part is in the subconscious, which we experience in dream many a time, and the thinnest part is in the waking condition. Because of its transparency, consciousness is reflected so clearly that even through that karmic residuum we begin to perceive things in the world as clearly as if it

were in the waking state. But we perceive things dimly in the dreaming condition because it is subconscious and not as clear as the waking condition. And we know nothing in the sleeping condition because the cloud is very thick and consciousness does not penetrate through that cloud—just as during the monsoons we will not see the sun even at midday, and it will be like night due to the thick clouds covering the entire sky.

This is the difficulty in knowing what karma is. *Gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ*: “The way of karma is indeed very hard to understand,” says Bhagavan Sri Krishna. But karmas loosen their grip upon the individual who does not act entirely according to the preponderance of the demands of the sense organs, but acts in the spirit of a *yajna*, to which reference is made in the Third Chapter. *Gataśaṅgasya muktasya jñānāvasthitacetasaḥ, yajñāyācarataḥ karma samagranṁ pravilīyate* (4.23): The person who is totally detached, *gataśaṅga*, and free from attachments, *mukta*, and established in the wisdom of life, *jñānāvasthitacetasaḥ*, and who performs action as a sacrifice as detailed in the Third Chapter—for him every action melts as ice before the sun.

No action will produce a reaction in the case of a person who acts as if in a *yajna*, or a sacrifice—i.e., as a participation in the cosmic purposes and not as an individual actor for the purpose of reaping an ulterior fruit. Expecting a fruit is a special characteristic of selfish action, and there is no expectation of fruit in an unselfish action. It is work for work’s sake, duty for duty’s sake, as they say. The moment there is an intention in the mind to reap a consequence, or a fruit, tomorrow or the day after or in the future, as the result of karma, or action, done today, that person is actually thinking in terms of the time process because the fruit of an action will accrue only after some time. The expectation of the fruit of an action, therefore, is tantamount to involvement in the process of

time, and time is equal to death; and such a person is bound by karma. But one who performs actions as a *yajna*, as a duty, does not expect any fruit. Ulterior motive is totally absent in the case of unselfish action.

We may wonder: if we expect nothing from a work, why should we work at all? These are the stock arguments of modern thinkers, and even of very well-read people. What should be the prompting behind us to do anything at all, if we get nothing out of it? This question arises on account of our total ignorance of the nature of our relation to the world which is, once again, the wrong apprehension of the world as being totally outside us—a field where we can grow a crop and eat the fruit thereof, with God somewhere in heaven, Who will bless us with salvation after death. This is the peculiar, crude, illiterate argument of even the most learned people these days. Hard it is for a person to appreciate that there is an organic, living connection between us, the world, and God.

An individual must have performed great *punya*, great merit in the previous birth or in several births, to be able to appreciate this great truth of the identity of ourselves with the atmosphere in which we are stationed. Therefore, unselfish action is itself a fruit thereof. If we become healthy, do we ask what we get if we become healthy? Health itself is the fruit thereof. Similarly, unselfishness is nothing but a healthy relationship that we maintain with the world, and perhaps with God. And what we call selfish action is an unhealthy relationship that we maintain with the world and with God—an alien relationship, as it were. We treat the world and God as foreigners, as if we have no connection with them. If that is the case, they will also treat us as foreigners. This is a tit-for-tat action that nature does unto us. But we can be free from this predicament of getting kicks from nature and from God if our actions are motivated by a consciousness that we are an agent,

an instrument, a medium of action of cosmic powers, and that we do not do anything.

Shakespeare wrote all the plays with his pen, but we cannot say the pen wrote the plays. Though it is true that the pen actually wrote the plays, we do not say that the pen wrote them; we say that Shakespeare wrote the plays. This is the manner in which we have to understand our position in this world. We are like a fountain pen in the hand of God, an instrument in His hand. We are a tool, as it were: *nimitta matra*.

The brain will not accept these arguments on account of the turbid karmas that are lying latent in the unconscious and subconscious levels. So in the beginning stages, spiritual practice cannot rise to such heights of this kind of comprehension. It has to start with *citta shuddhi*—the practice of *yamas*, *niyamas*, *viveka*, *vairagya*, *shad-sampat* and *mumukshutva*—qualities which are mentioned in the Vedanta Shastras. We must be good persons before we become God-persons. We cannot suddenly become godly individuals unless we are good individuals first and foremost. There is very little of goodness in most of us. We are the same brutes when the time for it comes, and this is something that we can know through a little bit of investigation, instead of actually landing ourselves in the predicament where we have to behave like that. We need not fall sick in order to know what sickness is. A doctor can understand. A good physician can know what sickness is, how it acts, without actually falling sick himself.

Hence, it is essential for us to educate ourselves in this art of spiritual living by a graduated ascending process of self-purification, before we go into the meditations of the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita. Even when we become students of Vedanta, for instance, we do not start with the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras, and so on, because they will look like a jungle, and we will not know where what is. Everything is

found in a forest, but we will not know what is found in which place. This also applies to the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras. Therefore, the Vedanta Shastra commences with introductory Prakarana Granthas like the Vedanta Sara, the Vedanta Paribhasha, the Laghu Vasudevamanana, and the Panchadasi. Then we study the Upanishads. Only after these, the Bhagavadgita and the Brahma Sutras should be studied. We should not suddenly jump into them unless we are already a prepared soul, by the grace of God.

Gatasaṅgasya muktasya jñānāvasthitacetasaḥ, yajñāyā-carataḥ karma samagram pravilīyate: All actions melt then and there. What is the *jñānāvasthitacetasa* condition? What is actually the *gatasaṅgatva*; and what is actually the *yajna* karma, finally? When there is a hailstorm, little balls of ice form; and the moment they fall on the earth, the balls of ice melt and become liquid. Likewise, the fire of knowledge will burn up the solid masses of karma that we have accumulated, provided that our actions are totally unmotivated in terms of the fruit that is to accrue in the future.

Brahmārpaṇam brahma havir brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam, brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahmakarmasamādhinā (4.24). This verse is itself enough for us to meditate on the great God of the cosmos. When we offer a sacrifice, the offering is nothing but a face of the Ultimate Reality itself. The performer, the process of performance, the instrument of action, and the result that follows are all various modifications of a single Reality, in the same way that the ocean waters—whether they are like foam or bubbles or ripples, whether they are solid or liquid, or whatever be the form—are just modifications of a single mass of water.

Even the offering of the sense organs in terms of objects of sense, this crude activity that we are performing as sense perception, is actually an action of the Cosmic Power. The

means, or the instruments, that we use in this process of perception also come from that Supreme Force only. That is the *havis* that we offer—the *yajna* of action. The fire into which we offer the oblation is only that Supreme Being manifesting as fire; and the aim that we have in our minds, the goal that we want to reach after the performance of this *yajna*, is also only the Ultimate Reality. The path and the goal coalesce in the highest realm of spiritual experience.

Brahmārpaṇam brahma havir brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam, brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahmakarmasamādhinā. There is a similar verse in the Yoga Vasishtha—*tat chintanam tat kathanam anyonyam tat prabodhanam, eta deka paratvam ca brahmābhyāsam vidur budhāḥ* (Y.V. 3.22.24)—in which it is told to us that we have to practice *brahmabhyasa*. The Yoga Vasishtha prescribes three kinds of *sadhana*—*prana nirodha*, *chitta-vritti nirodha* and *brahmabhyasa*—which are *prana-yama*, control of the mind, and meditation on the Absolute.

Tat chintanam: Thinking only that day in and day out. A person who has been given the death sentence will always be thinking of the gallows, and the executioner's noose will be in his mind even before it actually takes place, or a person who is expecting a great promotion will always wait for it to come, anticipating the increased salary, and so on. Just as we constantly keep in our minds the great goals in this world in some form of material possession, in a like manner we should brood over this Reality, always thinking That.

Tat kathanam: When we speak to people, we should not talk about unnecessary things. We should enlighten ourselves and the other by a discussion on this subject. We should prompt the person to talk only on this subject, and we should also talk only on this subject. This is actually a *satsanga* that is taking place between two persons, or any number of persons. *Tat chintanam tat kathanam*: Always thinking that, and talking

and conversing only about that.

Anyonyaṁ tat prabodhanam: Mutually enlightening only on that particular theme. When we meet anybody, we should ask, “What have you studied? What is the progress that you have made? I would also like to have the benefit of knowing something.” As students sometimes compare their notes in schools and colleges, we can compare notes and compare experiences even among our colleagues. That is mutual illumination that we engender among ourselves, and that also becomes a kind of meditation. In a family, in a community where there are many people, we should not talk nonsense. We should always be talking on this great subject, which is the great health of the body, of society, and finally, liberation itself.

Anyonyaṁ tat prabodhanam, eta deka paratvaṁ ca: Depending on that only for our life and death. This is our life, and this is also our death, and we cannot have any other thought in our minds. *Eta deka paratvaṁ ca brahmābhyāsaṁ vidur budhāḥ*: This is called the practice of Brahman.

There is a little book by Brother Lawrence called *Practice of the Presence of God*. You can all read that book. It is very interesting. His experience was that everywhere—in the shoes, in the kitchen and dishes, in the broomstick—everywhere is God only. Similarly, there is another verse: *tadbuddhayas tadātmānas tanniṣṭhās tatparāyaṇāḥ, gacchantyapunarāvṛt-tiṁ jñānanirdhūtakalmaṣāḥ* (5.17). We will discuss this verse later on.

Today we drew certain conclusions about our wrong apprehension of our relation between ourselves and the world and God, which creates binding karma, and the necessity to perform unselfish action in the form of *yajna*. What *yajna* is has been described. *Yajna* is actually *brahmabhyasa*—total dependence on God. This is, finally, unselfish action.

Discourse 10

THE FOURTH CHAPTER CONCLUDES

METHODS OF WORSHIP AND OF SELF-CONTROL

*daivam evāpare yajñam yoginaḥ paryupāsate
brahmāgnāvapare yajñam yajñenaivopajuvhati (4.25)
śrotrādīnīndriyāṇyanye saṁyamāgniṣu juvhati
śabdādīn viṣayān anya indriyāgniṣu juvhati (4.26)
sarvāṇīndriyakarmāṇi prāṇakarmāṇi cāpare
ātmasaṁyamayogāgnau juvhati jñānadīpite (4.27)
dravyayajñās tapoyajñā yogayajñās tathāpare
svādhyāyajñānayajñāś ca yatayaḥ saṁśitavratāḥ (4.28)
apāne juvhati prāṇam prāṇe'pānam tathāpare
prāṇāpānagatī ruddhvā prāṇyāmaparāyaṇāḥ (4.29)
apare niyatāhārāḥ prāṇān prāṇeṣu juvhati
sarve'pyete yajñavido yajñakṣapitakalmaṣāḥ (4.30)*

In these verses from the Fourth Chapter are further details as to actually putting the spirit of *yajna* into practice in daily life. We have heard a lot about *yajna*, sacrifice, in the earlier chapters. We envisaged, in a philosophical light, what *yajna*, or sacrifice, is. Now in a very down-to-earth, practical way we are told how we can practise spiritual *sadhana* as a *yajna*, or a sacrifice, and what the methods of actually manifesting *yajna* in our daily performance are.

Varieties are the ways of the daily performance of *yajna*. Some people offer everything, including themselves, to the gods in heaven. They worship Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, Ganesha, Devi, Durga, Surya. Every day there is a dedication of oneself

in an act of submission and surrender, through prayers offered by way of Veda mantras or verses from the Puranas and the epics, or from the Tantra and Agama Shastras. The gods are worshipped according to the injunctions that are given to us mostly in the Agama Shastra, which is a scripture dealing with the rituals of worship.

We may have seen people worshipping gods in a large public temple or worshipping a little image kept in front of them in their own house—a Siva *linga*, or Vishnu's image, or Surya's *sphatika*, or whatever it is. They perform varieties of entertainment to the god who comes to their house as a royal guest.

Actually, the ways of worship in temples, particularly in large temples of public worship, are similar to the ways in which we receive a king into our house. Suppose we are informed that tomorrow the emperor is paying a visit to our house. What do we do? There are a series of things that we do. We clean the premises, and make everything tidy. We arrange a beautiful seat for him. We receive him with honour and say, "Please be seated." Afterwards, in Indian tradition, we have to wash his feet. This system may not be there in the West, but in India one of the important gestures of reception given to an honoured guest is to offer him a very comfortable seat and wash his feet. Afterwards we enquire how he is and whether there is anything we can do for him, and then offer him something to eat or drink, give him some clothing or jewels, and place before him fruit and all the delicious dishes that we have prepared. We wave a sacred light before him, called *arati*, and then calmly sit and enquire about his welfare. We serve him a meal, and afterwards—very, very honourably—we bid him farewell. This is what is done in worship in very large temples like Tirupati, though they do not go into all these details in small temples.

God comes to us as an emperor, and He comes every day by way of invocation. After some time, we bid Him farewell; and so the next day, we have to invite him again. After bidding a guest farewell, the person leaves. Every day this gorgeous reception is given to the honoured guest who is God; and finally, we offer ourselves: I am Thine.

Daivam evāpare yajñam yoginaḥ paryupāsate: Some of the spiritual seekers or yogis worship gods in a ritualistic manner by chants, by performances of ritual, or even by actual contemplation. *Brahmāgnāvapare yajñam yajñenaivopajuvhati:* Or we contemplate the Supreme Absolute in our own personality. We surrender ourselves to that ocean of the Absolute so that we melt into that Supreme Being itself. The greatest worship we can think of is where we offer ourselves instead of offering delicious dishes, clothes, gold and jewels, etc. They are secondary in comparison with what we ourselves are. We offer ourselves in the great *brahmayajna* that we practise—the contemplation of the Supreme Absolute. *Brahmāgnāvapare yajñam yajñenaivopajuvhati.*

Śrotrādīnīndriyānyanye saṁyamāgniṣu juvhati: Some yogis offer the very powers of the sense organs into the fire of self-control. Self-control is visualised as a kind of *kunda*, a *yajnasala*—a special pit in which the holy fire is lit. Our performance, or act of self-control, is itself a holy fire that we have lit in ourselves, into which we offer the sense organs themselves, which we pour as an offering of ghee into this holy fire. The perception, and all the perceived objects of perception, are offered into this fire of complete withdrawal. All the five senses—the eyes, the ears, and the other perceptive sense organs—in their capacity as powers of perception and cognition, are abstracted from their involvement in the objects, brought back and offered, as ghee is offered, into the fire. The sense organs are offered into the fire of total

withdrawal—*pratyahara*, we may say. Here, *pratyahara* is described as the offering of the powers of the sense organs into the fire of self-restraint.

Śrotrādīnīndriyāṇyanye saṁyamāgniṣu juvhati, śabdādīn viṣayān anya indriyāgniṣu juvhati. There is a reverse action to what has been mentioned, which is also regarded as a kind of sacrifice. What we mentioned first is that the sense organs, which are involved in the objects, are withdrawn, and poured into the fire of self-restraint. Here, in this second half of the verse, it is said that all the objects of sense are offered into the fire of the sense organs through the media of the perceptive organs. The objects of perception are offered into the mind, and from the mind they are offered into the intellect. This is the reverse process of self-control. We may either withdraw our connection to the sense objects and then offer the powers of the senses into the fire of our self-control; or we may melt the very form of the objects themselves, as is done in *samadhi*, *samapatti*, etc., according to Patanjali's Yoga Shastra. It is also mentioned in the penultimate verse of the Second Chapter of the Bhagavadgita that all the desires and the desired objects come and pour themselves into the ocean of the seer: *apūryamāṇam acalapratiṣṭhaṁ samudram āpaḥ praviśanti yadvat, tadvat kāmā yaṁ praviśanti sarve sa śāntim āpnoti na kāmakāmī* (2.70).

We need not be afraid of the world. This is a higher form of self-control. The lower form of self-control is to sever the connection of the sense organs with objects, and to pour the energy into the mind in self-control. The other is more difficult, which is to melt the very concept of objects. Objects do not exist. They are only configurations of cosmic force. Objects are only energies—*sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*—concentrated in their permutation and combination, and when they are thus melted, as hard ice may melt before the sun's hot rays, the objectivity

vanishes and the entire cosmos of physicality may melt into liquid, as it were; and like rivers flow into the ocean, the whole world will flow into us. This is a kind of higher self-control, which only great masters can perform. We cannot melt the world so easily and make it flow like a river into our own ocean-like Self: *śabdādīn viṣayān anya indriyāgniṣu juvhati*.

Sarvāṇīndriyakarmāṇi prāṇakarmāṇi cāpare, ātmasaṁyamayogāgnau juvhati jñānadīpīte: All the sensations and the very activity of the *pranas* are concentrated in the Self. There are five sense organs—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching—and these are the five sensations. There are also five forms of breath—*prana*, *apana*, *vyana*, *udana*, *samana*. The *prana* causes the breath to exhale, and the *apana* causes the breath to inhale; and when we put a stop to this process of inhalation and exhalation it is called *kumbhaka*, which is mentioned a little later in further verses. *Vyana* is a pervading *shakti*, or force, which causes the circulation of blood throughout the body. *Samana* equalises the forces; it digests food.

These functions of the *pranas*, together with the fivefold function of the sensations mentioned, are concentrated on the Self, and emanate like rays of the sun from the Self of one's own existence. The five *pranas* and their functions, and the five sensations, may be visualised as the rays of the sun, as it were—the sun being our own Atman. So *sarvāṇīndriyakarmāṇi prāṇakarmāṇi*: All the sensations and all the *prana* activities are concentrated in the Self. *Ātmasaṁyamayogāgnau juvhati jñānadīpīte*: Lit up with the highest form of wisdom, endowed with the knowledge of the Ultimate Spirit of the universe, a yogi or a spiritual seeker is enabled to perform this otherwise very difficult task of concentrating the *pranas* and the senses in his own Self, so that there are no multifarious activities taking place. There is a total action taking place, total perception taking place; and that total perception is called insight or

intuition: *ātmasaṁyamamayogāgnau juvhati jñānadīpīte*.

Dravyayajñās tapoyajñā yogayajñās tathāpare, svādhyāya-jñānayajñās ca yatayaḥ saṁśītavratāḥ: Yogis, students of yoga, offer physical substances to the gods in heaven as a form of worship. This is called material offering: *dravya yajna*. Others offer themselves through the performance of *tapas*. *Tapas* is the creating of the heat in one's own body or mind by subjugating the sense organs. There is an energy content in ourselves which always maintains an optimum. It never increases or decreases. As they say, the total energy in the cosmos is always stable—it does not increase or decrease—but, it can increase or decrease under certain circumstances. When the consciousness is contemplating an object of sense which is outside, particularly with an emotional charge upon it, the energy flows through the channel of the perceptive organ—and to that extent, the energy quantum is diminished. And the more we are emotionally conscious of an object, the weaker we are in mind and body, and the worse we are in every way. The greater the power of the consciousness to not allow itself to move in the direction of the objects of the sense organs and stabilise itself in itself, the greater is the energy quantum in us. And then indomitable strength, invincible power, and such things as *siddhis* may develop in one's own self if our energies are maintained in ourselves, and they are not allowed to move outside towards objects or move through the sense organs to the parts of the body.

We have seen the beauty of a little baby. Why does an old man look ugly while a baby looks very beautiful? The reason is the equidistribution of energy in the baby's system. As the child grows into an adolescent and an adult, the energies begin to concentrate themselves in the different parts of the body, and the equidistribution ceases. The harmony with which the energy is distributed in a baby makes every part of

its body beautiful. There is no comparison of one part with another part. Whether it is the nose or the leg or the foot, all are beautiful. But when the energies get diverted due to the desires of the adult, they concentrate themselves in the eye or the nose or the tongue or the other organs, and the energy leaks out as water may leak out through a pot with many holes. This should not be allowed.

Tapas is the strength that we exercise in ourselves with which we maintain our energy in ourselves, and we do not wish that energy to go to some other object of sense, or even to a particular part of the body. It should be equally distributed everywhere. This is called *tapoyajñā*. This is why children who are innocent and have no desires, and also saints who have no desires, have beautiful and radiant faces. But ordinary people, who have desires, feel compelled to let out the energies towards objects through their sense organs.

Dravyayajñās tapoyajñā yogayajñās tathāpare: In terms of the practice of yoga, we do a *yajna* in a spiritual sense. It is left to us to determine what kind of yoga Bhagavan Sri Krishna means here. It may be karma yoga, it may be *bhakti* yoga, it may be the *raja* yoga of Patanjali or it may be the *jnana* yoga or *brahmabhyasa* of the Yoga Vasishtha and the Upanishads; by the practice of this kind of yoga, the highest kind of *yajna* is performed.

Dravyayajñās tapoyajñā yogayajñās tathāpare, svādhyāyajñānayajñās ca. There are people who are devoted to sacred study. Every day they read the whole Gita, or the whole Srimad Bhagavata, or the Ramayana, or the Mahabharata, or the Bible, or the Koran, or whatever their holy text is. They pour themselves into the theme of the text, so that this tremendous concentration that they are bestowing on the theme that is delineated in the sacred text becomes a kind of concentration. *Svādhyaya* is sacred study. *Svādhyaya* does not mean reading

books in the library, just picking up anything randomly and reading it. It is a concentrated study of a single text or a single group of texts—the Upanishads, Bhagavadgita, Vedas, etc.—so that the thoughts of the great masters who wrote these texts will have such an impact upon their minds that they are virtually meditating not only on the thoughts of these great sages but also on the noble themes which are delineated in the text. Thus, *svadhyaya*, sacred study, which is to be conducted every day by everyone, is also a *yajna*, a great sacrifice that a spiritual seeker ought to perform and must perform.

Jnana yajna is again mentioned as the pouring of the soul into the cosmos, the melting of ourselves into all the five elements, and ceasing to exist as individuals—existing only in God. The Yoga Vasishtha is especially devoted to *jnana yoga*. It tells us how to melt ourselves into the Supreme Being and deny the whole world as an existent subject itself—to see only God permeating everything, and know that only God is.

Dravyayajñās tapoyajñā yogayajñās tathāpare, svādhyāyajñāyajñāś ca yatayaḥ saṁśītavratāḥ; apāne juvhati prāṇam prāṇe'pānam tathāpare: Some people offer the *prana* into the *apana* as an oblation in a sacrifice. The offering of the *prana* into the *apana* is done by taking the breath inward. As I mentioned, the *prana* takes the breath outward. The *apana* pulls it down. So when we breathe in, the *prana*, which is otherwise outwardly motivated, is restrained from its outward activity and poured into the *apana*, as it were. This pouring of the *prana* into the *apana* by way of inhalation exercises is also a *yajna* of *pranayama*.

Prāṇe'pānam tathāpare: Some offer the *apana* in the *prana*. That happens when we exhale. When the *prana* goes out, the *apana* is pulled up; the *prana* wants to take the energy of the downward pull together with it, and we exhale. But when we deeply inhale, the opposite action takes place; the *prana*

is offered to the *apana*. So, *apāne juvhati prāṇam* is actually a description of inhalation and exhalation. *Puraka* is filling; *rechaka* is exhaling. Hence, what is mentioned here is nothing but the process of *puraka* and *rechaka*, inhalation and exhalation, as part of the *pranayama* process.

Apāne juvhati prāṇam prāṇe'pānam tathāpare, prāṇāpāna-gatī ruddhvā prāṇāyāmaparāyaṇāḥ: Some people practise only inhalation or only exhalation, but some people restrain both the outward breath and the inward breath at a particular spot. That is called *kumbhaka*, retention, which is true *pranayama*. Therefore, this verse actually describes the *pranayama* process—the inhalation process, the exhalation process, and the stopping process.

How will we stop the breath? Generally, people do it by closing the nostrils, though it causes a little suffocation. That is one way. But the better method of stopping the heaving of the breath is to concentrate the mind on one particular object. The more is the concentration on one thing, the less is the breathing process. Suppose we are walking on the precipice of a deep gorge. The path is only one foot wide, and if we step outside it even a little, we will fall down into the gorge. What would we do? Suppose we are walking on a tightrope in a circus. So much concentration is required! If we waver even a little bit, we will fall down. Therefore, concentration of the mind on a particular thing is a better method of bringing the breath to a stop. It cannot stop completely, but it becomes the minimum of inhalation and exhalation, so that the breath which usually extends about twelve inches in the ordinary process of breathing will become shorter and shorter. In the end, in perfected *pranayama*, the breath will move only inside the nostrils. It will not move outside. We will not even know whether the person is breathing unless a piece of cotton is put near his nose. This is type of *pranayama* is also one of the

yajnas in spiritual practice. *Apāne juvhati prāṇam prāṇe'pānam tathāpare, prāṇāpānagatī ruddhvā prāṇāyāmaparāyaṇāḥ.*

Apare niyatāhārāḥ prāṇān prāṇeṣu juvhati: Others restrain themselves by an abstentious diet. They take a minimum diet. *Niyatāhārāḥ*—*ahara* is a food of the sense organs. Though generally *ahara* means the food that enters through the mouth, in the yogic sense it can also be considered as anything that the sense organs take into themselves. Colour and form are the food of the eyes, sound is the food of the ears, smell is the food of the nose, taste is the food of the tongue, and touch is the food of the skin. Therefore, these are also food. So when we are abstentious and eat very little food, we not only diminish our chapatti and rice but we also diminish the desire to see, the desire to hear, the desire to smell, the desire to taste, and the desire to touch. All the sensations become diminished in their activity, and they become virtually controlled. This is *niyatāhārāḥ*—restrained diet of the sense organs.

Apare niyatāhārāḥ prāṇān prāṇeṣu juvhati: We can offer the senses unto the gods who superintend over the sense organs. Tell the god of the eyes, “Take your property.” Tell the god of the ears, “Take your property,” etc. We distribute the belongings which are not ours, which we borrowed from these gods. We give them back, and then we offer a terrible sacrifice of ourselves completely in terms of the dismemberment of the sense organs, and the *pranas* are offered into the cosmic *prana*. The senses are offered to the gods, the divinities that superintend or control the senses, so that the senses no longer work independently. They are centralised in the cosmic divinities. Similarly, the *pranas* are centralised in the cosmic *prana*, Hiranyagarbha.

Apare niyatāhārāḥ prāṇān prāṇeṣu juvhati, sarve'pyete yajñavido yajñakṣapitakalmaṣāḥ: All these processes of self-restraint that have been mentioned are equally good, and

whoever takes to any one of these practices is to be considered as a real spiritual seeker, a real *sadhaka*, a real *tapasvin*. We can resort to any one of these methods of self-control that have been described by Bhagavan Sri Krishna in these great verses in the Fourth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita.

The way of spiritual practice can be variegated, as designated as the different forms of *yajna* which are described in a few verses in the Fourth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita. A *yajna* is a sacrifice, an offering, and the offering can be a visible material something, or it can be an offering by way of an inward contemplation. *Śreyān dravyamayād yajñāj jñānaya-jñāḥ paramtapa, sarvaṁ karmākhilam pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate* (4.33): Better than material offering is the offering through knowledge. *Jnana yajna* is superior to *dravya yajna*. The imparting of knowledge is a greater service than giving a lot of money to a person as charity, because all value is centred in the extent of knowledge that we have of ourselves, of the world, and finally of God—of life and death.

Every activity culminates finally in knowledge. *Sarvaṁ karmākhilam pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate*: Every activity directs itself to a state where activity itself ceases and, in the end, all action finds itself in a state of the abolition of all necessity for action. The movements of the rivers cease when they reach the ocean, which is their destination. There is no further movement in any direction after the rivers reach the ocean. Until that time, there is intense activity. Hence, all activity is an obligation that arises on account of the consciousness getting lodged in the physical body's individuality, and it ceases to be an action when it assumes a super-individual dimension.

The flowing of a river is an action, the blowing of the wind is an action, the bursting of a volcano is an action. Do we find a difference between these actions and our actions? The difference is the extent of the personality-consciousness,

ego-consciousness, individuality-consciousness involved. If our actions have an impact upon another person, it produces a nemesis by way of a reaction; but if the Ganga overflows and demolishes millions of villages, no reaction will be set up against the Ganga. If tornadoes blow, tear out trees, make the ocean rise up and destroy all kinds of life, the wind will not have any nemesis or reaction to its action. If a volcano kills millions, it will not have any karma reacting upon it. But if we do anything—if we destroy a village or break something—we will get the nemesis thereof.

The cause of nemesis, or reaction, is the extent of the individual consciousness that we maintain; and *jnana* is the total abolition of individual consciousness. Knowledge here does not mean academic learning in a college. It is not a gathering of information through books. It is an insight into the very substance of all things. It is Realisation that we call knowledge. Knowledge here means identity of consciousness with being. Even if a professor knows much about how the stars are formed, how the sun moves, how the solar system works, he cannot be said to have a true knowledge of these things, because true knowledge is identical with the being thereof. Having true knowledge of the sun would mean becoming the sun itself, and to know the stars would be to become the stars themselves. As no professor of knowledge has that acquisition of insight by which he can become one with that which he teaches, all professorial and academic learning keeps us away from the object of true knowledge.

Here the knowledge that is referred to in the Bhagavadgita, wherein all actions are supposed to melt down, is not the ordinary learning of any kind of academician. It is not *panditya*, or scholarship, but it is the very being of the object getting identified with the knowledge of the object. *Sat* becomes *chit*. Existence becomes Awareness. Knowledge is

identified with the being of the very object that we know. It is this kind of knowledge that is spoken of as a highly exalted achievement, wherein all actions melt and cease forever.

All material offerings are inferior in comparison to the greatest of offerings of one's own consciousness into the very object of consciousness. *Jnana yajna* is higher than *dravya yajna* or any kind of *yajna* involving objects which are material in their nature. *Yathaidhāmsi samiddhognir bhasmasāt kuruterjuna, jñānāgniḥ sarvakarmāṇi bhasmasāt kurute tathā* (4.37): As a blazing fire reduces firewood into ashes, all karmas are reduced to ashes by this blazing fire of knowledge.

Arjuna is stupefied. "What is being told to me now? It was told that I should take up arms and fight. That was told at the beginning, and that is the import of the very teaching itself. What is the relation between my being asked to fight in the battlefield, and now being told that everything I do melts in the highest knowledge, which identifies itself with the object of knowledge?" Great doubts slowly arise even in Arjuna, the best of students.

All karmas get burnt to ashes in this great knowledge. *Yogasamnyastakarmāṇaṁ jñānasamchinnasamśayam, ātmavantaṁ na karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanamjaya* (4.41): He who has renounced all attachment through the identification of himself with all things, he who has dispelled all doubts through this knowledge which has been described just now, and he who is established in the consciousness of the Self, no karma can bind him. That is the meaning of this pithy verse, *yoga-samnyastakarmāṇaṁ jñānasamchinnasamśayam, ātmavantaṁ na karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanamjaya*: He who is a knower and a yogi, he who is established in the Self, him no action can bind.

Tasmād ajñānasañbhūtaṁ hr̥tsthaṁ jñānāsinātmanaḥ, chittvainaṁ samśayaṁ yogam ātiṣṭhottīṣṭha bhārata (4.42) is

the last verse of the Fourth Chapter. “Therefore, I am telling you, Arjuna, dispel this ignorance that has been born of misconception, and cut aside all doubts with this knowledge; with the sword of insight, establish yourself in yoga. This doubt that is harassing the heart of everybody and compels everyone to see things in a wrong fashion, dispel this ignorance with the sword of knowledge—*jñānāsinātmanaḥ*. Remove all doubts of every kind: ‘What kind of relation have I with myself?’ ‘What is my relation to the world?’ ‘What is my relation to God?’ ‘What is the relation of the world to God?’ Remove all these doubts at one stroke with the insight which is known as knowledge, or highest wisdom. Get up! Be bold! Bravo, O hero Arjuna!”

Discourse 11

THE FIFTH CHAPTER BEGINS

KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION ARE ONE

“My Lord, what are You telling me? You say that *jnana* is the highest. I understand what You say. But sometimes You say, ‘You must act. All actions melt in knowledge.’ If that is the case, where comes the necessity for me to hear from You the instruction that I must act?” *Sannyāsaṁ karmaṇām kṛṣṇa punar yogaṁ ca śamsasi, yac chreya etayor ekaṁ tan me brūhi suniścitam* (5.1). “Sometimes You say *jnana*, sometimes You say karma. Between these two, which is better for me?” This is Arjuna’s question.

Jyāyasī cet karmaṇas te matā buddhir janārdana, tat kiṁ karmaṇi ghore mām niyojayasi keśava (3.1). This question is raised in the beginning of the Third Chapter. If *buddhi*, understanding, is the root of all activity—as is mentioned in the Second Chapter where *buddhi*, or knowledge, is extolled as far superior to all actions—where is the need for action? Now, a similar question is being raised by Arjuna in the beginning of the Fifth Chapter. “When You say knowledge is supreme and all actions melt in knowledge, I would certainly be tempted to acquire that knowledge where all necessity to act will melt and actions will get burned.”

A disciple went to a Guru and asked, “Maharaj, who is greater, a disciple or a Guru?”

The Guru said, “A Guru is greater.”

The disciple replied, “Then please make me a Guru.”

This is the kind of question that Arjuna raised after hearing the discourse on the interrelationship between yoga and *sankhya*, *jnana* and karma. In the language of the Bhagavadgita, *sankhya* means knowledge. It is also known as *jnana*. Here yoga means action, karma, or rather the application of knowledge; karma means applied knowledge. Just as there is applied physiology, applied physics, applied chemistry, etc., applied knowledge is yoga which is karma.

“What is this question you are raising once again after having heard so much that I have been telling you?” In light of what we have already studied in the Fourth Chapter, there is some repetition in the Fifth Chapter. The Fourth and the Fifth Chapters deal with the same theme, so sometimes there appears to be a repetition and an overemphasis of certain things.

The verse in the Third Chapter was *lokesmin dvividhā niṣṭhā purā proktā mayānagha, jñānayogena sāṅkhyānām karmayogena yoginām* (3.3): “I have mentioned to you that there are two ways or approaches to Reality: *jnana* and karma.” Now in the Fifth Chapter Sri Krishna again speaks practically the same words. *Sāṅkhyayogau prthag bālāḥ pravadanti na paṇḍitāḥ, ekam apy āsthitaḥ samyag ubhayor vindate phalam* (5.4): “Only children think that *sankhya* and yoga are two different things. Therefore, childish is your query whether *jnana* is superior or karma is superior, or whether you have to resort to knowledge or resort to action. I have mentioned to you that these two are inseparable.”

The soul is not the same as the body, but yet it is found that God is inseparable from the soul. The implied application of knowledge in the form of action may make it appear that action is different from knowledge, but it is not different from knowledge in the sense that it is knowledge itself applied in daily life. Therefore, karma, or yoga, or action is

not to be considered as something quite different from the insight, or knowledge, spoken of earlier. Only children and illiterate, uneducated persons think that *sankhya* and yoga are two different things, that knowledge and action are different. If we are established in *sankhya*, we will automatically get established in yoga also. If we get established in yoga, we will automatically get established in *sankhya* also.

When we go to the furthest limits of the cosmos outside, as has been done by modern physics, for instance, we will find at the farthest distance of the cosmic periphery the same thing that we find in the deepest recesses of our heart. The farthest and the nearest are the same. The Atman in the deepest recesses of our heart is the same as the Brahman that we see beyond space and time. That is why modern physics has slowly found itself on the lap of the Upanishads, and tells us in its own language what the Upanishads proclaimed long before Einstein was born.

Thus, whatever *sankhya* is, that yoga also is. If we apply ourselves to the right action, we will find ourselves in the state of the highest knowledge that is necessary for doing that action. A person who is established in the highest knowledge is very active in the same way as, perhaps, God is active. Sri Krishna refers to Himself: *na me pārthāsti kartavyaṁ triṣu lokeṣu kiṁcana, nānavāptam avāptavyaṁ varta eva ca karmaṇi* (3.22). Sri Krishna is saying, “There is nothing that I have not acquired, there is nothing that I want, there is nothing that I need, there is nothing that can impel Me to do action, yet I am very active.”

God does not gain anything by being active. He is not profited by the creation of this world. No benefit accrues to God because He has created the world, yet we say He is very active in the creative process as Brahma, very active in the sustaining process as Vishnu, and very active in the transforming process

as Rudra. Supreme Activity will ultimately be found to be inseparable from the Supreme Being.

Intense motion sometimes looks like no motion. If we see an electric fan moving at high speed, it looks as if it is not moving at all. We do not see any motion, though it is at the greatest speed. If we put a finger into the fan to see whether or not it is moving, we will know the answer. Otherwise, from a distance it looks as if it is at a standstill. Hence, intense activity is like no activity; and so-called activity has its visible form when individuals are the medium of movement. The smaller, grosser and more limited the individual, the more visible is the action and the more limited is its effect. But the larger the dimension of the individuality from where the action is produced and proceeds, the less is the reaction, so that when the dimension of the individual reaches the cosmic level, action becomes no action. In the levels which are less than the ultimate cosmic level, there is movement, as it were, on account of a type of individuality maintained by everything that is at a level lower than the cosmic level. Therefore, we feel that something is happening, and something is moving, and somebody is doing something, on account of the limitedness of the personality that is supposed to be the agent of action. But if the agent of action is unlimited, there is unlimited action—and unlimited action is no action.

To have everything is to want nothing. All desires melt in the state where we have all things. *Ekam apy āsthitāḥ samyag ubhayor vindate phalam*: If we are established in the highest form of activity, we are also, at the same time, established in the highest form of knowledge. There were great sages in India. Bhagavan Sri Krishna was one, and there were many others such as Vasishtha, Vyasa, Suka Maharishi, Jada Bharata, Vamadeva, and Dattatreya. They were all established in the highest knowledge of the Universal Reality and yet looked

like ordinary individuals doing nothing at all—though in fact, everything was done by them. A tremendous velocity is assumed by the personality of the person established in knowledge, and so the one who is established in the highest knowledge may appear to be doing nothing at all.

Once somebody went to Ramana Maharishi and asked, “Why are you not doing some good work for people, instead of sitting here?”

Ramana Maharshi replied, “How do you know that I am not working? The highest knowledge is the highest action; therefore, those who are established in the highest knowledge may appear to be doing nothing while they are engaged in the highest action.”

I mentioned the other day about the vibrations set up by that idiot-like Jada Bharata. Dacoits dragged him to the temple in order to offer him to Kali by beheading that poor man. He was the worst of people in the eyes of men because he would do nothing. He sat as if he was sleeping—most lethargic, as it were, to all outside perception. He was completely inactive. Neither would he move at all, nor would he talk. But he was such a vibrant action inside that it touched the very gods in heaven and pulled Durga—Mahakali—from that stone image. He looked like a nobody, and people despised him as a good-for-nothing, but the lords in heaven were conscious of his existence. He had the ability to pull the powers of nature into himself by the tremendous velocity of his internal activity, which looked like no activity on account of his knowledge having expanded to the dimension of cosmic levels.

Yat sām̐khyaiḥ prāpyate sthānam tad yogair api gamyate, ekaṁ sām̐khyam ca yogam ca yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati (5.5). Whatever one attains through knowledge in the manner knowledge has been described in the Gita, that very thing is attained by those who are engaged in action in the manner

action is described in the Gita. One who knows in identity the goal reached by *sankhya* and yoga, or knowledge and action, in the end, such a person really sees the truth of things. Others only look at things but do not actually see the truth of things.

Sannyāsas tu mahābāho duḥkham āptum ayogataḥ, yogayukto munir brahma nacireṇādhigacchati (5.6). The word 'sannyasa' is used here, implying the characteristics of *sankhya*, or *jnana*, while ordinarily *sannyasa* means renunciation. The highest knowledge calls for the highest renunciation. Now Sri Krishna mentions here that without yoga we cannot have *sannyasa*. We cannot have renunciation without the practice of this yoga that I have described to you up to this time.

The renunciation of the world implies a mastery over the world. A mastery over the world implies total desirelessness for anything in the world. Can we imagine what renunciation, *sannyasa* means? He has not abandoned anything that is real. The *sannyasin* has abandoned only the wrong notion that he had earlier entertained in respect of the world outside. Nobody can renounce the world unless he has renounced himself first, because we are inseparably connected with the structure of the world. We are a part of the structure of the universe. Hence, a person who tries to renounce the world as a whole cannot but renounce himself also. But by wrongly construing the meaning of *sannyasa*, one may erroneously imagine that renunciation is the abandoning of the physical relationship with the objects of the world while keeping one's own physical individuality intact. That is not possible. A *sannyasi* is not physically intact while he has renounced the world. The intactness goes together with the renunciation of the world. When he has renounced the world, he has renounced himself also. When he does not want anything from the world, he also does not want anything from his body. Therefore, it is difficult to practise renunciation, or *sannyasa*, without a kind of yoga that has to

be there together with it—namely, union of ourselves with the Ultimate Reality in some form—either through *sankhya*, or through pure activity, as described.

Sannyāsas tu mahābāho duḥkham āptum ayogataḥ. In this sense, we may say that a *sannyasin* is not an inactive person, because here *sannyasa* is the same as knowledge that has been described earlier. It is highest renunciation on account of the attainment of the highest knowledge. It is not possible to renounce the world unless there is equally a great knowledge or insight. The greater is our insight into things, the greater is our power to renounce them. If we have an attraction to things, they will control us rather than us controlling them. Hence, *sannyasa* is referred to here as, on the one hand, the process of renunciation of attachment to things that are apparently looking outside the consciousness; and, on the other hand, it means establishment in great knowledge—the highest kind of knowledge.

Sannyāsas tu mahābāho duḥkham āptum ayogataḥ, yogayukto munir brahma nacireṇādhiḡacchati: If we are established in this kind of yoga where *jnana* is identical with action—*sannyasa*, or renunciation, is the same as activity—to be in the world is the same as being in God Himself, and we see no distinction between God and His creation. We see the world as God Himself would see the universe. How does God see the world? At that time, in this state of knowledge that is described here, in this great *sankhya* and great yoga, we will visualise the universe as the Creator Himself visualises it. Therefore, we have attained Brahman. In an instant, as it were, we have attained the Absolute with this practice.

Discourse 12

THE FIFTH CHAPTER CONTINUES

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A PERFECTED PERSON

Yogayukto viśuddhātmā vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ, sarvabhūtātma-bhūtātmā kurvann api na lipyate (5.7). In this verse, the characteristics of a yogi, a perfected person, are described. A person who is united in yoga is a *yogayukta*. Such a person is also a *viśuddhātmā*: his lower self has been purified in order to reflect the higher Self in itself. He is also a *vijitātmā*: a person who is perfectly under control of himself; *jitendriya*: whose sense organs have been restrained; *sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā*: whose Self has pervaded all beings, and the Self of all beings are in his own Self. These are the qualities of a sage which are mentioned in this interesting yoga.

In the beginning, the effort is to restrain the senses; and when the senses are restrained, the person becomes a *jitendriya*. When a person is a *jitendriya* on account of the restraint exercised over the senses, he becomes a *vijitātmā*—one who has conquered himself. The conquest of one's own self is actually the conquest over the sense organs, because it is due to the activity of the sense organs that one's own self moves in the direction of a not-self. We find that our interest is in outside things. The world seems to be more interesting than our own selves. This happens on account of the self moving away from itself, through the avenues of the senses, towards the direction of the world of objects. But a person who has restrained the senses does not allow the consciousness to

pervade and penetrate through the senses towards the direction of things outside. Such a person has restrained himself. It is an exercise for restraining the self. It is a restraint over the sense organs; and incidentally, it is at the same time a restraint exercised on the self itself—the lower self. A *jitendriya* is also a *vijitātmā*.

Such a person is a *viśuddhātmā* whose self is pure *sattva*, free from *rajas* and *tamas*. The entire reality is reflected through the *sattva guna*, as a mirror can clearly reflect the face of a person. Turbid or shaky waters do not reflect anything adequately. Turbidity is *tamas*, and shakiness is *rajas*. The sun is reflected on the waters of a lake or a river. If the lake is muddy, and it is thick and turbid on account of dirt in the water, there will be no reflection of the sun in that water; but even if the dirt is not there, even if it is clean water but it is shaking violently, then also there will not be a correct and wholesome reflection of the sun. Similarly, we may be disturbed and find ourselves incapable of reflecting the higher Self in our own personality either because of the *tamas* that is prevailing in us or due to the *rajas* prevailing in us. Either we are *tamasic*—lethargic and dark—in our mental operations, or the mind is distracted in a hundred ways, so then also there is no reflection. Free from both these defects of the mind is a *viśuddhātmā* who is purely *sattvic*, untarnished by *rajas* and *tamas*. Such a person is united with all things at the same time; he is a *yogayukta*. The words used in this verse are in a descending order, whereas I have explained it in an ascending order. *Yogayukta* is the highest state, which is attained by the *viśuddhātmā*, which is attained by the *vijitātmā*, which state is attained by the *jitendriya*. Such a person becomes a wonder in this world.

Yogayukto viśuddhātmā vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ: He also becomes *sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā*. He will find himself

reflected in the Self of all beings in the universe, and he will find the selves of all beings reflected in his own Self. *Sarvabhūtātma bhūtātma* means one who has become the Self of all beings, and also one in whom the selves of all beings find their abode. This is a grand description of the highest state of perfection achieved by union through yoga.

All processes in this universe—evolution, involution, activity of any kind—are said to be taking place on account of a peculiar propensity in the *gunas* of *prakṛiti*. Therefore, the Supreme Lord is not supposed to be directly responsible for either what we call creation or destruction, or for any kind of activity taking place. His participation in creation is secondary, just as the sun, the solar light, is responsible for everything—life and death in this world—and yet the sun is not directly connected. This is a very interesting verse in the Bhagavadgita: *na kartṛtvaṁ na karmāṇi lokasya sṛjati prabhuḥ* (5.14). The Supreme Being, the Lord, does not directly bring about the relation of cause and effect, in the same way as the sun does not directly interfere with the activities of the world. Agency in action is *kartṛtva*. Action is karma. Neither agency in action nor the action itself are something that is created directly by God. That is to say, the defects of the human being are not to be attributed to God. Otherwise, the Supreme Reality, being inclusive of all the individuals in the universe, the total, would be a mass of ignorance, full of distractions. The total of all mankind would be nothing but a heap of distraction and incapacity to perceive correctly.

Transcendent is God, though He is also immanent. Water pervades every fibre of a cloth that is dipped in it. When a cloth is dipped in a bucket of water, every fibre becomes wet. That is, the water pervades the whole cloth; it is immanent in the cloth. The water is almost inseparable from the cloth, because when we touch the cloth we can see the wetness and

the dripping of water; yet, the water is not the cloth. There is no connection between the cloth and the water. The pervasion of God through the universe, through every little thing in the world, even the littlest atom, does not mean that God has involved Himself in the defects of life, the limitations of things, the locations of bodies, the ignorance characterising individuals. These are not part and parcel of the Supreme Being.

The transcendence that is the real nature of God frees Him from every kind of defect that is otherwise seen in the effects which He pervades and in which He is immanent. That is why it is said here that agency in action—the consciousness of one's own individuality being responsible for work—is not created by God. It is due to the defect of the ego that one feels that one is doing some action. The action itself is a process that is engendered by the movement of the *gunas* of *prakṛiti* and, therefore, that also does not come from God. He is not responsible for anything whatsoever. God is responsible for everything, and yet He is responsible for nothing. It can be put either way. God's responsibility for everything lies in the fact of His being immanent, and His freedom from any kind of involvement arises on account of His supreme transcendence.

Na kartṛtvaṁ na karmāṇi lokasya sṛjati prabhuḥ, na karmaphalasaṁyogaṁ: The fruit of action that accrues through actions performed with a motive for fruit, this also is not done by God Himself. He is not thinking of giving us something. Neither does He take anything, nor does He give us anything. An automatic action takes place on account of the very structural pattern of the universe. Whether we go to heaven or to hell or we are reborn, we cannot say that God is thinking that we should be thrown somewhere or that we should be made to take rebirth. It is nothing of the kind. The universe is an automatic system of operation, and does not require an outside interference from God. Actually, God is

not an outside thing, and is not an extra-cosmic reality. Nor is God capable of being identified with the cosmos itself. The divisions, the mutations, the limitations and the spatio-temporal conditioning which are the characteristics of the world cannot be attributed to God. In a sense, we may say there is nothing in the world which can be found in God; but in another sense, everything can be found in God because the values that we see in this world arise from a transcendence which is invisible to the eyes and uncognisable to the mind.

It is like the analogy of the snake and the rope. The snake is not the rope and, therefore, we cannot say that the rope has become the snake; and yet, the snake would not be there if the rope was not there. The rope is responsible for the snake, yet the rope is not responsible for the snake. The rope has never become the snake; therefore, we cannot say that the rope is responsible for appearing as the snake. Yet without the rope, the snake would not have appeared in it. Likewise, God is not responsible for anything that is happening in the world, yet nothing can happen in the world without God's existence. God maintains a very crucial position: God is doing everything, and yet doing nothing at all.

Na karmaphalasaṁyogaṁ svabhāvas tu pravartate: The natural tendency of existence itself is responsible for what we call action and motivation in any direction. *Nādatte kasyacit pāpaṁ na caiva sukṛtaṁ vibhuḥ, ajñānenāvṛtaṁ jñānaṁ tena muhyanti jantavaḥ* (5.15): God does not take our sin or our merit, because merits and sins are meaningful only in individualised existence where consciousness works through the body and sense organs; therefore, sin and merit cannot be attributed to consciousness that is not working through the sense organs and the individual apparatus of the mind. Universal Existence does not think through the mind and does not perceive through the sense organs. Hence, the characteristics which are

of the mind and the senses cannot be attributed to God.

Therefore, what happens to our meritorious karmas and our sins, and so on? Is nobody punished for their sins? People are punished *by* their sins. The sin itself punishes us; somebody else, like a judge sitting in the court, does not punish us for our sins. A sin is a peculiar dislocated, maladjusted situation that an individual occupies in this cosmos; this maladjustment itself is the sin. The sin itself punishes us, and there is nobody else from outside to strike a rod on our heads. That is, a self-complete organism occupies a self-complete situation in itself, and its health and disease depend entirely upon the manner in which the components of the organism work. There is no third reality, no extra-physical reality coming and interfering with the wrong actions or the right actions of a person.

This is why it is said that the actions performed in the highest state of yoga cannot be called either merit or demerit. *Karma suklakrishnam*: Karmas are either black or white. But karmas are neither black nor white for the yogi. The blackness or the whiteness corresponds to the wrongness or the rightness of perception. What we call sin is nothing but the solidification, the condensation of wrong actions continuing for a long time; and *punya*, or merit, is the condensation of good actions that we have performed. To repeat once again what I said, a good action is that tendency in our consciousness which moves in the direction of larger and larger dimensions of itself, and a sin is a contraction of consciousness which moves more and more in the direction of the physical body; and the worst sin is to have consciousness lodged in the body itself, and think that one is only the body.

Nādatte kasyacit pāpaṃ na caiva sukṛtaṃ vibhuḥ, ajñānenāvṛtaṃ jñānaṃ tena muhyanti jantavaḥ: Due to a cosmic ignorance, all individuals suffer. Their suffering or their pleasures are not products emanating from God. The

transcendence of God precludes all connections with the mutations of *prakṛiti*, though without Him *prakṛiti* cannot move: *ajñānenāvṛtaṁ jñānaṁ tena muhyanti jantavaḥ*.

Tadbuddhayas tadātmānas tanniṣṭhās tatparāyaṇāḥ, gacchantyapunarāvṛttiṁ jñānanirdhūtakalmaṣāḥ (5.17): One can attain to this state of utter perfection free from the goodness or the badness of things, or the qualities of *prakṛiti*, by intense concentration on the transcendence which is God. God is untarnished because of there being no change, no mutation, no difference, no physicality, and no externality in God. Meditation is to be conducted by the consciousness of the seeker on a universal transcendence of its own self, freed from the clutches of whatever the world may appear to be.

Tadbuddhayaḥ: They are *tadbuddhayaḥ* who are centred in their intellect, and through their intellect are centred in That; their understanding is rooted in That.

Tadātmānaḥ: Whose self is perfectly lodged in That. Our existence itself is Its existence, and Its existence is our existence; this state of affairs is called *tadātmānaḥ*. *Tadātmānaḥ* is the uniting of the self with the Self. That is, the individual self unites itself with the Universal Self. That state is called *tadātmānaḥ*. Those who are established in their understanding have also their self rooted in that Supreme Being.

Tanniṣṭhāḥ: Whose main occupation is establishment in that Supreme Being. Our daily activity, our professions, our occupations, whatever we do, is a preparation for the establishment of ourselves in That. It does not mean that our daily routine is contrary to God-realisation. The activities of people, the daily routine of anybody, should be so conducted and so refined and harmonised that it stands perfectly in order in respect of that Supreme Being, Who is perfect order. It does not mean that when we move to God, we move from wrong to right. It is a movement from the lesser right to the higher right.

It is also not moving from falsehood to truth. It is a movement from the lesser truth to the higher truth.

Therefore, those people whose Atman, the Self, is pre-eminently established in the Supreme Self find that all their daily routine also is so immensely affected by this union that the otherwise distracting and dividing form of human activity becomes a manifold emanation from the Self that is at the back of all activity, in the same way as rays emanate from the sun. The rays of the sun may be said to be the activities of the sun in some way; but this activity of the sun in the form of the emanation of rays is not independent of the existence of the sun. Therefore, the light and the radiance of the sun are also to be seen in the rays. The action of the sun is identical with the existence of the sun. Similarly, our activities should be spiritual in their nature; they should be completely conditioned by the nature of consciousness. Or, every work is nothing but a movement of the Self; consciousness is moving in the form of activity. Thus, activity is not any more a bondage. It is our own Self that is moving in the direction of itself, partially inwardly, partially externally, as waves are activities of the ocean; and yet they are not activities of the ocean, as the activity itself becomes one with the ocean. *Tanniṣṭhāḥ*: That is establishment of oneself in that Supreme Being. *Niṣṭhāḥ* is establishment, rootedness.

Tatparāyaṇāḥ is always eager to attain That. Day in and day out we brood over the possibility of this supreme attainment: "When shall I get it, when shall I get it, when shall I get it?" You can go on chanting this mantra: "When shall I get it, when shall I get it, when shall I get it, when shall I get it?" This little sentence is also a recipe for bringing the mind back to the point of concentration on That. Eagerness to receive that Being into ourselves, eagerness to unite ourselves with that Being is *tivra vairagya*, intense detachment towards the

world of objects. It is *tivra samvega*, or intense ardour to unite oneself with God. This is a word used in Patanjali's sutra—*tīvrasamvegānām āsannaḥ* (Y.S. 1.21): God is near to you to the extent you are eager to attain Him. *Tatparāyaṇāḥ* means one who is intensely eager to reach That, and his ardour is burning like a flame.

Gacchantyapunarāvṛttiḥ: Such persons, having attained immortality, will not return to this world of mortality.

Jñānanirdhūtakalmaṣāḥ: On account of their being purified through the highest knowledge, they do not get reborn into this world of bondage and limitations. Immortality is attained.

Ihaiva tair jitaḥ sargo yeṣāṁ sāmye sthitaṁ manaḥ, nirdoṣaṁ hi samaṁ brahma tasmād brahmaṇi te sthitāḥ (5.19): One may be said to have attained God here itself, just now, provided one is free from *kama* and *krodha*, desire and anger. These are the obstacles that prevent us from a consciousness of our proximity to God, and create a wrong notion that God is away from us. Rebirth is conquered by people just now, here itself.

Ihaiva tair jitaḥ sargo yeṣāṁ sāmye sthitaṁ manaḥ: Those whose minds are perfectly harmonised inwardly as well as outwardly, and who live in a state of perfect balance within themselves as well as in relation to the outside world, are free from loves and hatreds; and, therefore, there is nothing in them which will cause rebirth. In that sense, we may say, they are selected for immortality. They shall not be born again.

Ihaiva tair jitaḥ sargo yeṣāṁ sāmye sthitaṁ manaḥ, nirdoṣaṁ hi samaṁ brahma tasmād brahmaṇi te sthitāḥ: Spotless is the Supreme Absolute; the highest purity is God Almighty. That being the case, those who are perfect in their purity of consciousness, those who are free from the distractions characterising the mind, are automatically established in Brahman. The attainment of God is not a future possibility.

It is an eternal acquirement just here and now. God is not in time and not in space. Therefore, there is no distance between us and God. Therefore, there is no tomorrow for God. God's actions are instantaneous actions, and God-realisation is also an instantaneous event. Sudden is the occurrence of this so-called event we call God-realisation: *nirdoṣaṁ hi samaṁ brahma tasmād brahmaṇi te sthitāḥ*.

Vidyāvinayasampanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini, śuni caiva śvapāke ca paṇḍitāḥ samadarśinaḥ (5.18): The high and low look equal to the harmonised vision of the sage. If he sees a learned person or sees a fool, it makes no difference to him. He sees the same underlying reality in both that are considered as superior and inferior by the eyes of the world. Whether it is a learned sage or an animal—a cow or an elephant or a dog—the vision of the sage sees only the underlying reality, just as a goldsmith sees only the quality and the weight of gold in an ornament. The goldsmith is not interested in the shape of the ornament; he sees only the weight and how much gold is in it, in the same way that a tiger sees only flesh in its victim and it does not note what it is that it is pouncing upon. Whether the tiger pounces upon a great saint or a little child or an animal, it sees only its diet there. Just as the ironsmith sees only iron and the goldsmith sees only gold, the great sage sees only consciousness everywhere. *Sarvataḥpāṇipādaṁ tat sarvato'kṣiśiromukham* (13.13), etc., as we will be told in a future chapter.

Paṇḍitāḥ samadarśinaḥ: Those who are learned in spiritual lore, who are endowed with the insight into the reality of things, see oneness everywhere.

Discourse 13

THE FIFTH CHAPTER CONCLUDES

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAGE WHO IS ESTABLISHED IN BRAHMAN

*na prahr̥ṣyet priyaṁ prāpya nodvijet prāpya cāpriyam
sthirabuddhir asaṁmūḍho brahmavid brahmaṇi sthitaḥ* (5.20)

*bāhyasparśeṣvasaktātmā vindatyātmani yat sukham
sa brahmayogayuktātmā sukham akṣayam aśnute* (5.21)

*ye hi saṁsparśajā bhogā duḥkhaḥayonaya eva te
ādyantavantah kaunteya na teṣu ramate budhaḥ* (5.22)

*śaknotīhaiva yaḥ soḍhuṁ prāk śārīravimokṣaṇāt
kāmakrodhodbhavaṁ vegaṁ sa yuktaḥ sa sukhī naraḥ* (5.23)

*yo'ntaḥsukho'ntarārāmas tathāntarjyotir eva yaḥ
sa yogī brahmanirvāṇaṁ brahmabhūto'dhigacchati* (5.24)

*labhante brahmanirvāṇaṁ ṛṣayaḥ kṣīṇakalmaṣāḥ
chinnadvaidhā yatātmānaḥ sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ* (5.25)

*kāmakrodhaviyuktānām yatīnām yatacetasām
ābhito brahmanirvāṇaṁ vartate viditātmanām* (5.26)

*sparśān kṛtvā bahir bāhyāṁś cakṣuś caivāntare bhruvoḥ
prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā nāsābhyantaracāriṇau* (5.27)

*yatendriyamanobuddhir munir mokṣaparāyaṇaḥ
vigateccābhayakrodho yaḥ sadā mukta eva saḥ* (5.28)

*bhoktāraṁ yajñatapasāṁ sarvalokamaheśvaram
suhṛdaṁ sarvabhūtānām jñātvā mām śāntim ṛcchati* (5.29)

These are the concluding verses of the Fifth Chapter. *Na prahr̥ṣyet priyaṁ prāpya nodvijet prāpya cāpriyam*: The great sage who is established in Brahman neither rejoices on

acquiring pleasant things, nor grieves when coming in contact with unpleasant things, because he sees with an equal eye the substances that are the components of pleasant things as well unpleasant things.

The atomic and molecular components of substances cause the differentiation of one substance from another. Milk can become poison if one molecule is removed. All things are just compositions of uniformly spread-out substances. Their permutations and combinations make things look different—beautiful or ugly, stout or thin, necessary or unnecessary, pleasant or unpleasant. Therefore, to the Universal vision of the basic substance of all things, there is neither joy at the perception of what is apparently pleasant, nor is there grief at the perception of what is apparently unpleasant. The pleasant and the unpleasant are actually not things; they are reactions set up by our personality in respect of certain compositions of things. Thus, things are actually neither good nor bad, neither beautiful nor ugly, neither pleasant nor unpleasant. We set up different reactions due to the peculiar setup of our psychophysical individuality, which can accommodate only certain things and cannot accommodate certain other things. Therefore, certain things look pleasant and certain things look unpleasant. But to the person who is non-individual, or super-individual—superman, *atimanav*—to that person who has an equanimous vision of the cosmos, things are neither pleasant nor unpleasant because he is established in the Universal Reality. *Brahmaṇi sthitaḥ*: Unshaken understanding is his, and establishment of the Self is in Brahman.

Bāhyasparśeṣvasaktātmā vindatyātmani yat sukham, sa brahmayogayuktātmā sukham akṣayam aśnute: When we are totally detached from connection with the objects of sense, when the senses do not see any meaning in the objects outside and, therefore, do not pull the consciousness out in the

direction of objects, when consciousness does not defeat itself through perception in terms of the sense organs, the energy of the person increases, and the Self realises itself, whereas the Self loses itself in the perception and contact of external objects. In all perceptions there is an element of losing consciousness. That is why, in the Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali, even the perception of an object without any element of love or hatred is called a wrong perception from the point of view of yoga because all perceptions, even if they are so-called right perceptions, are partial. For instance, this is a building, and it is really a right perception; we do not say it is an elephant. To say that it is a building and not an elephant is indeed a right perception, but it is not a right perception from another point of view because the limited operation of the mind of an individual characterises certain shapes as 'a building', while actually, internally, we will find that which is in one thing is also in another thing.

Therefore, one who is totally unattached to things outside—*bāhyasparśeṣvasaktātmā*—he rejoices in himself and enjoys a bliss which is Brahman itself. *Bāhyasparśeṣvasaktātmā vindatyātmāni yat sukham, sa brahmayogayuktātmā*: To identify the consciousness with one's own self by freeing it from entanglement in sensory perception is equivalent to establishment in Brahman itself. The Universal Brahman is in the Atman of every individual. Space is universal; but the same universal space, when we see the space only inside the vessel, may appear to be limited to a little vessel. The space inside the vessel is called pot ether—*ghataakash*. The pot ether looks very small because it is limited by the walls of the pot, and the bigger space—which is *mahakasa*—seems to be larger than the little space inside the pot. Thus, there appears to be a difference between the universal *akasha*, or the universal ether, and the individual ether that is in the pot—but really

there is no such difference. The space has not been divided into two parts, inside and outside the pot. The same consciousness is within us and also outside us.

Thus the within-ness of ours, the Selfhood that we enjoy, the bliss that comes out of the detachment of consciousness from objects of sense, is the same as the bliss of Brahman—the Universal Reality emanating, rising up from our so-called little self. The Universal Reality rises up into action the moment the so-called little self in us withdraws itself from contact with things and does not concern itself with anything that is external—*sa brahmayogayuktātmā sukham akṣayam aśnute*.

Ye hi saṁsparśajā bhogā duḥkhaḥayonaya eva te, ādyanta-vantaḥ kaunteya na teṣu ramate budhaḥ: Any joy that comes through the contact of one thing with another thing cannot be regarded as real joy. There are five types of contact with external things: contact through the eye, contact through the ear, contact through the nose, contact through the skin, and contact through the tongue. The joy that we get by this kind of contact is an unreliable joy. It is a deceptive experience that we are passing through, and we wrongly come to the conclusion that we are experiencing happiness because this kind of contact appears to be pleasant in the beginning but breeds sorrow later on.

Even at the time of the enjoyment of a sense object we are under an illusion, and it is not a real joy that we are experiencing. Why do we feel happy when we come in contact with a mango or a cup of delicious *kheer* or any pleasant object? The reason is that when the mind is not in contact with any sense object, it is restless in itself, and it goes out in search of its own food in the form of objects. The mind that is not in contact with objects moves out in search of those objects which it finds pleasant to contact. When the mind moves in that way, the consciousness of the Atman, or the Self, also moves

together with the mind—just as electricity flows through a wire. Wherever the wire is, there is also electricity. Wherever the mind is, the Atman also goes, as it were, due to the attachment between the mind and consciousness that is caused by karma; and when the contact takes place with the consciousness, the mind feels that there is no further necessity to move outside in search of an object, because the object has already come into possession. The mind ceases to move outside, and comes in contact with the Self inside. Immediately there is a joy. The joy, therefore, has come from within us. It has not come from the object, yet foolishly we think that the object is painted with bliss and we are the abodes of sorrow, which is not true. The reverse is the case. All those who run after the pleasures of sense will reap sorrow one day or the other, for anything that has a beginning will also have an end—*ādyantavantaḥ*. That which has a beginning will also have an end because our pleasures, which are contact born, begin with the contact itself. Therefore, they shall end when the contact ceases.

There is bereavement on account of sensory contact. Our relationship with this world is fragile. The Mahabharata tells us that just as two logs floating on the surface of the ocean may come in contact with each other due to the prevailing wind, we come in contact with each other and become relatives, friends, a community; but if the wind blows in a different direction, the logs move away from each other as if they have no connection. So when the wind of the cosmic force blows in a different direction, you will be taken to one place and I to another, as if we had not been born here at all. The great sage Vyasa has written in the Mahabharata: *yathā kāṣṭam ca kāṣṭam ca sameyātām mahodadhau, sametya ca vyatlyātām tadvad-bhūtasamāgamaḥ*. The coming in contact of beings, the friendship that we have, the community that we establish humanly,

are all false in the sense that they are conditioned by the winds of cosmic powers which breed contact; and when these winds blow in a different direction, we are separated, and then we say that somebody died. "I have lost someone. My brother is dead," we cry in bereavement. Why did we come in contact at all in order that we may cry afterwards? Hence, contact with objects has a beginning, and it also has an end. Therefore, all joys that are born of contact are poison in the end, though they look like honey in the beginning. *Ādyantavantaḥ kaunteya na teṣu ramate budhaḥ*: Wise people do not rejoice in objects of sense.

Śaknotīhaiva yaḥ soḍhum prāk śārīravimokṣaṇāt, kāma-krodhodbhavaṁ vegaṁ sa yuktaḥ sa sukhī naraḥ: Blessed is that person who is able to restrain himself from desire and anger even before the dispatch of his body. The vehemence of anger and the vehemence of desire are actually the vehemence of the mind which runs in terms of sense objects. Therefore, he who longs for blessedness, and does not want to perish in this *samsara*, in this worldly existence, works very hard—*kāma-krodhodbhavaṁ vegaṁ. Sa yuktaḥ*: Such a person is united with Reality.

We cannot be free from the desire for external things unless we are united with the Universal Being. Unless we have an element of universality in our experience, it is not possible for the mind to be free from the objects of desire. So there is no use in merely trying to dispatch objects outside, throw them away, bundle them into the Ganga, and imagine that we have no desires. We cannot be free from the longing for something unless we have realised and obtained something greater. The object will no longer torment and tantalise us when there is something greater than the object which we have realised in our own self. When we have the ocean itself within us, we do not run after a cup of water.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon every student of yoga to work hard, and not merely negatively by restraining the sense organs through fasting, not sleeping, not speaking, and physically being away from things. This method alone is not adequate because we cannot starve consciousness. Consciousness wants food; therefore, we must give it the food of universal experience, in any degree of expression. It may not be the highest universality, but it should be higher than ordinary individuality. Only then will the desires spontaneously cease. If we have a million dollars, we do not mind losing one dollar; but if we have only ten dollars, one dollar looks very good. Similarly, we would not mind losing the whole world through sense contact if the Absolute is realised in our conscious experience. Only a person who has realised his universality can be free from desire and anger.

Yo'ntaḥsukho'ntarārāmas tathāntarjyotir eva yaḥ, sa yogī brahmanirvāṇaṁ brahmabhūto'dhigacchati: Who is blessed in his own Self, who delights in his own Self, who rejoices in his own Self, who takes rest in his own Self, who finds life in his own Self—such a person has attained Brahman. *Yontaḥsukh:* whose satisfaction is inside, within himself; *antarārāmaḥ:* who is reclining and whose abode is within himself only; *tathāntarjyotir eva yaḥ:* whose illumination, whose light, whose guide is also inside; *sa yogī brahmanirvāṇaṁ:* he merges into Brahman because he has become Brahman. *Brahmabhūto'dhigacchati:* The Universal is nothing but Brahman, and Brahman is nothing but the Universal. Therefore, the attainment of Brahman is the same as the requirement of the largest dimension of our own consciousness, our own individuality expanding itself to cosmic levels until there is nothing external to it. Thus, Atman becomes Brahman, the individual becomes the super-individual, the veritable Universal—*sa yogī brahmanirvāṇaṁ brahmabhūto'dhigacchati.*

Kāmakrodhaviyuktānām yatīnām yatacetasām, abhito brahmanirvāṇaṁ vartate viditātmanām: The Brahman that we are seeking is just under our nose here, provided we are free from desire and anger. Yogis who are self-restrained persons, who are free from *kama* and *krodha*—*kāmakrodhaviyuktānām yatīnām yatacetasām*—whose minds are united with the Self, to such people Brahman is here, and not in some distant place. It is just here and now. *Abhitaḥ*: Everywhere is Brahman for that person. There is no distance between himself and Brahman, and there is no futurity of attaining Brahman; it is an eternal presence that is experienced as *brahmanirvāṇa*: *sa yogī brahmanirvāṇaṁ brahmabhūto'dhigacchati*.

The entire yoga is described in two verses towards the end of the Fifth Chapter, and the Sixth Chapter is a long commentary on them. What is meant by yoga is elaborately detailed in the Sixth Chapter, but the seed of that long commentary is sown in these two verses towards the end of the Fifth Chapter: *sparsān kṛtvā bahir bāhyāś cakṣuś caivāntare bhruvoḥ, prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā nāsābhyantaracāriṇau; yatendriya-manobuddhir munir mokṣaparāyaṇaḥ, vigatecchābhayakrodho yaḥ sadā mukta eva saḥ*.

Sparsān kṛtvā bahiḥ: Cutting asunder the contact that is external, by means of the methods described in the earlier verses. *Sparsān kṛtvā bahir bāhyāś cakṣuś caivāntare bhruvoḥ*: Not looking at things with open eyes, but closing the eyes to some extent as if we are looking at no one, or gazing at the spot between the eyebrows. In one place in the Sixth Chapter we are told that it will look as if we are gazing at the tip of the nose. Now it is said that it will look as if we are concentrating on the middle of the eyebrows, as the case may be.

Sparsān kṛtvā bahir bāhyāś cakṣuś caivāntare bhruvoḥ, prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā: Equalising the breathing that is

apana and *prana*, and not exhaling or inhaling heavily or with difficulty. When we run fast, we breathe in an unusual and abnormal way. There is gasping, a tremendous pushing of the *prana* outside, and also a tremendous desire to push the *prana* down. Too much physical exercise which will push the *prana* out and exhaust the body is not very conducive to yoga practice. Yoga asanas are better than ordinary physical exercise because when we run while playing sports we perspire, energy goes out, we feel tired and breathe heavily, exhausting ourselves; but in yoga asana there is a calm and quiet bending of the *prana* inside. Even if we do the asanas for a long time, we do not feel exhausted, we do not perspire, and our breath does not heave as it does when we run or jump. It is an internalisation process taking place in the yoga asana. The externalisation of *prana* takes place in ordinary games. Hence, yoga asanas are superior to the Western type of physical exercises. The *pranas* and *apanas*—the breathing that is inside as well as outside—should be equalised in such a way that they will be conducive to the concentration of the mind.

The breath and the mind are connected to each other. As each cog in the mechanism of a clock is connected with the hands which show the time, there is a connection between the mind and the *prana*. The *prana* is like the hands of the clock. It can be seen, but the mind is inside and cannot be seen. It is said that the *prana* can be restrained in two ways, just as there are two ways to stop a clock from working. One way is to hold the hands still; then the clock stops, but there is still the pressure of the wheels inside to make the hands move. Similarly, merely holding the breath when there are still desires in the mind is not conducive to stopping the *prana*. Rather, it is highly deleterious. Nobody should do *pranayama* and *kumbhaka* if there are submerged desires in the mind, because the *prana* can suddenly burst out, like a bomb, and

cause illnesses of various kinds. If a desire-filled, emotionally torn individual starts doing *pranayama*, there can be a collapsing of the body rather than a strengthening of it. Thus, the *prana* can be controlled by restraining the mind by freeing it from desires, just as a clock can be stopped by stopping the inner mechanism; or the *prana* can be stopped externally by holding the breath.

Prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā nāsābhyantaracāriṇau: In the highest stage of the equalisation of the breath, the *prana* and *apana*, which move through the two nostrils, are supposed to operate only inside the nose. They do not come out, which is contrary to what generally happens in our daily life—*nāsābhyantaracāriṇau*.

Yatendriyamanobuddhih. *Yata* means restraint, held in check; *indriya* means the senses, *mana* means mind, and *buddhi* means intellect. He who has restrained, held in check, the operations of the senses, the mind and the intellect in terms of external things is called a *yatendriyamano-buddhih*.

A *muni* is one who is calm, quiet, and silent in himself, and who does not announce himself or parade his knowledge or glory, being satisfied with himself, asking not for satisfaction from anybody else. Such a person is a *muni* who has restrained his senses, mind and intellect, and is calm and quiet in himself, devoted entirely to the liberation of the spirit—*munir mokṣaparāyaṇaḥ*—and is intent on the liberation of his soul. Day in and day out he prays that the soul will be liberated from his body, that he will attain *brahmanirvāṇa*, that moksha will be his blessedness one day or the other. Day in and day out he broods over the possibility of attaining liberation, and sees nothing else except moksha—such a person is *mokṣaparāyaṇaḥ*. Being entirely free from any kind of desire—*vigatecchābhayakrodaḥ*—neither is there *iccha*, nor

longing, nor fear of anything. *Krodha*, or anger, is of course far away from him. Whoever he is—*sadā mukta eva saḥ*—such a person is liberated in this life.

Such a person who is liberated even while apparently living in this body for some time is called a *jivanmukta*. He becomes a *videhamukta*, or discarnately liberated when the body is shed, but he also may be liberated even while the body is there if the *sattvic vrittis*, *sattvic* karmas, take an upper hand and the *rajas* and *tamas* in him are completely subjugated. When the *rajas* and *tamas* are completely obliterated and only *sattva* predominates in a person, he becomes a *jivanmukta*—verily a god moving in this world. But when even the *sattva guna* is transcended—he becomes entirely free from the clutches of *prakriti* even through *sattva*—he drops the body and becomes universally present everywhere. A *jivanmukta* becomes a *videha mukta*—*sadā mukta eva saḥ*.

Bhoktāraṁ yajñatapasāṁ sarvalokamaheśvaram, suhṛdaṁ sarvabhūtānāṁ jñātvā mām śāntim ṛcchati. The Lord says, “Realising that ultimately I am the enjoyer and the actor, all sacrifices are directed towards Me, all activity in this world is motivated by Me. All austerities, all *tapas* are possible only on account of My grace because I am the Lord of the three worlds and the Lord of all the fourteen worlds. I am the friend of all people, of everyone in any realm of existence. I am the dearest friend of all people living in any realm of existence.” Nobody except God can be called a friend. Knowing this truth, one attains peace.

Discourse 14

THE SIXTH CHAPTER BEGINS

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A SANNYASIN AND A YOGI

śrībhagavānuvāca

*anāśritaḥ karmaphalaṁ kāryaṁ karma karoti yaḥ
sa sannyāsī ca yogī ca na niragnir na cākriyaḥ (6.1)*

*yaṁ sannyāsam iti prāhur yogaṁ taṁ viddhi pāṇḍava
na hy asaṁnyastasaṁkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana (6.2)*

*ārurukṣor muner yogaṁ karma kāraṇam ucyate
yogārūḍhasya tasyaiva śamaḥ kāraṇam ucyate (6.3)*

*yadā hi nendriyārtheṣu na karmasvanuṣajjate
sarvasaṁkalpa sannyāsī yogārūḍhas tadocyate (6.4)*

*uddhared ātmanātmānaṁ nātmānam avasādayet
ātmaiva hyātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ (6.5)*

*bandhur ātmātmanas tasya yenātmaivātmanā jitaḥ
anātmanas tu śatrutve vartetātmaiva śatruvat (6.6)*

*jitātmanaḥ praśāntasya paramātmā samāhitaḥ
śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkheṣu tathā mānāpamānayoḥ (6.7)*

This Sixth Chapter, which we are commencing now, is a culmination of the very spirit of the first six chapters of the Bhagavadgita. The first six chapters of the Bhagavadgita deal with the discipline of the human individual. It starts with the lowest condition, as is described in the First Chapter, which is a state of conflict. From the state of conflict, the mind is gradually raised to the necessity to have knowledge of a wider perspective of things. Greater and greater detail about this is

provided in the Third Chapter, even more detail is provided in the Fourth Chapter, and an even wider detail on the very same theme is given to us in the Fifth Chapter. *Bandhur ātmātmanas tasya yenātmaivātmanā jitaḥ, anātmanas tu śatrutve vartetātmaiva śatruvat*. All these are graduated descriptions of the ascending series of self-discipline that is absolutely necessary to become totally disciplined in one's own individuality.

Our psychological apparatus is not aligned properly; it is mostly disarrayed. The non-alignment of the psyche consists of various functions—understanding, feeling, willing, etc.—and their not being in a state of psychological mutual collaboration splits the personality into fractions. Therefore, a person who is not properly integrated in his psyche behaves differently in different conditions, and one cannot know which mood a person will put on at what time because of the possibility of putting on different contours of behaviour. This is because of the fact that people generally live a fractional life; they never live a whole life. They are either emotionally moody or disturbed in some other way, or they are arrogant due to their understanding and their academic qualification or wealth or power, etc. Under different conditions they behave in different ways, the emphasis being laid on one or another aspect of the mind. This is the characteristic of an undisciplined mind, a mind that has been dissected into little pieces of behaviour and conduct due to a non-aligned personality, a disturbed personality, an undecided personality, a changing personality, an unsettled personality and, finally, an unhappy personality.

This has to be gradually overcome by a process of integrating the so-called fractions of the mind into a gestalt, as it is called in modern psychology, so that all thinking becomes a total thinking. Towards the achievement of total thinking, the chapters gradually take us to higher and higher levels, as medical treatment gradually moves in an ascending order

from the worst of conditions, which is the illness of a patient, towards a gradual improvement in health, until it becomes total perfect health.

The final integration process is described in the Sixth Chapter. We are still only in an individual state. In the first six chapters we are not told what is beyond the individual, as there is no use speaking of what is beyond an individual to someone who is incapable of receiving this knowledge. What is beyond the individual is not an individual. Therefore, it is not possible for an ordinary split personality to receive knowledge of higher realities that are super-individual. So it becomes necessary to prepare oneself for the reception of this knowledge through graduated training in psychological integration; and the highest integration is achieved through *dhyana*, or meditation, which is the subject of the Sixth Chapter.

Anāśritaḥ karmaphalaṁ kāryaṁ karma karoti yaḥ, sa sannyāsī ca yogī ca na niragnir na cākriyaḥ. In ancient India, Sannyasins were supposed to be in a mature condition, transcending the Brahmacharya, Grihastha and Vanaprastha stages. The Grihastha, or the householder, maintains a sacred fire which is to be worshipped every day. When he takes Sannyasa, he no longer worships that fire. This verse says that merely because a person does not maintain a fire, it does not follow that he is a Sannyasin. *Na niragnir na cākriyaḥ*: A Sannyasin is supposed to be a person who does not take part in active work of any kind. The verse says that, in this regard, it does not mean that a person is a Sannyasin merely because he does not do any work.

In the traditional pattern, there are two characteristics of Sannyasa. A Sannyasin does not do any work in the ordinary social sense, nor does he worship fire as a householder does. So can one give up doing any work, and give up worshipping the fire of the householder, and say that one is a Sannyasin?

Bhagavan Sri Krishna says here that it does not follow that a person is a Sannyasin merely because he has given up fire worship and he is not doing any work. The characteristics of Sannyasa do not mean non-work, nor do they mean the non-worship of fire. The characteristics of Sannyasa are an internal illumination, a maturity of thought, and a widening of perspective. It is an internal achievement, and not an outward performance.

When a person does not depend on the fruits of an action—*anāśritaḥ karmaphalaṁ*—and yet goes on doing the work for the welfare of the world, he may be considered to be a Sannyasin. That is, work does not in any way hinder a person from being a Sannyasin; but work hinders if it is done with an ulterior motive for achieving some future fruit. Not depending on the fruit of action, we have to engage ourselves in action. This has been described in detail in the earlier chapters. The duty that is incumbent upon an individual is performed. Duty is a must on the part of every individual. There are different types of duty that are called for—physical, psychological, social—and these duties are incumbent on the individual merely because of the fact that the individual exists in an environment which calls for such work or duty.

Therefore, such a person can be called a Sannyasi—*sa sannyāsī*—such a person can be called a yogi—*ca yogī*—who performs duty for duty's sake, and works not with a motive for the fruit. But a Sannyasi is not necessarily a person who does not do any work and keeps quiet, nor is a Sannyasi a person who does not perform the rituals of a householder. External dissociation does not mean internal illumination. Yoga and Sannyasa are internally connected: *yam sannyāsam iti prāhur yogam taṁ viddhi pāṇḍava*. Sannyasa and yoga finally mean one and the same thing in the sense that a person who has not totally withdrawn himself from attachments of

every kind cannot unite himself with the cosmic spirit. The union that we attempt with the cosmic spirit is yoga, but this cannot be attempted unless there is a total detachment of the consciousness of the individual from involvement in external objects. *Yam sannyāsam iti prāhur yogam taṁ viddhi pāṇḍava:* Whatever is called Sannyasa is also called yoga, and whatever is yoga is also Sannyasa. A person who is united with the cosmic reality is automatically detached from every kind of sense contact; and conversely, a person whose consciousness is totally detached from contact with objects is also a yogi because he enters into a wider dimension of experience due to the withdrawal of consciousness from sense contact.

Yam sannyāsam iti prāhur yogam taṁ viddhi pāṇḍava, na hy asaṁnyastasaṁkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana. A Sannyasin has another quality: he does not will that something has to be done. He has no volition in any particular direction. He does not decide that something should be 'like this', and he does not decide that it should not be 'like this'. Such a decision, such a determination, such a wish does not arise in his mind. He has no *sankalpa*. *Sankalpa* means a kind of desire-filled determination of the will. As a Sannyasin does not have any desire, he cannot have a determination in respect of doing something and avoiding something else. The Sannyasin, having withdrawn his self from contact with sense objects, cannot have a desire to decide matters in favour of certain things or against certain other things. *Na hy asaṁnyastasaṁkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana:* A person who is *asaṁnyasta-saṁkalpa*—that is, a person who has not freed himself from this desire-filled willing in terms of achievements in the world—such a person who has not attained this freedom cannot become a yogi.

We cannot commune ourselves with realities until we are free from contact with unrealities. We cannot attain to the Self until we are free from the clutches of the non-Self. We

cannot attain the Atman until we are free from contact with the *anatman*. We cannot attain the Universal until we are free from clutches of the external. The external and the Universal are opposites, and the externality that characterises ordinary sense perception precludes all possibility of Universal Consciousness. Therefore, a person who is not a Sannyasi—that means to say, a person who has not freed himself from desire for contact with objects of sense—such a person also cannot become a yogi. This is because yoga is union with Reality, and that is possible only if one is free from the life of unreality, which demands attachment to things, etc.

Yam sannyāsam iti prāhur yogam taṁ viddhi pāṇḍava: “O Pandava Arjuna! Know that whatever is Sannyasa, that is also yoga.” Perfect renunciation is the same as perfect attainment. The highest achievement is effected through the highest renunciation. The total withdrawal from contact with externals is automatically contact with the Universal, and contact with externals is automatically an obliteration of the consciousness of the Universal. Thus it is that Sannyasa and yoga are identical in their meaning, and one who is not one also cannot be the other: *na hy asaṁnyastasaṁkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana*.

Āruruṣor muner yogam karma kāraṇam ucyate, yogārūḍhasya tasyaiva śamaḥ kāraṇam ucyate. This is a very difficult verse, whose meaning has been brought out in various commentaries on the Bhagavadgita. Literally, this verse means that action is the means to perfection for a person who attempts to practise yoga, and non-action is supposed to be the characteristic of a person who has already attained yoga. This is the literal translation. God, in the form of Bhagavan Sri Krishna teaching the Bhagavadgita, does not propagate non-action, as we have already seen. Therefore, we cannot interpret the word ‘śama’ as absence of activity, although many a commentator has thought that *śama*, which means

internal tranquillity, automatically means withdrawal from external activity. This is what commentators generally say. But we cannot conclude that the word ‘*śama*’, or tranquillity, which is supposed to be the characteristic of one who is established in yoga, is opposed to activity or work, because throughout the Gita the point is hammered into our ears again and again that inaction does not mean yoga, and inaction does not mean Sannyasa. Hence, the state of total, perfect establishment in yoga should not necessarily be interpreted as a state of total negativity, or absence of action.

The other day, I gave you a homely example of intense activity appearing as no activity at all. The higher forms of activity do not look like the ordinary activities of a labourer in a field. Even in ordinary parlance, a person who is sitting quietly on a chair in an office may be doing greater work than a labourer carrying bricks on the road, although visibly the labourer is doing more work than a person sitting in an office. This is because a person who administers a big office works in a different way and in a different realm altogether. His actions are of a higher quality, though in quantum it appears as if the bricklayer is more active. As the level of administration rises higher and higher, it may appear less and less active to the onlooker, though in quality it is actually an increase in a person’s responsibility—and responsibility is the same as work.

When a person is beginning to practise yoga, there are preparatory actions of self-purification—*ārurukṣu*—which are: *sandhya vandana*, or the daily worship in the morning and evening; worship of Suryanarayana through *surya namaskara*, etc.; Gayatri *japa*, etc.; and in the case of a householder, the performance of the *pancha mahayajnas* and the worship of the holy fire, and charity. All these activities are the visible forms of work that are self-purifying in their nature because these

actions are done with no motive for the fruit of action. These actions are done as a perfect duty and, therefore, it purifies the self; and this kind of purifying activity is supposed to be a means to perfection in the case of a person who is attempting to practise yoga.

In the case of a person who is totally established, action is not supposed to be the means. *Śama*, or tranquillity, is the means. 'Tranquillity' is a very intriguing word because, as I mentioned, various commentaries have looked upon it from various perspectives. But keeping in view the total vision of the intention of the Bhagavadgita, we should consider the life of Bhagavan Sri Krishna as the best commentary of the Bhagavadgita. There is no commentary on the Gita greater than the life of Bhagavan Sri Krishna himself. How did he live? This is perhaps his intention in teaching the Bhagavadgita. He wants us to be a Bhagavan Sri Krishna ourselves, and to think and act as he thought and acted. In my opinion, Sri Krishna's life is perhaps the best commentary on the Gita, and not any other commentary, academic or otherwise.

Sri Krishna was a total inclusive personality. Was Sri Krishna a householder? Was he a Sannyasin? Was he a warrior? Was he a saint? Was he a Brahmin or a Kshatriya? What kind of person was Bhagavan Sri Krishna? We will not be able to have a straight answer to this because it is an incarnation of the Absolute that came in the form of Sri Krishna. The Absolute does not behave like a householder, and it does not behave like a Sannyasin. It does not behave like a person who keeps quiet. It may appear to behave like a warrior, but it does not mean that it is really behaving like a warrior. It is calm and quiet—utter tranquillity. And, the Brahmana-Kshatriya distinction does not apply. As a matter of fact, from a purely physical point of view, Sri Krishna was a Kshatriya, and not a Brahmin. Sri Rama was also a Kshatriya.

The power that Sri Krishna wielded is commensurate with the knowledge that he had. Sri Krishna was a mastermind who had the power to contact even Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. He could immediately contact these great gods, and he could work on earth as a labourer in the battlefield, driving Arjuna's chariot with five horses into the battle. He could speak the highest philosophy as in the Bhagavadgita, and he could be in his palace in Dvaraka like an emperor. He could be like a child, a baby in the lap of Yasoda. He could be a terror to wicked people like Kamsa. What kind of person was he? It is like asking what kind of person God is. Our minds are not fit to accommodate these characteristics of total personalities. We call these people supermen. Since supermen do not behave like men, we should not interpret their behaviour in terms of human behaviour. Many people read the Mahabharata and say that Krishna did this and Krishna did that. They are judging things from the human point of view. It was a superhuman intervention of divinity that behaved in the necessary fashion from the cosmic point of view and, therefore, any kind of human ethics should not be applied to divine activities.

Thus, Sri Krishna was not an inactive person; nor can we say he was an active person restlessly moving about here and there, trying to uplift the world, doing charity, and building hospitals or schools and colleges. Neither was he that type of person, nor was he the type who kept quiet without doing any service. And no Sannyasin could equal him. Millions of Sannyasins could not stand before him, and yet he was a general and a field marshal. What a contradiction: a Sannyasin behaving like a field marshal before whom no warrior could stand! No Sannyasin could stand before him, no yogi could stand before him, and even the gods could not stand before him. What kind of a person was he? This is the kind of personality that he wants us to become, and that state is the ultimate

tranquillity that we achieve in the condition of establishment in yoga: the divine tranquillity of God Himself, Who is not a restless individual. *Yogārūḍhatva* is a state of utter tranquillity in the divine sense, not in the sense of absence of activity, because we cannot say that God is free from activity. *Varta eva ca karmaṇi* (3.22): “I am always busy,” is what Lord Krishna tells Arjuna. But his being busy is totally different from our being busy—because we are busy physically, socially and psychologically, but Lord Krishna is the Absolute itself working. We cannot know how the Absolute acts because its action is within itself and, therefore, it may look like non-action. An action that is taking place within itself is no longer an action, and yet it is a tremendous action, a most heightened form of action. But because it is the highest form of action, it looks like no action. *Śama*, which is the tranquillity that is spoken of here as the characteristic of a perfect yogi, is to be understood in this sense. This is my own individual commentary based on my own insight, as it were, and not based on any book or academic knowledge. My feeling about it is that we have to work like God Himself, and that is what Bhagavan Sri Krishna is telling us in the Bhagavadgita: *yogārūḍhasya tasyaiva śamaḥ kāraṇam ucyate*.

Yadā hi nendriyārtheṣu na karmasvanuṣajjate, sarva-saṅkalpasannyāsī yogārūḍhas tadocyate: This state is when there is no contact of the senses with objects, and we do not see anything even with open eyes. We can keep our eyes open, and yet see nothing. Our ears can be open, and yet we hear nothing. This is possible. Opening the eyes and apparently looking at things, but yet seeing nothing, is called *sambhavi mudra*. People say that Ramana Maharishi was doing *sambhavi mudra*. He would appear to look at things with open eyes, but he was seeing nothing. The mind becomes withdrawn from the outer organ which is the eye. Similarly, we may not even

hear a gunshot if the mind is concentrated on something and does not register the sound of the gunshot. When the sense organs do not receive reports from outside objects, when a person is not attached to the activities of the sense organs, and does not get attached to any kind of ordinary fruit-yielding actions—*yadā hi nendriyārtheṣu na karmasvanuṣajjate*; when a person is rid of all decisions in a particular direction—that things should be ‘like this’ or should be ‘like that’, and feels that either way is all right—such a person who has no particular will in any given direction is called a *sarvasaṅkalpasannyāsī*, and he is also called *yogārūḍha*, established in yoga.

Uddhared ātmanātmānaṁ nātmānam avasādayet, ātmaiva hyātmāno bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ. Never feel despondent. Never complain that you are not able to achieve anything in meditation. Do not put on a sour and castor-oil face, as Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to say. He used to say, “Don’t put on a Sunday face.” Do not feel diffident. Do not feel discomfiture within yourself that you have come to the ashram and have been practising yoga under the guidance of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj’s blessings for so many years but you have achieved nothing. This kind of feeling should not arise. How do you know that you have not achieved anything?

There was a person called Madhusudhana Saraswati, and a person called Vidyaranya. They did twenty-four *purascaranas* of Gayatri, and no divinity appeared before them. They were great masters, more powerful in their minds than any one of us. They were wonderstruck that after so much *tapasya* they had no experience at all.

A voice said, “You shall not have a vision of me in this life.”

The person who was called Vidyaranya, who wrote the Panchadasi and other works, was known as Madhava in his pre-Sannyasa days. He was a very learned person. His brother, called Sayana, wrote a commentary on all the four Vedas.

They must have been geniuses. We cannot imagine such great wisdom.

Madhava did Gayatri *purascharana* for attaining *siddhi*, and a voice said, "You shall not have a vision of me in this life."

He got disgusted that after having done so much, nothing had come. He took Sannyasa.

When he took Sannyasa, immediately the divinity appeared and asked, "Why are you doing do much *purascharana*? What do you want from me?"

To that Madhava said, "You said that you will not appear before me in this birth."

"But this is a second birth," the voice said. "You have taken another birth. Therefore, I came."

"I want nothing now," said Vidyaranya. "I was a poor man. As the householder Madhava, I would have certainly asked for wealth and riches, and anything that would make me prosperous. But I have taken to renunciation, the path of Sannyasa. Now I cannot ask for anything. So I am very sorry, great divinity. You have come too late, and now I cannot ask anything from you."

But the divinity said, "I cannot go without giving something. When I appear, I must give something before going."

"But I cannot ask for anything."

"You must ask for something."

"But I want nothing."

Then the divinity said, "Because you want nothing, you shall have everything," and it vanished. And Vidyaranya became omniscient.

What I mean is, you should not say that after twenty-four *purascharanas* you have achieved nothing. Some *prati-bandhaka* karma, some *rajasic* karma of your previous birth has obstructed the appearance of divinity, but it does not

mean that you have not progressed. The *purascharanas* have destroyed your sins, and when all the obstacles have been eliminated completely, immediately illumination will come. This was the case with Buddha also. The day before illumination, he felt as if everything was a waste. He was crawling like a half-dead man, and he felt that all the *tapasya* that he had done was a waste; but that very night he had illumination. As they say, the night is darkest just before sunrise. It does not mean that it is really dark; illumination is to immediately take place. So even if after many years of meditation in an ashram you have achieved nothing, it does not mean that really you have achieved nothing. You have achieved something; some obstacle is there which is being eliminated gradually. So do not be despondent. Do not complain about yourself. Do not complain against God, and do not be diffident. Do not have a lack of faith in the scriptures, in the Guru, and in God.

Raise yourself: *uddhared ātmanātmānam*. Always be positive in your nature: "I am strong. I am healthy. I can walk three miles without any fatigue, and I can digest any food that is given in the kitchen. I have no problem." Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to say, "My disciple can digest any food. He can wash vessels better than any servant. He can walk three miles and not feel any fatigue. He can type better than a good typist. He can speak better than professors. Such is my disciple. My disciple is not a diffident man; he is a very confident man. My disciple is unequalled in any field." So he is a genius, almost like a superman.

Therefore, *uddhared ātmanātmānam nātmānam avasādayet*. Never become depressed. "It is a waste! So much *japa* has been done. What is the good of it? God may be there or may not be. I don't understand anything. The scriptures may be saying a hundred things. I don't know which path to pursue. This Guru has been telling me something, but finally he has

brought nothing. I will go to another Guru, and I will stay in some other place. I will go to Uttarkashi. I will go to Benares.”

These kinds of ideas should not arise in the mind. You should feel, “I have taken to this path, and I am sure that I will get it.” If there is no visible progress, it is due to some *rajasic* karma operating in you. It does not mean that no progress has been made. So do not deprecate yourself. Never condemn yourself. Do not say that you are a sinner. “I am not a sinner. I am a disciple of a Guru and a devotee of God, and I will attain the final liberation one day. So why should I think that I am unfit? I am as fit as anybody else.” Have this confidence, and you will really become that—because what you think you are, that you really become.

Uddhared ātmanātmānam nātmānam avasādayet: Never deprecate yourself. Raise yourself by the power of the Self. *Uddhared ātmanātmānam nātmānam avasādayet, ātmaiva hytmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ*: You are the friend of yourself and you are the enemy of yourself. If you go on condemning yourself, you are actually becoming the enemy of your own self; but if you raise yourself with the power of the spirit of higher aspiration, you are becoming the friend of yourself. You will be healthy, strong and prosperous.

Discourse 15

THE SIXTH CHAPTER CONTINUES

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION

*uddhared ātmanātmānam nātmānam avasādayet
ātmaiva hyātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ (6.5)
bandhur ātmātmanas tasya yenātmaivātmanā jitaḥ
anātmanas tu śatrutve vartetātmaiva śatruvat (6.6)*

Ātmaiva hyātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ: We must not criticise our own selves or deprecate our own selves or feel diffident about our own selves when we are on the spiritual path, because it is said elsewhere that even a little practice that we do is a great credit in our name and there is no loss of effort. No effort in the direction of spiritual practice is going to be a loss. It is always going to be a gain, even if it is a very insignificant gain. *Nehābhikramanāśo'sti pratyavāyo na vidyate* (2.40). It is mentioned in an earlier chapter that no effort in the direction of spiritual realisation can be a waste. Even a penny that is credited in our bank is a credit, though it is only one penny. So no one should imagine that there is some serious defect in one's own self when one has decided to tread the spiritual path. Once one has taken the step, one should not turn back due to diffidence. It is said that he who has put his hand on the plough cannot look back. Once he has started doing the work, no diffidence is permitted. Hence, *uddhared ātmanātmānam:* The self has to be raised with the Self's power. *Nātmānam avasādayet:* Do not depreciate your effort. *Ātmaiva hyātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ:* We

are our own friend, and we are our own enemy. All troubles come to us due to our own errors; also blessings come due to our proper adjustment of personality with reality.

Bandhur ātmātmanas tasya yenātmaivātmanā jitaḥ: When we have conquered our lower self with the power of the higher Self, we have become our own friend. When the lower self disobeys the regulations and rules of the higher Self, we become an enemy of our own self. This is because our real self is the higher Self, and the higher we go, the more real we become in our own personality. The lower we go, the less and less we are in our own reality. When comprehensive regulations of the higher Self restrain the instinctive activities of the lower self, we are supposed to be our own friend. The higher Self is our friend because we ourselves are the higher Self.

Anātmanas tu śātrutve vartetātmaiva śātruvat: God Himself may look like an enemy when we disobey His orders, which operate in the form of *rita* and *satya*.

Bandhur ātmātmanas tasya yenātmaivātmanā jitaḥ, anātmanas tu śātrutve vartetātmaiva śātruvat: The more we are attached to the objects of sense, the more are we inimical to our own Self. The lesser our desires and greater the capacity of our consciousness to establish itself in itself, the more are we friendly with our own Self.

Actually, there is no separate God sitting somewhere in the cosmos. It is the largest dimension of our own Self that is called Brahman. The miniature of that Brahman is the Atman. That itself, expanding to the widest dimension, is Brahman. Hence, there is no God outside us. There is an immanence of that Universal Being in our own selves. Therefore, if our so-called self is inimical to the regulations of the highest realm, it is acting against the requirements of the highest Self, and there will be a reaction from the cosmic forces in the form of *karma phala*, or nemesis. This is the way in which God works if we

disobey God's law. Thus, obedience to the law that is operating in the cosmos is the way in which we can accommodate the highest reality into our own self—which is to be a friend of the highest Self, and which is equal to being a friend of one's own self also. To be a friend of the highest Self is equal to being a friend of one's own self, because we are the highest Self. Otherwise, the lower self will take an upper hand, the instincts will take revenge, and the sense organs will set up a revolt; and in that case, we will become a friend of the lower self, which is the enemy of the higher Self—which is another way of saying that we are an enemy of our own Self.

This is a psychological foundation which is laid in the first few verses of the Sixth Chapter, from the first *śloka* onwards, describing the actual practice of yoga. The Sixth Chapter concerns itself with the actual practice of yoga. Apart from a few minor details, it is similar to the yoga of Patanjali in many ways. Actually, some commentators, such as Madhusudhana Saraswati, have appended many sutras from Patanjali to supplement their explanations of the Sixth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita. There are abundant quotes from Patanjali in Madhusudhana Saraswati's commentary on the Gita's Sixth Chapter.

Yogī yuñjīta satatam ātmānam rahasi sthitaḥ, ekāki yatacittātmā nirāśīr aparigrahaḥ (6.10): A yogi is a person who is attempting to practice yoga, and a yogi is one who is established in yoga. Whether we are in the second standard in primary school or we are studying in college at the post-graduate level, we are undergoing education. So 'yoga' is a common word that applies to the preliminary stages of attempt, as well as to the final establishment. Therefore, a yogi who is a student of spiritual practice in any level—the first, the second or the third, or whatever level it is—such a person should undergo certain disciplines that are described in this

chapter in order to carry on meditation.

Yogī yuñjīta satatam ātmānaṁ rahasi sthitaḥ: Aloneness being our friend—living in a secluded place and not in a place of disturbance or noise—we try to collect ourselves into ourselves. We collect our energies, muster the forces of the mind and the senses, and try to be more and more in ourselves instead of being more and more in the objects of sense. This is the meaning of this half-verse: *yogī yuñjīta satatam ātmānaṁ rahasi sthitaḥ*. We have to unite our self with our own Self. The uniting of one's self with one's own Self is a process of psychological integration, whose methods have been described in the previous five chapters.

Ekākī: We should sit alone in a secluded place for meditation, unbefriended, unknown. *Yatacittātmā*: Bringing about a union of the mind and the intellect and the Self, so that there is no disparity among the thoughts of the mind or the understandings of the intellect or the yearnings of the soul. They must be in a state of balance. Such a state of attaining balance is *yatacittātmā*. *Ekākī*: Being alone to oneself and united in mind, intellect and spirit.

Nirāśīr aparigrahaḥ: Expecting nothing from the world outside, having no desires for anything in the world is *nirāśīḥ*; and *aparigrahaḥ* means expecting no gifts from anybody. When we have abandoned things, we may expect gifts to come from different sources—and actually gifts will come, as that is the law of action and reaction. The more we renounce things, the more are things abundantly poured on us. The more we try to renounce the world, the more it will try to pursue us and become our friend and be with us. Therefore it is said that when we are desireless, we should not expect any recompense or remuneration for our desirelessness. Expecting to obtain something as a result of being desireless is another kind of desire and, therefore, the desire

to receive something because of our desirelessness has also to be given up. That is *aparigrahaḥ*—*nirāśīr aparigrahaḥ*. *Yogī yuñjīta satatam ātmānaṁ rahasi sthitaḥ, ekākī yata-cittātmā nirāśīr aparigrahaḥ*.

Śucau deśe pratiṣṭhāpya sthiram āsanam ātmanaḥ, nātyucchritaṁ nātinīcam cailājīnakuśottaram (6.11). We have to sit on a seat which is a non-conductor of electricity. That is why it is said a grass mat may be spread on the ground. A grass mat is a non-conductor of electricity. Some people place a deerskin or some such thing over the grass mat, and then spread a cloth to sit on. The seat should not be directly on the ground, nor should it be too high. *Nātyucchritaṁ nātinīcam*: Neither too high nor too low. This is because if the seat is too low, insects may crawl on us and disturb our session; and if it is too high, there is a possibility of our falling down while in the state of concentration. The seat should be of moderate height. A very practical suggestion is given here that we should sit in one particular posture. The yoga meditation posture is the same posture in which most of us are sitting now (cross-legged on the floor with spine held upright), or it can be any other meditation pose such as *padmasana*, *siddhasana*, etc. Whatever is convenient to us and does not cause us discomfort is the posture that we may assume for meditation. In Patanjali's Sūtras, a very non-committal description is given of the asana: *sthira sukham āsanam* (Y.S. 2.46). Patanjali does not say that we should be seated in *padmasana*, *sthira*, etc. Nothing is mentioned; no nomenclature is used. We can assume any pose which will enable us to be fixed and not cause pain in the knees or the joints. The pose should be fixed, and it should also be comfortable: *sthira sukham āsanam*. Whatever be the pose that we assume, it should be fixed and comfortable. Śucau deśe: In a pure spot be seated. *Nātyucchritaṁ nātinīcam cailājīnakuśottaram*: The seat should not be too high or too low.

Tatraikāgram manaḥ kṛtvā yatacittendriyakriyaḥ, upaviśyāsane yuñjyād yogam ātmaviśuddhaye (6.12). Then, what should we be doing while seated there? We should try to bring the mind to a point of concentration. *Yatacittendriyakriyaḥ*: By restraining our mental function and restraining our sense functions by *pratyahara*, we should try to bring the mind to a point of concentration. *Tatraikāgram manaḥ kṛtvā yatacittendriyakriyaḥ, upaviśyāsane yuñjyād yogam ātmaviśuddhaye*: For the purification of the self, for the raising of the lower self to the higher Self, one should resort to the practice of yoga which is meditation.

Samam kāyaśirogrīvaṁ (6.13): We must be seated erect with the head, neck and the spine in a straight line so that the *prana* may move harmoniously through the channels of the body. If we sit in a distorted position, it will be difficult for the *prana* to move in a harmonious manner. Therefore, we remain in a stabilised pose in order to help the *prana* move in a stabilised fashion. We should be fixed; there should be no shaking of the personality.

Dhārayannacalam sthiraḥ: With eyes neither open nor closed, we should gaze as if we are looking at the tip of the nose. It does not actually mean that we should concentrate on the tip of the nose. This is only a metaphor for not opening the eyes entirely because objects outside—colours and forms—may disturb our mind. So we should not keep our eyes open, nor should we close them completely, as that may lead to sleep.

Samprekṣya nāsikāgram svam diśaś cānavalokayan: Therefore, the eyelids are half-closed, as if we are looking at the nose.

Diśaś cānavalokayan: We should not look here and there, in different directions.

Praśāntātmā vigatabhīr brahmacārivrate sthitaḥ, manaḥ saṁyamya maccitto yukta āsīta matparaḥ (6.14). *Praśāntātmā*

means subdued in one's own self, calm and quiet, and never susceptible to any kind of disturbance from outside events or sources. *Praśāntātmā* also means calm, quiet and subdued because of desirelessness in the mind. We are not agitated either by the operations of the mind inside or by the activities of people externally.

Vigatabhīḥ: Fearless are we. Fearlessness comes only when we are sure that we have a very secure position individually. If we are insecure, fear will haunt us from all directions. Yoga is the attempt at assuming a tremendous security of oneself in the world of cosmic rulers. In the Yoga Vasishta, it is clearly mentioned that an ardent student of yoga who is sincerely attempting to achieve perfection will be guarded by the rulers of the cosmos. The divinities that superintend over the powers of nature will open their eyes and befriend us and, therefore, we need not be in a state of agony or insecurity. The more are we dependent on people outside, the more are we insecure. The more we are dependent on the inner forces that are commensurate with the cosmic forces, the more are we fearless. But many a time doubts arise in the mind, and these doubts cause a diminution of the level in the state of meditation. Then we may suddenly come down from the level in which we are protected by the cosmic forces, and we may feel disturbed, as if some tremendous trouble is going to take place.

These fears do not come in an ordinary manner. They come in a tremendously ferocious form, and are highly disturbing. It is impossible to describe what kind of fears can come upon us. The terror and the temptations that Buddha had to face during his meditations are described in a beautiful poetic style in the sixth chapter of Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia*. Edwin Arnold was a very good writer who also wrote *Light of the World*, which is about the life of Christ, and *Song Celestial*, which is the Bhagavadgita rendered in English poetry.

The sixth chapter of *Light of Asia* is a description of the fear, agony, temptation and torment that Buddha had to undergo before he attained illumination. These temptations and troubles—the devils attacking us from all sides—may be a phenomenon that everybody has to face one day or the other, because what one person has experienced may be the experience of everyone else also. Because there is only one road to God, whatever we see on the way has been seen by others, and future meditators will also see the same thing. *Vigatabhīḥ*: Therefore, we must be fearless by establishing ourselves in ourselves and having confidence in ourselves.

Prasāntātmā vigatabhīr brahmacārivrate sthitaḥ: Completely restraining the sense organs from disturbing the energy of the body and the mind is called Brahmacharya. Brahmacharya does not mean a physical dissociation from contact with things. *Viṣayā vinivartante nirāhārasya dehinaḥ, rasavarjam raso'pyasya param dṛṣṭvā nivartate* (2.59): Physical dissociation is not Brahmacharya, because the mind will be brooding. What our body is doing is not actually our action. What the mind is doing is our action. Therefore, there should be a withdrawal of the desire to see through the eyes, and a withdrawal of the energy that makes the ears hear. There should also be a withdrawal of all the powers of the ten sense organs—the five organs of perception and the five organs of action. All these must be restrained. There must be no inclination to move at all. We are seated in stability. That condition is the filling of our entire personality with the total energy that we consist of, and no energy should leak out through any organ of sense. Then we become indomitably strong, physically as well as mentally, and we develop a sharp memory that will not forget things.

Prasāntātmā vigatabhīr brahmacārivrate sthitaḥ, manaḥ saṁyamya maccitto yukta āsita matparaḥ. This is the first time

that the Lord uses the words “depend on Me”. Later on it will be told in more elaborate form. In the Bhagavadgita up to this time, the Lord has not said, “You should depend on Me.” He has only said, “Do this work,” “Do that work,” “You should not be reactive,” “You should conduct yourself in this fashion,” “This is the discipline that you have to practise,” and so on, but he did not bring God into the picture. In a way, he brings God here by saying *maccitto yukta āsīta matparaḥ*: “Depending on Me entirely, be united with your own Self.”

Manaḥ saṁyamya: With great effort, restrain the mind. The mind will not yield so easily. It will wander here and there. Wherever it goes, from there we bring it back, as we control a horse with the reins. The sense organs are like horses, and they have to be restrained by the power of the higher reason. *Maccitta*: entirely depending on God’s grace, and on nothing else. *Manaḥ saṁyamya maccitto yukta āsīta matparaḥ*: United with our own Self, integrated in our psyche, fearless in our behaviour and vision of life, depending entirely on the grace of God for His mercy and His coming to us quickly, thus we should be seated for this highest form of concentration and meditation.

Yuñjann evaṁ sadātmānaṁ yogī niyatamānasaḥ, śāntiṁ nirvāṇaparamāṁ matsaṁsthāṁ adhigacchati (6.15). We should do this practice continuously, every day. It may be for a few minutes in the beginning, and later on for half an hour, one hour, etc.; nevertheless, this practice should be carried on daily, continuously, and without remission.

Śāntiṁ nirvāṇaparamāṁ: One who has restrained oneself perfectly attains a peace which is a reflection of Ultimate Bliss. Nirvana itself is reflected in our personality, and heaven throbs in our mind, as it were. We will automatically feel such bliss inside, and will not know from where that happiness comes.

Matsaṁsthāṁ adhigacchati: Actually, this bliss comes from God. The meaning is that this internal joy or satisfaction

which we feel in this form of contemplation or meditation is a reflection of God Himself in our personality.

Certain formulas are now mentioned so that we may not go to excesses in the practice of yoga. Yoga is a practice of a kind of harmony in every kind of behaviour. *Nātyaśnatas tu yogo'sti* (6.16): We should not eat too much. A glutton cannot practise yoga. This is because as gluttons we make the body so heavy and *tamasic* that *sattvic* qualities cannot manifest in us and, therefore, we cannot practise yoga. *Na caikāntam anaśnataḥ*: That person who is abstemious to an extreme extent and is starving also cannot practise yoga. This is because if we go to the other extreme, which is starvation, we cannot sit or stand or breathe. We cannot even think. At that time, the mind will not concentrate. *Nātyaśnatas tu yogosti na caikāntam anaśnataḥ*: Neither a glutton nor an abstemious person going to the extreme is considered fit for meditation.

Na cātisvapnaśīlasya jāgrato naiva cārjuna: A person who sleeps too much is so *tamasic* that he is not fit for meditation. But a person who never sleeps at all is also not fit for meditation because his mind is disturbed by certain psychological or biological factors, which is why there is sleeplessness to such an extent. It is a kind of illness. Therefore, a person who is always awake, who never rests, as well as a person who always sleeps, cannot practise yoga.

Then who is fit to practise yoga? *Yuktāhāravihārasya yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu, yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhaḥ* (6.17): Yoga, which is the destroyer of all sorrow, will come to us; yoga, which is the destroyer of all pain and suffering, will come to us. When will it come? It will come when our diet is harmonious, when our behaviour is harmonious, when our activities are harmonious and not disturbing to anybody. One who is harmonious in his waking and his sleeping, such a person is fit for yoga because he is himself in a state of harmony.

Discourse 16

THE SIXTH CHAPTER CONTINUES

MEDITATION ON THE ISHTA DEVATA

Yadā viniyataṁ cittam: When the mind is settled in its own Self through being perfectly restrained, it is tantamount to its settling itself in the Atman. *Yadā viniyataṁ cittam ātmany-evāva tiṣṭhate, niḥspṛhaḥ sarvakāmebhyo yukta ity ucyate tadā* (6.18): Free from the necessity to allow the mind to work in terms of the sense organs, feeling happy within on account of the proximity of the mind to the Self, one attains to a unity with one's own Self, which is equal to the unity with the Self of all things.

The meditational process can be carried on in three ways: internally, externally, and universally. The Atman is generally considered to be the Self of an individual. It is the deepest root of any particular person, and the idea that the person is located in some place also gives rise to the idea that the Atman is in one place. People refer to themselves as 'myself', 'my Atman within'. They touch their heart when referring to the Atman and the Self, indicating that the Self is their deepest subjectivity. The Atman, or Self, is a pure subject. The purity of the Self arises on account of it not being contaminated by the desire for objects. The self that desires an object is an impure self—the lower self, the instinctive self, the sensory self. The Self that is not contaminated by any longing for outside things is the purified Self.

This Self, which is generally considered to be dominating the personality of an individual, is also the Self that dominates the personality of any individual anywhere. When it is agreed that my Atman, or Self, is within me, it is also agreed that it is within everyone. The within-ness of the Atman in the case of a particular individual does not preclude the very same Self also being within other persons, other individuals, other beings. Now, if it is within some particular individual and it is within all individuals, it would be equal to saying that it encompasses all things, that it is everywhere. Because of the fact of its being within all things, it has to be understood as being present everywhere, inasmuch as individuals are everywhere. Even in the littlest forms of individuality, the Selfhood can be recognised.

When we investigate into the consequences that follow from agreeing that the Self which is within us is also within all people, the internality of the Self as the Atman becomes the universality of the very same thing as Brahman. Therefore, the Atman is Brahman. The Self within is the Self that is everywhere. The internality of the Self automatically becomes a universalised form of internality, as the Self is not within anything, because to be within only something would be equal to not being within something else. When we accede that the Self is within all things, the within-ness exceeds the limit of its little location of individuality and becomes an all-pervading presence. For example, the space in thousands of pots may look like the individualised contents in those pots. We may say that the space in the pot is the Self, or the Atman, of the pot. But it is present in all the pots. When the dividing factor, which is the bodily egoism, is dispensed with—when the pots are broken—we will find that the very same space which was apparently within the pots is everywhere. It was always everywhere. It appeared to be within only on account

of our interpreting it as the presiding principle over individual bodies. This Atman which is within me is also the Atman that is within everyone. Therefore, it is a universal internalising. Universal does not mean an expanse in space and time, because space and time are objects of consciousness. We are aware of there being such a thing as space, and we are aware of there being such a thing as time. Inasmuch as space and time, or even space-time blended together, are objects of consciousness, they cannot be regarded as universal. The consciousness itself is universal. Space and time are not universal, because they are limited objects. Thus, the universality of consciousness is different from the sensorily cognised universality of space, because space can be cognised by the mind and perceived by the eye. The Atman cannot be cognised or perceived, because it is the cogniser and the perceiver. “Who can see the seer? Who can know the knower?” says Yajnavalkya, the great sage in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. *Vijñātāram are kena vijānīyād* (B.U. 2.4.14): He is the knower of all things. Who can know him?

Therefore, it is not a universalisation like an objectivity of space; it is a conscious universality. And inasmuch as consciousness cannot be an object, it is pure subjectivity. It becomes necessary for us to stretch our imagination to some extent in order to accommodate these two thoughts into a single point of concentration. Consciousness—which is the pure subjectivity without any kind of objectivity in it, and yet it is everywhere—is difficult to meditate on. Therefore, people generally do not go to such advanced practices in meditation unless they themselves are advanced and have a purified mind and were born with good *samskaras*. The initial stages of meditation are not conducted along these lines, which stretch the brain to the breaking point by making it imagine something which cannot be easily imagined.

The earlier stages of meditation are objectively conducted as concentrations on what are called the *ishta devatas*. An *ishta devata* is our own God, whom we worship and adore. Now the idea of God being something whom we can worship and adore brings into our minds the idea of His location. Though theoretically it is conceded that God is everywhere, the mind cannot conceive this everywhere-ness. Even when we agree that God is everywhere, the idea of God being everywhere will be a kind of externalisation of form. Even if we think of God as the universal Virat Himself, when we think of the Virat, He will appear to be an object which we are cognising. The necessity to visualise God as an object, or an *ishta devata*, arises on account of the difficulty felt by the mind in transcending space and time.

Therefore, this attempt at going beyond space and time should not be worked on or attempted in the earlier stages, because it will be a great strain to the mind. We have an *ishta devata*. It may be our dear God. It may be Rama or Krishna or Devi or Surya or Jesus Christ or Mohammed, or any incarnation. Whatever be the dearest and the nearest and the best that we can think of, that is our object of meditation.

It is many a time indicated that we can concentrate on anything; we can concentrate on even a pencil or a candle flame or a rose flower. Yes, it is possible for us to concentrate on anything, but this effort at concentrating on such objects as a pencil, etc., will not succeed finally because the emotions will have their say. The emotions will cry out and proclaim that the pencil is not going to bring anything. We cannot love a pencil; we cannot hug it; we cannot consider it as a dear object. At least here, in the case of meditation, the *ishta* is the dearest and the best that we can think of; and inasmuch as we have conceded that it is the best, there cannot be anything better than that anywhere in the world.

Hence, in meditation the choice of the *ishta devata* is very important, and it is not all right if we just choose anything for the purpose of practice. We should be clear that we have chosen the best, and there cannot be anything better than that. There cannot be anything better than the best. That is to say, when we have chosen the object as something capable of fulfilling all our desires because it is the dearest and the nearest to us, then the mind in concentration on that *ishta devata* will not move out in any other direction. The distractions and the oscillations of the mind in meditation—its moving away from the object of concentration to some other thing—are due to a feeling that this *ishta devata* is not all-in-all, that there are also other things in the world which are dear and which are capable of satisfying the mind. It feels that all satisfaction—the highest satisfaction, and every kind of satisfaction—cannot be expected from this particular object. This is due to a defect in the choice of the *ishta devata*. If we have not chosen the *ishta devata* properly, the mind says that there are other things which are also equally good, and so it runs here and there during concentration.

It is not possible to conceive any object in the world which is so dear, because every object in the world has a defect of its own, and we cannot consider anyone or anything as the dearest. Not even jewels, not even diamonds, not even the most glorious valuable objects can be considered as the dearest, because they lose their value under different conditions. The *ishta devata* becomes, for our purposes, a conceptual ideal that we have placed before us, on which we foist all the greatest qualities of God. We consider the *ishta devata* as an all-pervading essence concretised in one form, like the sun manifesting one ray. But, one ray is not all rays, and one form is not all forms. Nevertheless, through this one form we can reach all forms because the quality of the *ishta devata* is

something like the quality of the rays of the sun, and one ray is equal to any other ray in its quality.

We must foist all the characteristics of the best of things on our object of meditation. We must think that it is alive, and not dead. If we think that our god is dead, and it is not speaking, that it is only an image, then we will not have any affection for that object. If possible, we should choose an object that is mentally construed as a symbol of all the perfection that we can think of. We should feel that it can connect us to the omniscient and omnipotent Godhead, and it can melt into a universal existence if necessary. We should feel that the *ishta devata* is an ambassador of God Almighty, and that it has all the powers of the government which has brought it and employed it here, and we can speak to it.

It is true that our *ishta devata* can speak to us. The lives of saints like Purandaradas, Tukaram, Ekanath, Namdev and such people have illustrated this before us—as Vitthala danced with the devotees. Though for us it is only a stone image, it broke into action. The other day I mentioned to you how the image of Kali broke into action and became alive, as it were, to protect Jada Bharata when dacoits wanted to finish him off. Did not Narasimha come from a brick pillar? Therefore, we should not say that there are only inanimate objects in this world. The idea that our object is an image or a picture or that it is not going to bring us that which we expected should be removed from the mind. The conceptualisation of the *ishta devata* should be as a specimen of God Almighty Himself.

In the beginning, the *ishta devata* will look like somebody standing before us. Lord Krishna, Rama or Devi is standing before us. All right, let them be before us. It looks as if they are only in one place. In the earliest stages of meditation, we can feel that God is in front of us—Lord Krishna, Devi, Durga, Surya or whoever it is. Later on, in the advanced

stage of meditation, we should be able to recognise that this particular god is present everywhere, as if the *ishta devata* is filling all space. It is just as when we look at one tree in the forest we will see only that tree and nothing else, but when we notice that this tree is one tree in the forest, we will find that there are only trees everywhere. Hence, the next stage of meditation may be an attempt on the part of our mind to feel the presence of the *ishta devata* as filling all space so that, as some devotees sing in their poetry, *jidhar dekhta hun, udhar tu hi tu*: “Wherever I look, I see only you, God.” It appears that Ravana saw Rama everywhere at the last moment; and at one moment in the war, Duryodhana saw Sri Krishna everywhere. Wherever he looked, he saw only Krishna. This kind of expansion of the location of our *ishta devata* is an advanced stage of meditation, higher than the stage where we saw our god only standing or seated before us. Then, the original location where we thought the *ishta devata* was gets increased on account of our seeing it everywhere.

There is an even higher stage, where it is not enough if we feel that Lord Krishna is everywhere like there being many trees in a forest. There is only the *ishta devata* everywhere, and there is nothing else. It is not many Krishnas or many Devis or many Narayanas that we are seeing. It is only one Narayana, just as when we do not see many waves but see only one ocean. The so-called individual conceptual forms of the *ishta* melt into the larger liquid of the sea in which they exist, which is the substance of these manifested forms. This stage which I am describing is something like *savikalpa samadhi*, where we see the light everywhere—but we see the light. This is the penultimate stage of an experience that has to transcend itself further on, because we too should melt into the light. When we perceive the light as being everywhere, it is a great thing indeed. It is a great experience. It is the highest

form of experience that we can imagine; but we still maintain an individuality of ourselves as a worshipper, an adorer, an onlooker, etc. When we enter into it, that stage becomes *nirvikalpa samadhi*, the highest union that one attains in meditation.

So from the internality of the Atman, we conceived the universality of the very same Atman as being present in all individuals; and also we felt the necessity to worship an *ishta devata* through mantra *japa*, the glorification that we are singing by these mantras, and *nama japa*. We sing like Hanuman, in great ecstasy. This is a kind of invocation of God. Immense longing for God, which will manifest in the loud chanting of a mantra or in musical songs that we sing, or even dancing in the glorification of God, is supposed to be one of the ecstatic conditions that the devotee reaches in the heights of devotion and communion with his *ishta devata*.

Thus, internal meditation in the light of the Atman being within us may give way to a larger conceptualisation of the Atman being everywhere. This is the philosophical, Vedantic method of meditation. In the devotional, *bhakti* method, the *ishta devata* concept is prescribed; and there also, the *ishta devata* is a transcendent reality, and not merely an externally existing object. The god who is the *ishta devata* is not an outside something; it is that which is pervading all things, including ourselves. Therefore, it is able to give us light; and it can also receive light and speak to us. There is nothing in the world which cannot speak. Even a stone, even a leaf in the tree, has a Selfhood of itself; and when our self pervades all things, things assume their Selfhood in themselves, and they react by way of a conscious response. Even the trees responded to the call of Vyasa when he summoned Suka, his son. "Oh my son, where are you?" "I am here, my dear father," was the response that came from every leaf of every tree. That means Suka was

not in one particular place. Therefore, the *ishta devata* is our God, and becomes the universally inclusive reality which finally inundates us also. *Yadā viniyataṁ cittam ātmany-evāvatīṣṭhate, niḥsprhaḥ sarvakāmebhyo yukta ity ucyate tadā* (6.18).

Yathā dīpo nivāstho neṅgate sopamā smṛtā, yogino yatacittasya yuñjato yogam ātmanaḥ (6.19): As a flame, say a candle flame, flickers not when it is burning in a windless place, so will be the mind concentrating, as it were, at the height of absorption in the Atman. *Yathā dīpo nivāsthaḥ*: That which is located in a windless place. *Neṅgate*: Does not flicker. *Sopamā smṛtā*: That is the illustration that is used here. *Yuñjato yogam ātmanaḥ*: The Atman reflects itself as an immense steadiness in the mind that is concentrating. The fickleness of the mind, which is otherwise a form of distraction, ceases on account of the entire Atman reflecting itself in this condition of intense concentration.

yatroparamate cittam niruddham yogasevayā
yatra caivātmanātmānaṁ paśyannātmani tuṣyati (6.20)
sukham ātyantikam yat tad buddhigrāhyam atīndriyam
vetti yatra na caivāyam sthitaś calati tattvataḥ (6.21)
yaṁ labdhvā cāparam lābham manyate nādhikam tataḥ
yasmin sthito na duḥkhena guruṇāpi vicālyate (6.22)

These are some illustrations of the condition of intense concentration of the mind. It flickers not. The mind is not any more distracted, because the steadiness of the Atman is reflected here in this highly concentrated mind. Joy manifests itself from within. The mind ceases.

Uparamate cittam: It melts into the Self, as it were. *Niruddham yogasevayā*: Because of the restraint continually exercised on the mind, it melts into the Atman itself. *Yatra caivātmanātmānaṁ paśyannātmani tuṣyati*: Where beholding the Self in the self, one delights within oneself. There is no

delight that is equal to this delight.

Sukham ātyantikam yat tad: This happiness is absolute happiness. It is not a relative happiness that we gain by the contact of the mind with the objects of desire, because when the object of desire vanishes there is no happiness and, therefore, it is not actual happiness. It is a relatively tantalising form of joy.

Buddhigrāhyam: This happiness can be experienced only by the higher purified reason, and not by the sense organs. The higher purified reason can reflect the highest reality within itself in the same way as it can infer the existence of God Almighty, though usually such a perception is not possible through the sense organs.

We will not be able to arrive at God by an inductive logic of collecting particulars to arrive at generals. No amount of particulars that we collect in this world will make God. Therefore, inductive logic does not help us here. The ancient masters took resort to an intuitive perception by which they started with the Universal first, and not with the particular first. Thus, they deduced everything from the Ultimate Reality. That is, we may say they followed a kind of deductive logic, and not the inductive logic of Francis Bacon, etc. The indubitability of the existence of the Universal Reality is established first. That is, the Universal is taken for granted in the beginning itself by logic, which we find explained in great detail in commentaries on the Brahma Sutras written by Sankaracharya, etc. The existence of the Universal Reality is established by pure logic, and once this is established as the consequence of the work of the higher reason, everything follows. All creation can be explained in terms of this Universal Reality. It is infinite happiness. All other happiness in this world is relative.

Sukham ātyantikam yat tad buddhigrāhyam atīndriyam, vetti yatra na caivāyam sthitaś calati tattvataḥ: In that state, we

will never be shaken even by the winds of the world. *Yasmin sthito na duḥkkena guruṇāpi vicālyate*: Even the heaviest sorrow cannot shake us from that happiness. Even if the earth cracks and the sun falls on our head, even if such a thing can be imagined, we will not be shaken at that time, because of our entry into the very substance of all things.

Taṁ vidyāddh duḥkhasaṁyogaviyogaṁ yogasaṁjñitam, sa niścayena yuktavyo yoganirviṇṇacetasā (6.23). *Anirviṇṇacetas* means by a non-despondent mind, by a courageous mind, by a heroic attitude of the spiritual seeker. With this bold attitude of spiritual aspiration, one should seek to attain this union of the self with the Self. *Taṁ vidyāddh duḥkhasaṁyogaviyogaṁ*: At one stroke, it cuts us off from all sources of pain, and we will no longer know what pain is. *Taṁ vidyāddh duḥkhasaṁyogaviyogaṁ yogasaṁjñitam, sa niścayena yuktavyaḥ*: That is called yoga which is the separation of consciousness from all sources of pain. We must definitely attain it, and unite ourselves with it—*yoganirviṇṇacetasā*—by not being despondent, and by total union with the Self, which is the ultimate yoga.

Discourse 17

THE SIXTH CHAPTER CONCLUDES

GOD'S GREAT PROMISE TO US

Śanaiḥ śanair upamed buddhyā dhṛtigṛhīṭayā, ātmasamsthāṁ manaḥ kṛtvā na kimcid api cintayet (6.25). Here we are in the meditational technique of the Sixth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita. Gradually, slowly, step by step, we have to subdue the mind. We should not try to control the mind hurriedly, quickly, by force of will.

There is a story to illustrate the way in which the mind can be controlled. The mind is like a ferocious bull that will not allow us to go near it. A wild bull is so ferocious that we dare not go near it. How will we be able to control that wild bull and ride on it? Our first step is to put a fence around it. Now we have restrained its movement to some extent. We can restrain the mind in a similar manner by putting a fence around it, allowing it to go so far and no further. Even if we have desires, they should be permissible, justifiable desires, conducive and healthy. Unjustifiable and harmful desires should not be entertained. Therefore, the first step is to permit the mind to have some desires, but not allow it to go beyond a limit—like the fence that we put around the wild bull.

The next step is to bring some green grass to the bull, stretch our hand inside the fence, and call out to it. Because of the green grass, it will come near us. We have no fear of the bull because we are on the other side of the fence. It can look at us threateningly, but it cannot harm us. Because we

are giving it green grass, it is a little subdued and its mind is concentrated on the grass. If we bring the bull green grass every day, it gets accustomed to our face, and we can touch it on the head with the fence still between us. If we go on doing this for a long time, we can even hold the bull's horn, and it will not do us any harm. It will not make noise and threaten to gore us. Then we can gradually open the gate a little and thrust the green grass inside. It will look at us in a friendly manner because it is habituated to seeing our face. After some time we can go near it, and then touch it. A day will come when we are able to ride on it.

This is an illustration of how the mind is threatening us, trying to control us like a wild bull, and how it pulls our consciousness in any direction whatsoever just as a wild bull may run amok, hither and thither; but gradually, we can bring the mind under control by circumscribing its activity, putting a fence around it, allowing it to move only within a certain area. Suppose we are in an ashram or a monastery; we can do whatever is permissible. We can eat, we can play, we can talk, we can go for a walk, we can have a cup of tea. All these are permissible. But drinking, gambling, a non-vegetarian diet, and smoking are not allowed in these institutions and, therefore, we are automatically weaned away from them.

Circumscribing the number of desires, and making them operate within a certain limit, is the first step. Then we reduce the desires gradually by deciding which are unavoidable and which are avoidable. There are unavoidable desires and avoidable desires. For instance, we require one meal, and we have to have one meal or even two meals if it is necessary. But we go on snacking on varieties of things between meals. These snacks are not necessary, and can be avoided. Therefore, we may restrain our eating to the minimum number of items that we require.

Then we can prescribe to ourselves a discipline, as certain Swamis in Haridwar have done. They take *kshetra sannyas* and do not go out of Haridwar. This is also a limit that we put on the mind. Otherwise, the mind says that we can go anywhere we like—to Mussoorie or to San Francisco. We take a decision that we shall not go beyond Rishikesh; this is *kshetra sannyas*. That Swamiji who took *kshetra sannyas* then restrained himself still further by taking *ashram sannyas*—that is, he would not go out of the ashram. If we maintain such disciplines, the mind gradually attains tranquillity: *śanaiḥ śanair uparamed*. It may take many years for us to restrain the mind and make it come back to the point of concentration, which is the Self. *Buddhyā dhṛtiḥ*: With a bold determination by our reason, with discrimination, with *vichara* and *viveka shakti*, the mind has to be brought under control very, very slowly. Abrupt actions are not permitted.

Ātmasamsthāṁ manaḥ kṛtvā na kiṁcid api cintayet: Once the mind becomes settled in itself, we should not disturb it. There should no longer be any necessity to speak or to think or to do anything whatsoever because the settling of the mind in the Atman is the final goal of life, and once the mind tastes the nectarine bliss of the Atman's contact, it will not want anything else. *Yaṁ labdhvā cāparam lābhaṁ manyate nādhikaṁ tataḥ* (6.22): Having gained this, we do not consider any other gain in the world as equal to it. *Yasmin sthito na duḥkhena guruṇāpi vicālyate*: Established in this, the heaviest of sorrow cannot shake us. Let anything happen; nothing will shake us out of our balance because of our establishment in the Self.

Yet, the mind will move here and there. It goes here, it goes there. What do we do at that time? *Yato yato niścaraṭi manaś cañcalam asthiram, tatas tato niyamyaitad ātmanyeva vaśaṁ nayet* (6.26): Whatever be the direction in which the mind is moving, from that direction it should be pulled back. When a

horse is restive and kicks and moves backwards and forwards, the rider controls it with the reins. If the horse goes in one direction, the rider pulls it back from that direction. If it goes in another direction, he pulls it back from that direction. When the mind is pulled back from the particular direction that it has taken, it will move in another direction.

If there are ten holes in a pot which is filled with water, water will start leaking through one hole; and if we plug that hole, water will leak through another hole. Similarly, if we control the eyes, the ears will wreak havoc. If we control the eyes and the ears, the nose will say something. If the nose is also controlled, the tongue will go out of control. One sense or the other will be there to trouble us. Therefore, whichever be the direction of the action of the mind, from that direction we should pull it back with the reins of self-control because the mind is very fickle and it will never rest in any particular given point. Hence, the habit of the yogi, the student of yoga, should be to bring the mind back to the point of concentration by intense exercise of will and reason, allowing it to rest in itself for some time. And if the mind goes in another direction, we should gradually bring it from there also, until it is habituated to being controlled and it knows that it will be pulled back from wherever it goes. Then the mind settles, one day or the other. *Yato yato niścarati manaś cañcalam asthiram, tatas tato niyamyaitad ātmanyeva vaśam nayet*: From whichever direction the mind goes, bring it back to the Self. We should be steadied in our nature.

Praśāntamanasaṁ hyenaṁ yoginaṁ sukham uttamam, upaiti śāntarajasam brahmabhūtam akalmaṣam (6.27): Such a person who has restrained his mind, and who is established in the Self, has made the mind subdued and calm. *Praśāntamanasaṁ*: A great bliss manifests itself from within. *Śāntarajasam*: One becomes free from all *rajas*, free from the

distractions of the senses and the mind. *Akalmaṣam*: The mind becomes spotless and pure. *Brahmabhūtam*: One veritably expands one's dimension to the state of the Absolute. When we sink below a particular wave in the ocean, we enter into the very ocean itself. Though it may be only one wave among the many waves into which we have sunk, sinking into the root of the wave takes us to the very foundation of all waves. That is to say, sinking into our own Self is like sinking into a wave in the sea of consciousness so that, in that sinking in an individual fashion, so-called, we enter into the Self of all beings. We become *sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā* (5.6), the veritable Self of all beings.

Yuñjann evaṁ sadātmānaṁ yogī vigatakalmaṣaḥ (6.28): The yogi, one who is an ardent student of yoga, daily practising this meditation continuously and without remission, gets freed from all the dirt and evil of *rajas* and *tamas*. *Sukhena brahmasaṁsparśam atyantam sukham aśnute*: Easily he contacts Brahman because he has contacted the Atman. The contact of the Self in us is the same as the contact of the Brahman in the cosmos. The illustration to make it clear is that sinking into the root of the wave is equivalent to sinking into the ocean of all waves.

The four verses that follow may be recited like a mantra. The Lord places a great dictum before us in these four verses. These verses give the quintessence of divine mercy and divine involvement in human life. A kind of quintessential divine blessing is put into a little capsule, as it were, in these four verses; and we may recite these verses every day as a mantra to purify the mind and to enable us to concentrate on God.

*sarvabhūtastham ātmānaṁ sarvabhūtāni cātmani
īkṣate yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ* (6.29)
*yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati
tasyāhaṁ na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati* (6.30)

*sarvabhūtasthitaṁ yo mām bhajatyekatvam āsthitaḥ
sarvathā vartamānopi sa yogī mayi vartate* (6.31)

*ātmaupamyena sarvatra samaṁ paśyati yo'rjuna
sukhaṁ vā yadi vā duḥkhaṁ sa yogī paramo mataḥ* (6.32)

Sarvabhūtastham ātmānaṁ means one who recognises the presence of the universal Self in all beings. *Sarvabhūtāni cātmani* means one who recognises the presence of all beings in the universal Self. Firstly we behold the universal Self in all beings, and conversely, we behold all beings in the universal Self. *Īkṣate yogayuktātmā*: One who is united in yoga beholds the realities of things in this manner, as the location of all beings in God and the location of God in all beings. *Sarvatra samadarśanaḥ*: Equanimously he sees the same substance in the variety that is this world.

Everything in the world is made up of five constituents: *asti*, *bhati*, *priya*, *nama*, *rupa*. *Asti* means existence; *bhati* means consciousness; *priya* means bliss, joy; *nama* means name; *rupa* means form. Every object in this world has a name and a form. It exists, it has a self-consciousness, and it enjoys itself. The *nama* and the *rupa*, or the name and form complex of a particular object, is a characteristic of its location in space and time. If the object is relieved of its involvement in the space-time complex, it will not appear as something having a name or a form. But *nama-rupa prapancha*, or the world of names and forms, is supposed to be relative and not absolute. Therefore, *nama* and *rupa*—name and form—cannot be attributed to God, because God is absolute. Name and form are relative to the circumstance of objects in the world in terms of space and time. But *asti-bhati-priya*—Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, known also as *sat-chit-ananda*—are the essences which constitute the basis of all things, and are permanent.

An eternity and a temporality characterise all things in the world. The eternity in things is in the form of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, *sat-chit-ananda*. The temporality or perishability of objects is in their name and form. Name and form are rejected by the yogi, and he sees the essence. As I mentioned previously, he sees the gold in all ornaments. Whatever be the shape of the ornament, he sees one substance there, which is the shining gold.

Sarvabhūtastham ātmānaṁ sarvabhūtāni cātmani, ikṣate yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ. Prior to this, the Lord had said *yo mām paśyati sarvatra*: “He who beholds Me everywhere”; *sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati*: “and beholds all things in Myself.” Therefore, “He who beholds Me in all things sees My presence in everything, and also sees all things located in Me.” To repeat, *yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati* and then *tasyāhaṁ na praṇaśyāmi*: “I shall not lose him, and he shall not lose Me.” God will not desert us. We will never be disconnected from God. He shall be at our beck and call. He shall be our servant, as it were. All things shall be provided to us by this Great Being, provided that we are able to convince ourselves in the heart of our hearts that all things are located in the Absolute and the Absolute is located in all things. *Yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati, tasyāhaṁ na praṇaśyāmi*: We are dear to God and God is dear to us in such an intensive manner that we are perpetually inseparable. That state of life is the attainment of great godliness where *yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati, tasyāhaṁ na praṇaśyāmi*.

Sarvabhūtasthitam yo mām bhajatyekatvam āsthitaḥ: “One who adores Me as residing in all things, as the Atman, or the Self, or the essence of all things; one who worships Me in this way—locating Me everywhere, worshipping Me in all things, beholding Me in every little form and name—whoever does

this is able to achieve this great unity with Me.” *Ekatvam āsthitaḥ* means he who has attained to a unity of perception in the midst of the diversity of things. Whatever be the mode of that person’s life, that person is one with God. God has been very kind in giving a blank cheque to us: “Behave in any way you like, but be rooted in Me.” These days people sometimes say, “Love, and then do what you like.” In a similar way, God says, “Love Me, and then do what you like.” Whatever be the mode of one’s living, whether one is poor or rich, tall or short, whatever be the circumstance of one’s life and the occupation that one is practising, it matters not. *Sarvathā vartamānopi sa yogī mayi vartate*: Such a person, irrespective of his occupations, location and circumstances, is rooted in God because of the great concentration that he has practised on the deepest Self in him as the Self of all beings.

Ātmaupamyena sarvatra samam paśyati yo’rjuna, sukham vā yadi vā duḥkham sa yogī paramo mataḥ: “Hey Arjuna! He who beholds all things as he beholds himself...” This is a very difficult thing, to look at all things as we look at ourselves. Things outside look ugly, but we do not look ugly to ourselves. We have a contour of pleasantness and beauty, and other things may look otherwise in comparison to us. The difficulty in practising this doctrine of seeing everything as one would look upon oneself arises on account of the egoism of the individual.

If we are hungry, others are also hungry. If we feel fear, others also feel fear. If we are deprived of our possessions, others can also be deprived of their possessions. We have desires, and others also have desires. We have problems, and others also have problems. Therefore, we must be in a position to sympathise with the circumstances of all people and things. Even an ant would not like to die. Even an insect would not like to be trampled on by an elephant. An insect loves itself

as much as an elephant loves itself. It crawls, wriggles, runs or flies if somebody tries to catch it and kill it. Every living being has a love for itself, and the largeness or the smallness of the body is immaterial here. Though the body of an elephant is larger than the body of an ant, the selfhood of the ant is not in any way smaller than the selfhood of the elephant. The ant feels hunger as intensely as the elephant feels hunger. The physical dimension of the body is not in any way a deterrent to feeling pain and pleasure, whatever be the circumstance and the species into which one is born.

Ātmaupamyena sarvatra samam paśyati: We love all things as we love ourselves. Even the trees and the stones will respond to our call. There are no non-living or dead elements in this world. The various levels of creation such as matter, vegetable, plant, animal, human, etc., are only various stages of the expression of consciousness, but no level is totally without consciousness. It is present even in a stone. If that were not the case, there would be no possibility of evolution. Inasmuch as we are able to locate our Self as the deepest reality of all things, we will be able to locate the same reality even in a stone. Everything in the world will shine like the light of the sun, and sparks of flame, as it were, will be seen jetting forth from every atom in the cosmos. If we see solar light emerging from every atom and every electron, only then does it become possible for us to consider outside things as beloved, as valuable as our own self.

Ātmaupamyena sarvatra samam paśyati yo'rjuna, sukham vā yadi vā duḥkham sa yogī paramo mataḥ: "Whether he is in a happy state or in an unhappy state, that great yogi is lodged in Me." This is a great promise, a kind of manifesto, as it were, that the Lord has bequeathed to us in these four verses which tell us how great God is, how compassionate God can be, how near God is to us, and how easy it is to contact Him. All these

aspects of our relationship with God are brought out in these four verses, which we should recite. They can be recited in any language.

A doubt arises in the mind. "Well, all this is very well. I practice yoga, and I am struggling to achieve perfection in this life itself. But suppose, in spite of my ardent struggle and striving, I do not attain the goal before the discarding of this body. Suppose death overtakes me before the attainment of the goal of yoga, notwithstanding the fact that I have been practising yoga. What will happen to me? Is it going to be a waste of effort? Is it true that when death takes place, everything is destroyed? Then all the effort in the direction of God-realisation by way of yoga will also be destroyed. Years of practice will become futile. Is this going to be my fate or anybody's fate if, per chance, one dies in the middle of the practice of yoga? Will not the soul perish into shreds of unfulfilled aims like a cloud rent apart? What good is there in practising yoga when death is at the elbow and it can kill me at any moment?"

To this, a great consoling reply comes from the great Lord. There is no perishing of effort. The body may be discarded, but the force that is generated by our concentration, by our practice of yoga, will come with us because in death the body perishes but the mind does not perish. What takes rebirth is the mind. The desire-filled mind discards this body because it cannot have any more experience through this body. As we discard an old shirt because it is worn out, and put on a new shirt, the mind that is to fulfil further desires in some form or the other discards the old shirt of this body and puts on a new shirt in the form of a new body. Therefore, the mind does not die in death. It is only the body that goes. Hence, because all effort in yoga is a mental effort, a conscious operation, our yoga practice will not be futile or a waste because the mind will take with it all its assets in the form of the great

work that it has done in meditation. The power of meditation which is impregnated into the very structure of the mind will be carried with it even if we take another birth. So, we should not be afraid that if we die in the midst of the practice of yoga there will be a loss of effort. No such thing will take place.

Because of the power of our practice, we may be born in a highly conducive atmosphere in which there is no kind of disturbance to us. Now we have a lot of disturbances—political disturbance, social disturbance, personal disturbance, communal disturbance, and all kinds of things. Due to difficulties of this kind, we cannot easily practice yoga in this world. No such difficulty will be there afterwards. All factors will be conducive to our practice. We will be born into such a noble family, into a royal family, as it were, due to the great practice that we have carried on in this present life. Or we may even become the son or daughter of a great yogi such as Vasishta or Vyasa. Then what else would we require? Such blessedness is difficult to attain, but it is possible to attain it. Thus, there should not be any fear in the practice of yoga. Even if we die having practised only a little, the whole effort will be carried forward as assets are carried forward in a balance sheet.

Discourse 18

A SUMMARY OF THE FIRST SIX CHAPTERS

We may cast a retrospective glance over the studies that we have made up to this time, which comprise the first six chapters of the Bhagavadgita. These first six chapters form an independent book by themselves. The eighteen chapters of the Gita have been classified into three books: the first six, the next six, and the last six. The first six chapters, as we might have noticed, lay emphasis particularly on the individual's discipline by rightly directed activity. We have been told several things in all these six chapters: how an individual should behave, how an individual should conduct himself, and how yogic discipline has to be the central motif of every spiritual seeker.

In the First Chapter we are introduced to the scenery of the actual workaday world of what we may call mutual conflict, and an inner instinct for waging war even with one's own neighbour, kith and kin, and family members. This was the predicament in which Arjuna found himself; and man is symbolised by Arjuna. We have the representative of man in Arjuna. We can find the weaknesses and the strengths of human individuality in Arjuna's personality. Whatever we feel, he too felt. Whatever is our forte and foible, that was also his forte and foible. Actually, every day we do the same things that he was doing, but in a different magnitude. We may not actually find ourselves on a large field of battle with elephants, chariots, horses and drawn swords; but in a miniature, more modified form, we are on a battlefield every day, each one of

us, if we consider the fact that there is some conflict that we have to face from morning to evening. This conflict is partly in our own selves because it has not always been easy for us to reconcile our judicial and rational understandings with our instinctive feelings, biological calls, and the like. We also feel some difficulty in adjusting ourselves with people outside. Great effort is necessary to see that we do not come in conflict with other people. Though a person may be very near us, maybe living next door, we have to adjust ourselves with him, notwithstanding his nearness. We experience a strain owing to the necessity that we feel to adjust ourselves from moment to moment in the atmosphere that we are placed; and we know that we are always placed in some atmosphere every day socially, geographically, naturally.

Now there is a big storm, which we never expected; yesterday it was so hot, and tomorrow it may be something else. This is a geographical and natural phenomenon with which we have to adjust ourselves so that we may not fall ill. And, of course, there are various ways in which people think. Not everyone thinks in the same manner every day. As evolution advances, the pattern of thinking in individuals also goes on changing. We cannot take any person in this world for granted, because every individual undergoes even psychological modifications on account of the *gunas* of *prakriti*—*sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*—modifications in the onward march through the process of evolution.

A peculiar difficulty has been briefly picturised before us in the First Chapter of the Bhagavadgita—a chaos of mental activity, and a peculiar difficulty whose causes are not easily detectable. Fortunately for Arjuna, Sri Krishna was his guide and, therefore, he was in a better position than many of us here who do not have guides of that kind. Sri Krishna immediately placed Arjuna in the proper context of his activity, saying that

all the social and psychological difficulties he felt, which he expressed in the First Chapter, were due to a lack of knowledge.

Here, by 'knowledge' Sri Krishna meant the structure of the universe in the light of the components of *prakriti* as detailed for us in the Sankhya philosophy. Everything in the world—outside as well as inside, individually as well as cosmically—is supposedly constituted of twenty-four principles; and the relationship of oneself with this world is not actually a sentimental one. Our relationship to people outside and to the world is not sensory, not sentimental, not emotional; it is a different thing altogether. That our relationship with the outside world is altogether different from what we assume it to be was not known to Arjuna. And many of us are in the same condition; we do not know the world properly. Therefore, every day there is a peculiar anxiety in our minds, either in a submerged form or in an expressed, patent form.

Sankhya knowledge was lacking in Arjuna. Apart from that, even supposing he had been initiated into the doctrine of Sankhya, which is the pattern of the working of the cosmos, he could not implement it in daily life, especially in the conflict-ridden field where he was stationed. So he was lacking knowledge of both Sankhya and yoga.

The Second Chapter briefly lays the foundation for all the teachings in the Gita that follow. The various verses of the Second Chapter sow the seeds for more detailed enumeration of the very same theme that will come in the later chapters.

In the Third Chapter we saw in larger detail how one has to conduct oneself in this *prakriti*-ridden world—the world constituted of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—by applying the knowledge of Sankhya in our day-to-day activity. We should not be under the impression that we are the agents of action or the doers of anything whatsoever, as independent individuality is not permitted in the cosmic setup of the three *gunas*,

which constitute the outside world as well as our own selves. *Guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta iti matvā na sajjate* (3.28), says the Third Chapter. Knowing that the three *gunas* in the form of the components that make up the individual collide with the very same *gunas* in the form of objects of sense—knowing this truth of *prakṛiti* itself working individually on the one side and cosmically on the other side—one does not get attached to any particular individual, event or activity.

We are born with a determination, a will and necessity to perform sacrifice. *Sahayajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā purovāca prajāpatiḥ, anena prasaviṣyadhvam eṣa vo'stviṣṭakāmadhuk* (3.10): By mutual cooperation and mutual sacrifice, we will be able to live here comfortably in this world. If we are friendly with other people, those other people will also be friendly with us. A little sacrifice that we do will evoke the very same spirit of sacrifice from other people. Total independence of an individual is not possible in this world where individuality is weak in many ways and cooperation from other people is necessary. Hence, we have to show respect, and a sacrificial spirit should be our attitude towards other people because we expect the same sacrifice from others. It is a kind of mutual give-and-take policy of harmonised behaviour among individuals in society.

After hearing all this, the student may be perturbed: “This teaching is too high for me; it goes over my head. I seem to understand what You are saying, Lord Krishna, and the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. My body is trembling, my mind is running here and there with its distractive activities, and my soul is not able to reconcile itself with the demands of the sense organs, the physical body, and the fickle mind. How am I to actually utilise this knowledge that You have imparted to me in my daily work? I have got weaknesses of a hundred varieties.”

The Fourth Chapter tries to give a solacing reply to this doubt. Whenever we have such difficulty and we find ourselves in an impasse which we cannot easily cross, God Himself will descend in the form of an incarnation in order to help us. A descent of divine light will suddenly illumine the dark corners of our daily work. *Yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata, abhyutthānam adharmasya tadātmānam sṛjāmy aham; paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām, dharma-saṁsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge* (4.7-8). We noticed that God's incarnating is a perpetual activity. It is not something that took place centuries back and may take place again after several centuries. It is the direct action that God takes at every crucial moment whenever there is an impossible situation, as it were, which we cannot handle even with the guidance of our associates.

A great problem is before us. We do not know whether to live or to die. Sometimes such situations arise, and it is then that we have to invoke a higher power. We had such difficulties in the ashram during Gurudev Swami Sivananadaji's time—to be or not to be, to do or not to do. "Swamiji Maharaj, tomorrow there is a very difficult situation for us. We have no food to eat." Or—"That person is giving this trouble. This person is a problem. What is to be done? Gurudev, these kind of problems are there." His answer was, "Don't bother. It will be all right"; and it became all right.

Now this sentence, "It will be all right," is a kind of incarnation of God. It is a blessing that comes from a source that is not of this world, and we could not have handled it individually. In the same manner, Bhagavan Sri Krishna gives us a solacing message that we need not feel perturbed that it may be difficult for us to practise yoga. We should not think it is difficult, beyond us totally, physically as well as mentally. No! When we feel difficulty of this kind, when it is impossible for

us to take even one step, if our hearts are pure and our feelings are sincere, we will see a light like a candle flame in front of us. Some good Samaritan will suddenly come to our help. Miracles take place every day, and they can be known to us if we have eyes to see and ears to hear. Therefore, no problems will be there.

Different kinds of spiritual practice are further described in the Fourth Chapter—the kinds of *yajna*, or sacrifice, in the form of worship, etc., that we have to perform. We went through this in detail towards the end of the Fourth Chapter.

The same subject was taken up in more detail in the Fifth Chapter, especially touching upon the qualities of a great *siddha purusha*: how he behaves, how he conducts himself in this world, how undetectable is his behaviour. Knowing everything, he behaves as if he knows nothing; and knowing that people are ignorant, he does not find fault with them. Like a good psychologist or a good teacher, he educates people at the level that they are in, whatever be the level. Whether it is the kindergarten level or the first standard or whatever it is, from that level the teacher who is a *siddha purusha*, who knows all the secrets of the cosmos, educates people. He does not criticise anybody, and he never says they are on the wrong path. He says they are on the right path, but it is an initial step that they have taken and, therefore, it is not adequate. We cannot say that the blundering difficulties that a child in the first standard is facing in school are to be condemned. It is a phase that everyone has to pass through, and it has to be a base for us to construct the subsequent structure of the mind. This is how the great sages behave in this world. Friendly, loving, compassionate, and very, very attractive—these are the qualities of a great saint. When we see him, we are attracted as if we are seeing the full moon, and we feel a solace, a kind of comfort even if he does not speak a word. That is the power

his personality emanates in the form of an aura around him; and sometimes he teaches even without uttering a word. His very presence is an ashram, and his very presence is a solution to all our difficulties. Such things were described in the Fifth Chapter, towards the end of which three seed-like verses were mentioned as a preparation for what we have to study in the Sixth Chapter: *sparśān kṛtvā bahir bāhyānś cakṣuś caivāntare bhruvoḥ, prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā nāsābhyantaracāriṇau; yatendriyamanobuddhir munir mokṣaparāyaṇaḥ, vigatecchābhayakrodho yaḥ sadā mukta eva saḥ; bhoktāraṃ yajñatapasāṃ sarvalokamaheśvaram, suhṛdaṃ sarvabhūtānāṃ jñātvā mām śāntim ṛcchati* (5.27-29).

By restraining the sense organs and settling the energy of the senses in the mind, settling the mind in the intellect, and settling the intellect in the *buddhi*, or the self inside, one restrains the total personality of oneself and attains the goal of self-discipline. And the greatest solace for us is not merely the confidence that we have attained some perfection in the process of self-discipline, but that God is our friend: *suhṛdaṃ sarvabhūtānāṃ jñātvā mām śāntim ṛcchati*. Our heart will well up with joy in one second if we know that God is our best friend. He is at our beck and call, and He is just now ready to come to us. If we are sure that this is a fact, our disciplines are surpassed by this great joy that arises in our hearts that God is with us, in us, and is ready to come to us just at this moment.

In the Sixth Chapter, we were introduced to the necessity for self-control by way of the subjugation of the lower self by the higher Self, whereby the higher Self becomes a friend of the lower self. But if the lower self insists or persists in its own egoistic behaviour in terms of objects of sense, etc., the higher Self will act as an enemy, the world will look like an enemy, and God Himself might look like an enemy; and He will not help us if we are disobedient to the laws of nature and the

requirements of God's ordinance.

The practical instructions went on as follows: We have to be seated in a particular place, on a seat that is comfortable, in a posture that is helpful, concentrating the mind on our *ishta devata*—the god whom we have chosen as the object of our concentration. I mentioned that the god, or the *ishta devata*, is not necessarily an object outside us; it is a transcendent principle that envelops us and is above us. Even in the initial stage of the concept of the *ishta devata*, the power that is God is a transcendent element that includes us, and is not just some image that is outside us. God is not outside even in the lowest of His manifestations. He is above us always.

Whether it is a Guru or a god, we must not consider a Guru or a god as some outside person. The Guru is above us, and not outside us, in the same way as the teacher is above the student, though he looks as if he is sitting outside on a chair. The outsideness of the teacher does not make him an external object to the student. He transcends the student in his comprehension of the teaching capacity and his knowledge. We have to be able to understand what transcendence means. The teacher's knowledge includes whatever the student has and, therefore, he is above the student, even though he looks like an outside object sitting in front of the student. This also applies to the Guru. The Guru is not an object whom we can photograph and keep a picture of. The Guru is a force; and in that sense, we may say the Guru never dies. As God cannot die, the Guru also cannot die. It is a generated power which includes us, is above us and, therefore, it is not a physical individual. The Guru is a force.

We know that the physical body of the Guru will perish one day, since it is as much a component of physiology and anatomy as anybody else's and, therefore, there is nothing especially valuable or divine in the physical body of the Guru.

The divinity that is the Guru is in the essence that is inside, which is emanating a graceful energy around us as an aura; and that does not die. The Guru that we worship, in spite of our imagining that it is a physical body in front of us, is actually a force.

We hang a photo of our father on the wall, even though our father is dead. We have been worshipping our father even though he has gone. *Who* has gone? We cannot actually know who our father is. Our father is there in the form of a dead body, and we say that our father is still there. The father whom we were worshipping and photographing and considering as our superior in our daily life is still there in the form of the dead body, and we are actually hanging the photograph of only the body. But we say that our father has gone. *What* has gone? Our father is actually not the body that we are worshipping, and it is also not the photograph that is hanging on the wall. It is a force which we could not detect with our physical eyes, but which evoked a respect from us. So is the case with a Guru, and with God Himself.

Neither our father, nor our Guru, nor God Himself can be considered to be external objects. They are transcendent principles. This is an insight that we have to draw from the teachings of the Bhagavadgita, where Sri Krishna stood as the paramount Guru, or teacher, to Arjuna. Meditating on the *ishta devata* can mean meditating on any concept of God that we have in our minds. Some people ask to be initiated into meditation or to be given a mantra for *japa*. Generally, we ask them what concept they have of God. Some people say they worship Jesus. Some say they are devotees of Lord Krishna or Devi or Durga, etc. Some say they meditate on light as an all-pervading illumination. Some meditate on the *bhrumadhya*, which is the point between the eyebrows, or the heart, etc. These are indications of the way in which the mind

of the student works, and the student has to be taken from that level and initiated into a mantra or a method of meditation.

In the beginning, meditation is externally construed because the mind is not capable of universally perceiving all things at the same time. Even when we think of God, notwithstanding the fact that we feel that He is everywhere, we picture Him as an external something which we can behold. Even when we are told that Arjuna saw the Visvarupa, we feel that the Visvarupa was spreading itself everywhere and Arjuna was standing somewhere outside and looking at it, as one would look at a movie on a cinema screen. Our involvement in space and time and objects creates such a peculiar defect in our minds that, somehow or the other, even a universal principle gets externalised.

The mind can think only in four ways: in terms of quantity, in terms of quality, in terms of relation, and in terms of a condition or mode. Quantity, quality, relation and modality—these are the four types of crucibles into which our mind is cast, and no one can think of anything except in terms of quantity, quality, relation and mode. Because of this helplessness that the mind feels on account of being cast into this crucible, it cannot conceive universality. The Universal is not a quantity, it is not a quality, it is not a relation, and it is not a condition, so how can we think of God as Universal Being? Hence, the Guru initiates us into a god whom we can conceive as something outside, and our dear god is standing in front of us as Lord Krishna, as Sri Rama, or Devi, or Jesus, as the case may be. Then we have to slowly educate our minds into higher concepts of this very god by feeling that the *ishta devata* that we are imagining to be present, or standing in front of us, is pervading all places. Krishna is not only in one place; Jesus is not in one place, etc. We universalise the concept of the otherwise localised *ishta devata* so that we may feel at home with

all things in the world. Whoever beholds God everywhere and sees God in all things, and also sees all things in God, is never bereaved of God's presence. These are the last instructions which are given towards the conclusion of the Sixth Chapter.

Arjuna raises a question regarding what happens to a person who dies even before he achieves perfection in yoga. It is frightening to conclude that one dies and achieves nothing in spite of all the effort in meditation. Sri Krishna's answer is that nothing dies in spiritual effort. Only the physical body dies; the spiritual practice that we did or the yoga that we practised was not conducted by the physical body. It is the mind that did the *sadhana*, and the mind does not die. The deathless individual principle in us will carry itself forward like a rocket, rising up into a new body where we will find favourable circumstances for the completion of our *sadhana* and our onward march. Because of the *sadhana* that we have performed in this life, we will be reborn into a well-to-do family that will not disturb us or place obstacles in front of us. All favourable conditions will be provided to us in the family into which we are born. Due to a premonition of the previous practice, we will suddenly take up the thread from the very point which we left in the previous life. We will be able to grasp things quickly. There are precocious people who immediately understand things, who catch things better than other students. This precocity is due to the experience, learning, practice and goodness that they had in the previous life, which carries them forward. Sri Krishna says that we may even be born as sons or daughters of great yogis, which is a still greater blessing than to be born under favourable circumstances in a well-to-do family. But this is very difficult to attain. To become the son of Vasishtha or Vyasa is not an easy thing, but it is worthwhile attempting.

Therefore, the total activity of the cosmos is an onward march, and we are included in this total activity of the cosmos

in the process of evolution. Hence, all the participation that we extend by way of our harmonious relations with the world and by the practice of yoga will carry us forward, onward, and we will be more blissful and more juxtaposed in our relationship with the Ultimate Reality.

This is a kind of summing up of the essentials that the Bhagavadgita places before us in the first six chapters. We would have noticed there is not much mention of God here. Very little or no mention at all is made. The first six chapters just tell us what we have to do, and in what manner. But the individual is not a complete reality in itself. Even a highly disciplined individual is, after all, an individual. It is a finite entity. How will the finite contact the Infinite?

From the Seventh Chapter onwards we will be brought in contact with the cosmos, in whose relation we are placed as individuals organically connected with realities that go beyond our finitude. This subject we shall take up from tomorrow onwards.

Discourse 19

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER BEGINS

TRANSCENDING THE SANKHYA

Yesterday we briefly summed up the first six chapters of the Bhagavadgita that were previously covered. We noticed that the emphasis is particularly on self-discipline—or rather, to put it in a more technical way, the emphasis is on self-integration in the different levels of the operation of the human psyche.

Now, what happens after the expected goal of self-integration is reached by way of direct restraint of the senses and the mind, and meditation as per the suggestions given in the Sixth Chapter? Meditation on what? There is not much detail on this subject in the first six chapters. There was a reference to the Atman towards the end of the Fifth Chapter, and this continues throughout the Sixth Chapter: *ātmanyeva vaśaṁ nayet* (6.26). This has been reiterated several times. The restraint of the mind and the senses is intended for the purpose of achieving Self-identity—the establishment of consciousness in the Atman. We have heard this word ‘Atman’ a number of times, but in the Sixth Chapter the Bhagavadgita does not go into detail as to what this Atman is, though it says that it is immortal and it is pervading everything.

From the Seventh Chapter onwards, we enter into a new field of observation and study—namely, the encounter of the individual with the cosmic purpose. Very little of the cosmos is mentioned in the first six chapters other than a reference to the

three *gunas* of *prakriti*, etc., in the Third Chapter. But a direct onslaught, as it were, on this great subject of the Universal Being having an organic connection with the individual, and God being the Creator of the world, did not receive adequate emphasis. “Do this.” “Do not do this.” “Restrain yourself.” We heard this many a time in the first six chapters.

From the Seventh Chapter onwards, the Supreme Lord assumes an important position. In the first six chapters, Sri Krishna speaks as an instructor, as a mentor, as a good guide—a friend, philosopher and guide, as it is said. Now he speaks in a different tone altogether, as a representative of the Almighty Himself. He is no more a teacher of the ordinary type. He is not a simple friend of Arjuna or a philosopher par excellence, but is God Himself speaking. He is the mouthpiece of the Almighty. Therefore, the ideas of “Come to Me. Resort to Me. Be intent on Me. Depend on Me. Surrender yourself to Me,” are more prominently emphasised from the Seventh Chapter onwards. God speaks as the mighty originator of the cosmos, and the be-all and the end-all of all things. Thus, we enter into the field of true religion—spirituality, we may say—from the Sixth Chapter onwards. From the beginning until the Sixth Chapter, we were in the field of psychology mostly—the constituency of the inner psyche and its *modus operandi* in relation to the *gunas* of *prakriti*, and more properly, the way of right action in human society.

Here is something which is directly religious, in the sense that we come in direct contact with God Who speaks to us face to face, as it were. *Mayyāsaktamanāḥ pārtha yogaṁ yuñjan madāśrayaḥ, asaṁśayaṁ samagraṁ mām yathā jñāsyasi tac chṛṇu* (7.1): “O Arjuna! When you are devoted to Me, intent on Me only”—*mayyāsaktamanāḥ*—“and for the purpose of uniting yourself with Me, you practise yoga, what happens to you? You attain to a total experience and you will know Me

in totality.” That is to say, God speaks to the individual represented by Arjuna as the specimen of mankind and says, “You shall know Me in totality.” *Samagram*: “You will not know Me merely as your protector and guide. You will not know Me merely as the Creator of the cosmos. You will know Me in totality, which includes whatever you can conceive in your mind.” *Samagram māṁ yathā jñāsyasi*: “How will you know Me in totality? I shall now tell you.”

Jñānam te'haṁ savijñānam idaṁ vakṣyāmyaśeṣataḥ, yaj jñātvā neha bhūyo'nyaj jñātavyam avaśiṣyate (7.2): “After having heard what I am going to tell you, there will be nothing left for you to know. *Vijnana* and *jnana*, both I shall place before you.” In commentaries of the Bhagavadgita, the interpreters vary in the meaning they give to the words ‘*vijnana*’ and ‘*jnana*’. The Amarakosha, the famous dictionary of Sanskrit, says *mokshe dhirjnanam anyatra vijnanam silpasastrayoh*: When you are endowed with the wisdom of the Ultimate Reality which is moksha, that wisdom is called *jnana*; and *vijnana* is the arts and the sciences of the world, such as architecture, sculpture, etc.—*vijnanam silpasastrayoh*. But Acharya Sankara and certain other teachers say *vijnana* is the direct experience of what one has already known through *jnana*, or what may be called lower knowledge.

Reference to two kinds of knowledge—*apara vidya* and *para vidya*—is also made in the Mundaka Upanishad. These days we consider the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, Atharvaveda, Itihasa, Purana, Siksha and other Angas, or auxiliaries of the Vedas, as the highest form of learning; but here this learning, which we adore as the highest possible reach, is considered as lower knowledge. *Atha parā yayā tad akṣaram adhigamyate* (M.U. 1.1.5): That is called *para vidya*, or Supreme Knowledge, through which we directly enter into the imperishable Reality of the cosmos. We may

become enlightened by the study of the Vedas or the Puranas or the Itihasas or other scriptures, but that knowledge is not adequate to enable us to enter the imperishable Reality. Merely knowing about it is not enough. Lord Krishna says, “I shall tell you both these things—that which is helpful to you as analytical knowledge of the structure of the cosmos, and also that which will directly take you to Me, the Supreme Being.”

Manuṣyāṇāṁ sahasreṣu kaścīd yatati siddhaye, yatatām api siddhānāṁ kaścīn mām vetti tattvataḥ (7.3). Millions of people live in this world. Do they all want God? Very few even think of God. They very rarely put forth any effort in the direction of knowing and realising God. There is a small percentage of humanity who want God, and they would very much like to practise yoga for the sake of the realisation of God; but among those who strive, even ardently, all may not reach God. *Yatatām api siddhānāṁ kaścīn mām vetti tattvataḥ*: “Even among those who devoutly seek Me—even among those—only very few really do reach Me.” How difficult it is! The difficulty in contacting God is stated here briefly: *manuṣyāṇāṁ sahasreṣu kaścīd yatati siddhaye, yatatām api siddhānāṁ kaścīn mām vetti tattvataḥ*.

The cosmological principles which God created, as it were, at the time of His willing this cosmos are now mentioned briefly along the lines of the Sankhya, and also the Vedanta. We heard something about the Sankhya when we studied the Second and Third Chapters. The Sankhya enumerates the categories of the constituents of *prakṛiti*, and says that there is a *puruṣa* that superintends over all the activities of *prakṛiti* as an immutable universal consciousness. Somehow or the other, Sankhya falls into the chasm of the duality of *puruṣa* and *prakṛiti*. It is not possible for Sankhya to bring about a unity between consciousness and matter.

Even today we cannot easily say what the relationship between consciousness and matter is; and psychologists are in the dark as to the relationship between mind and body. Does the body determine the mind, or does the mind determine the body? When we have a mental shock, the body is affected. Or if we swallow poison, the mind is affected. So interiorly they seem to be interconnected. But what is the meaning of 'interconnection'? Who causes this connection between mind and body? This question is still being raised in psychological circles. The principles of Sankhya, which enumerate the constituents of *prakṛiti*, are very highly informative knowledge indeed, but we are still left in the dark as to what connection *puruṣa* has with *prakṛiti*. What happens to us when we attain Self-realisation? Where does the *prakṛiti* stand at that time? *Prakṛiti* is supposed to be there permanently—eternal, never dying. Is *prakṛiti* still eternally there even after Self-realisation? If that is the case, will the Self-realised entity be conscious of *prakṛiti*?

These are the difficulties that Sankhya poses before us. When we realise the Universal *puruṣa*—'Universal' is to be underlined, which means to say all-pervading and existing everywhere—and we are established in that Universal Consciousness which is supposed to be liberation even according to the Sankhya, where is the stance of *prakṛiti*? If the *puruṣa* knows *prakṛiti*, then it is in contact with *prakṛiti*, and that is bondage. The whole point is that consciousness should not be in contact with *prakṛiti*. The moment it comes in contact with *prakṛiti*, it enters into the state of bondage; but if we say that *puruṣa* is not conscious of *prakṛiti*, it is not omniscient. So here is a snag in the Sankhya philosophy, which the Bhagavadgita gradually gets over as it proceeds.

Bhūmir āpo'nalo vāyuh khaṁ mano buddhir eva ca, ahaṁkāra itīyaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā (7.4): "My

prakṛiti, the material out of which I have created this cosmos, can be classified under eight principles.” Earth, water, fire, air, and ether are five well-known physical elements; they are known as *bhūmir āpo’nalo vāyuh khaṁ*. These are the gross manifestations of the subtle substances behind them, which are known as *tanmatras*: *sabda, sparsa, rupa, rasa* and *gandha*. These five elements are the principal building bricks of the cosmos. Then there is the mind, which is the subtle, rarefied matter which reflects consciousness through it as a mirror reflects one’s face. Then there is *buddhi* which understands, decides, and logically concludes, and *ahamkara* which is self-conscious. So earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intellect and egoism are the eight categories out of which the whole cosmos has been manufactured, as it were, by God.

Apareyam itas tvanyām prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām, jīva-bhūtām mahābāho yayedam dhāryate jagat (7.5): “What I have mentioned to you up to this time as the eightfold constituents of the cosmos are lower categories; but there is something which is higher—through which, by which, I sustain the cosmos.” It is not enough if we have only these categories, just as building material does not make the building. It has to be synthesised, organised, given a living touch by a mason or an architect; only then the building material becomes a house to live in. So, all these that have been mentioned as the eight constituents are the building bricks of the cosmos. They are the material. But who will build the house? “I myself build it by entering into it as the mason, as it were, and giving life to it.” Unless there is a cohesive force, there cannot be the coming together of the discrete items which are *prakṛiti*’s constituents.

As cement is necessary to bring together all the bricks into a coherent structure, something is necessary to bring all these eight things into a state of harmony and unity of purpose, as they themselves cannot achieve it. Here there is earth,

here there is water, here there is fire, but it does not make a cosmos—just as here we have bone, here we have flesh, here we have blood, but it does not make a human being. There is something else in man, other than his anatomy or physiology, which makes him a man, a human being. Man is not anatomy and physiology. There is something else in him, and it is called humanity. That is the life principle which gives value to the physical structure of the body. In the same way as cement holds the bricks together and the building does not crumble, there is something which gives value to the elements of the cosmos. *Jīvabhūtām mahābāho yayedam dhāryate jagat:* “I become the cosmic *jiva*. I, as the *jiva tattva* of the cosmos, the vitality of the cosmos, keep all these elements in unison so that you see a universe rather than chaos.” We do not see building material spread out everywhere; we see a structure beautifully placed before us as this wondrous creation—grand, very systematic, working as methodically and precisely as mathematics.

Science is able to predict certain consequences of present contingencies in nature on account of there being a mathematical precision and positivity in the working of nature. “If we do this now, tomorrow this will happen to us”—and this also applies morally, ethically, socially and medically because there is a connection between the present condition and the future condition of the body and the mind. As there cannot be a connection unless there is a vital principle, Lord Krishna says, “I myself act as the cosmic vitality.” Here *jīvabhūta* does not mean the ordinary, individual *jiva*; it means the cosmic *jiva*. This cosmic *jiva tattva* has been given various names in the different schools of thought. Vedānta generally calls these stages of the entry of God into the materials of creation as Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha and Virat. God enters through these gradations. The Atman enters this body and gives it life through the *karana sarira*, *sukshma sarira*, etc. In the same

way, the cosmos becomes a living organic entity, beautiful to look at and meaningful in every way, when the Universal Consciousness enters into it. Hence, that higher principle is a greater *prakṛiti* than the eight lower ones mentioned earlier.

Etadyonīni bhūtāni sarvāṇītyupadhāraya, ahaṁ kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayas tathā (7.6). “You may consider all these things to be instrumental in the production of the cosmos. They are everything. Whatever you touch, whatever you feel, whatever you see in this universe is just these eight principles operating with My help, as I invisibly animate the whole cosmos. But, finally, I shall tell you I am everything. I can dismantle this universe if I wish, and if I withdraw Myself from the universal structure, it will crumble and fall like an old house whose cement has deteriorated. But I am very active and do not allow the universe to disintegrate into bits of matter. I shall tell you the truth.” *Ahaṁ kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayas tathā*: “I am the origin and the sustenance of the whole universe. I not only created this and brought it into being, but I also maintain it. I created the universe with My will, and I sustain it as My own Soul.”

This body is sustained by the entry of the soul into the mind, intellect, etc. We are physically alive because of the Atman inside. That Atman does not directly interfere with the bodily structure. It works incidentally, successively through its permeation in the three *koshas*—the mind, intellect, and *prana*—in the same way as the cosmic structure is also maintained through certain gradations and subtleties of the descent of the one God.

In the Panchadasi and other Vedantic scriptures, much is told to us about the way in which Brahman becomes Ishvara, Ishvara becomes Hiranyagarbha, Hiranyagarbha becomes Virat. The illustration given in the Sixth Chapter of the Panchadasi is that Brahman is like a clean cloth. Ishvara is like

the very same cloth stiffened with starch. The painter cannot paint directly on the cloth. The cloth must first be stiffened. Starch is applied to the cloth—that is, the cloth assumes a concretised form, as it were. It is not the pure cloth that it was, but the cloth is still there as the base. Without the cloth, there cannot be the starchiness; but without the starch, the cloth cannot be a good background for any painting. Similarly, there cannot be a movie in a cinema without the screen. Though we are not going to the cinema to see the screen, we know very well how important the screen is. The painting on the canvas is very attractive indeed and we go on looking at it, but we never think of the background on which the painting has been made. We never recognise its existence, just as we do not think of the building's foundation when we look at it.

This foundation is the cloth, and it gradually stiffens itself into a will to create, just as the cloth is stiffened by the application of starch. That stiffened form, which is the will of Brahman, as they call it, is Ishvara-tattva. Then what does the painter do? After the cloth is stiffened with starch, he draws an outline of the picture that he will paint; with a pencil or a slight touch of ink, he draws an outline. This outline of the universe which is not yet fully manifest is Hiranyagarbha. We have a faint idea as to what will be the character of the universe that is going to be created, even as by seeing the pencil drawing, we can know what the painter is actually going to paint. The full painting is the Virat. The drawing on the canvas is filled with ink of various colours, and then we have the beautiful picture of the painting. This is the Virat—the whole cosmos looking so beautiful, the finest and the most complete manifestation of that which was only an outline in Hiranyagarbha, and which was only the will to create in Ishvara, with Brahman as the background. *Ahaṁ kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayas tathā.*

The cloth can say that it is the entire painting because without it there would be no painting at all. Though we see only the painting and do not appreciate or even think of the cloth on which it is made, where would the painting be without the cloth? In the same way, Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha and Virat—this beautiful creation that we see—cannot exist if there is no universal background, which is Brahman. Brahman is totally invisible as is the cloth behind the painting, but it is very, very substantial; and without it, nothing can be. Therefore, Lord Krishna says, “I am everything. I am the origin and the sustenance of this cosmos.”

Mattaḥ parataram nānyat kiñcid asti dhanamjaya (7.7). Very emphatically the Lord says, “Nothing outside Me can exist, not even this universe.” He becomes very bold now and even transcends the universe by saying, “Even this universe that I have been describing to you cannot be there without Me; and higher than Me, nothing can be.” *Parataram* can mean ‘external to Me’ or ‘higher than Me’. “Beyond Me, there is nothing. Outside Me, there is nothing. There is nothing either as the fourteen worlds, the gods in heaven or what is called *prakriti*; nothing of that kind can be outside Me.”

Now the Sankhya has been transcended. The Purusha Supreme is speaking: “*Prakriti* cannot be outside Me.” But the Sankhya says that *prakriti* is immortal, that it is as indestructible as *purusha* itself. If that is the case, there is a predicament regarding the relationship between consciousness and matter, *purusha* and *prakriti*, which is transcended here in the Vedanta of the Bhagavadgita. “I transcend everything, even *prakriti*, and it cannot exist without Me. It cannot even be outside Me, let alone without Me.” If that is the case, if the whole cosmos is not outside God, then it is permeated by the immanence of God, and every atom in the cosmos dances with the power of the Soul which it assumes from the Almighty Himself: *mattaḥ*

parataraṁ nānyat kiñcid asti dhanamjaya.

Mayi sarvam idaṁ protaṁ sūtre maṇigaṇā iva: “As beads are strung on a thread, the whole universe is strung on Me.” The beads cannot become a garland or a *mala* unless there is a thread. “There would be no cohesion, no principle, no meaning, no future, and no sense in anything if there was no thread underneath to connect the little bits of creation. I am that thread—the Supreme Soul—and, therefore, I am everything.”

Discourse 20

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER CONTINUES

THE GLORY OF GOD AND HIS CREATION

God assumes a glorified form through the personality of the great incarnation Bhagavan Sri Krishna. “I am all. Surrender yourself to Me.” These statements are actually the statements of the Supreme, Who is revealed in the personality of Bhagavan Sri Krishna. In future, wherever the word ‘I’ is used by the great Master, we should be careful to note as to who this ‘I’ is. “Come unto Me all who are weary and heavy laden,” said Christ—‘me’ with a capital M.

Vṛṣṇīnām vāsudevosi (10.37) is told in the Tenth Chapter: “I am Vasudeva among the Vrishnis.” This statement could not have been made by Krishna himself. Somebody else was speaking. It was the personality of Nara-Narayana incarnated as Bhagavan Sri Krishna and Arjuna, the spokesmen of the Supreme Absolute. The Eternal spoke through the personality of Bhagavan Sri Krishna. It is the Supreme Brahman, the Absolute that said, “I am the all.” It was said, “Outside Me nothing can be, higher than Me nothing exists, external to Me nothing can be real.” *Mattaḥ parataram nānyat kiñcid asti dhanamjaya, mayi sarvam idam protam sūtre maṇigaṇā iva* (7.7): “As beads are strung on a thread, the whole universe is strung on Me. I remain as the connecting Soul of all particulars.”

The details of the varieties of manifestation that we shall read in the Tenth Chapter are briefly premonitioned, as it

were, in the verses that follow. We will find that the succeeding chapters are something like a commentary on the preceding one. “I am the taste in water.” Water is the embodiment, but the taste in the water is God’s presence: *raso’aham apsu kaunteya prabhāsmi śaśisūryayoḥ* (7.8). The radiance that we experience as emanating from the sun is a shadow, as it were, cast by the Supreme Absolute Sun. It is said in the Vedas, *yasya chāyā amritaṁ yasya mrityuḥ*: “Immortality is a shadow cast by the Absolute, and death is another shadow that is cast by It.” The highest conception of liberation that we may have in our minds falls short of what it really is.

It is described in the Moksha Dharma Parva of the Mahabharata that when Narada went to have *darshan* of Narayana in Vaikuntha, he saw a vast Cosmic Being who said, “You are seeing only an illusion. My reality is something else.” Even the cosmic being-ness of the Absolute is considered as peripheral to its essential nature. All light comes from It. All taste, all sensibility, all understanding, all feeling, anything that is of any worthwhile nature in the world, whatever significance we can see anywhere—any meaning whatsoever in life—is an emanation from that Supreme Being.

Raso’aham apsu kaunteya prabhāsmi śaśisūryayoḥ, praṇavaḥ sarvavedeṣu. *Pranava* is Omkara, Om. In the Manusmṛiti it is said that Brahma expanded the three letters A, U and M that constitute Omkara into the three metres of the Gayatri mantra. The three feet of the Gayatri mantra are the expanded forms of the three components of Omkara—A, U, M. The three sections of the Purusha Sukta of the Veda are further expansions of the three feet of the Gayatri mantra. The three Vedas—Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda—are further expansions of the three sections of the Purusha Sukta. If we extract the essence of the three Vedas, we will get the Purusha Sukta. If we extract the essence of the Purusha Sukta, we

will get the Gayatri mantra. If we extract the meaning of the Gayatri mantra, we will get *pranava*, which is the seed.

There was no Veda in the Krita Yuga; *pranava* was the Veda in the Krita Yuga. The Veda did not manifest itself in its present form in the Treta Yuga also, because the present form of the Vedas is nothing but the classifications made by Veda Vyasa Krishna Dvaipayana, who was a contemporary of Bhagavan Sri Krishna in the Dvapara Yuga. Perhaps in the earlier cycles of creation, the exposition of the great Truth in words or in detailed forms of expression was not felt necessary. Therefore, Sri Krishna says, “Essentially I am the Omkara—the supreme vibration which gradually became concretised into the visible universe.”

That pure vibration is the unimaginable continuum, which is originally nothing but motion and force. Even according to modern science, there is only motion and force—vibration, as it were—trying to get condensed into tangible substances finer than even atoms, which gradually descend into more grosser forms of molecules, cells, organisms, and the huge cosmos of physical elements. “The origin of all things I am, and the exposition of it is here in the form of *pranava*. The supreme vibration that caused the whole cosmos is Me; and the vibration emanated from My will, the central will of Ishvara.”

Śabdaḥ khe: The reverberation of sound that is caused by space when we make any sound anywhere is also caused by the universal existence of Ishvara in space itself. Otherwise, there would not be a reverberation of sound; it would be only inside our ears. *Pauruṣam nṛṣu*: The heroism, the strength, the virility, the energy that people feel in themselves, that also comes from God. It does not come merely from the food that we eat, because thrusting food into a corpse will not give it energy. The vitality that is necessary for the body to digest food and make it its own comes from Vaisvanara Agni, which is the

universal fire. *Pacāmyannam caturvidham* (15.14): “I digest your fourfold food working as the cosmic fire, Vaisvanara Agni, in the stomach.”

The energy content in the cosmos, the energy quantum in any person, in anything whatsoever—even the energy of the elephant or the lion—is a manifestation of that immaculate, immeasurable energy, the *shakti* of Brahman. *Puṇyo gandhaḥ pṛthivyām* (7.9): The fragrance of the flower and the beautiful scent from things in the world are components of the earth. The space principle, *akasha*, has only one quality: the production and reverberation of sound. Air has two qualities: in the form of wind it can make sound, and also it can be felt by us. Space cannot be felt. We can only see it as an expanse that is the cause and the reverberation of sound. Fire not only makes sound and we can feel it, but it also has colour, which air does not have. So as we come down, the number of qualities increases by one. Thus, there is only sound in space; there is sound and touch in air; there is sound, touch, and colour in fire; there is sound, touch, colour, and taste in water; and there is sound, touch, colour, taste and smell in earth. “The smell which is in anything that is formed of earth, even in the highest rarefied form in a flower—it is My presence in it that gives life to things in the form of the fragrance.”

Tejaś cāsmi vibhāvasau: “The brilliance of the sun is My brilliance.” The sun’s light is borrowed light. *Na tatra sūryo bhāti* (Katha 2.2.15): In that Supreme Light of lights, the sun does not shine. The sun’s light is like darkness before that Supreme Radiance. Of all the light that we can think of, we can think of only sunlight as the greatest. They say that there are stars which are bigger than the sun, more brilliant than the sun, towards which the entire galaxy is moving. All these things are unthinkable. We cannot even dream of what those stars could be in their majesty of largeness and radiance—eighty thousand

times more than the sun; and countless millions of times more brilliant is the brilliance of God. We can only speak like this, but we cannot know what it actually means. It is something beyond our conception because however much we go on glorifying the Light of lights, we still confine ourselves only to the light of the sun. The best we can do is to multiply the quantity of the sunlight in order that we may have an idea of what that great Light is. But the spiritual Light is not merely an expansion in quantum; it is also qualitatively more intense. We are not fit even to think what it is: *tejaś cāsmi vibhāvasau*.

Jīvanam sarvabhūteṣu: “The vitality, the very life-principle in all things is Myself.” *Tapas cāsmi tapasviṣu*: The energy that we produce by sense control, mental control and *tapasya* is an intensified expression of the energy of God. The more are we self-controlled, the more is the chance of the energy of God entering into us. The senses and the mind, which go in the direction of objects outside, do not permit the entry of the universal energy into our personality and, therefore, we do not feel strong. We become weak by decay and old age. The more is our capacity to withdraw the energy that gets depleted through the sense organs and the mind, the greater is the quantum of energy that is held in us. *Tapas shakti*, or the power of yoga—the energy of the sages who can bless us or curse us—is nothing but the enhanced entry of God-energy into us through *tapas*. “That energy of *tapas* is Myself,” says the Almighty.

Bījam mām sarvabhūtānām viddhi pārtha sanātanam (7.10): “I am the origin, the seed of all things. Whatever be the diversity that you see in this world—milk is different from stone, mango is different from sand, water is different from honey—whatever be the difference visible to the eyes and to your sensory experience, the seed of all these so-called diversifications is Me alone.” We are told that things differ in their

chemical composition on account of the atomic particles differing in their number and velocity. If the number and the velocity of the atoms in milk change, it can become poison; and if the number and the velocity of the atoms in poison are either increased or decreased as would be required, it can become milk. Nectar can become poison and poison can become nectar by the permutation and combination of the inner components. In science, they are called atomic particles. Whatever be the diversity that we see in this world—varieties of fruit, honey, the fragrance of beautiful things—can we imagine they all come from the sun, which is a blazing mass of atomic energy? There must be some miracle working in the blazing heat of the sun where everything must be in a potential form—else nothing could be on earth, which has come from it. So everything is there in an unimaginable form, in the seed of all things. *Bījaṁ māṁ sarvabhūtānāṁ viddhi pārtha sanātanam*: “Know Me as the eternal seed of all things, in all variety or diversity.”

Buddhir buddhimatām asmi: If we have intelligence, it is a ray of the light that is emanating from God’s brilliance. An intelligent person is more *sattvic* than an unintelligent person in the sense that the *buddhi* of the intelligent person is less dominated by *rajas* and *tamas* and, therefore, the Atman’s light can shine through in the *sattvic* intellect of an intelligent person. The intelligence quotient of a person—the IQ, as it is called these days—is dependent entirely on the extent of the Atman’s light that can be reflected through the *buddhi*. The intellect is only a vehicle, like a mirror. It itself does not think and understand, as a mirror does not shine unless there is light. The light has to come from the Atman within through the three *koshas*, but that cannot happen if *rajas* and *tamas* cloud the intellect. Thus, an intelligent person, a genius, a great scholar, a highly learned person with great insight—such

a person has the blessing of embodying in his own or her own intellect the mighty wisdom of God. *Buddhir buddhimatām asmi*: “The intelligence of the intelligent is My consciousness—the Supreme Intelligence, *jnana*, that is reflected there through the intellects of people.”

Tejas tejavinām aham: The valour of people, the zest that we feel, the enthusiasm that we have, the vigour that we manifest in our daily activity, the indomitable power that we sometimes manifest, and the indefatigability with which we manifest our capacity to work—they come from God.

Balaṁ balavatām cāhaṁ (7.11): Whoever has got tremendous strength, that strength comes from the permeation of the cosmic energy through the body by the permutation and combination of physical particles or cells of the person. The more we are free from *kama* and *raga*, the stronger will we be. The more are we infested with desire or *kama* and *raga*, attachment and desire, the weaker will we be in our memory, in our mind, in our understanding, in our intellect, and in our body. Strength, even physical strength, can be seen to be superior in its manifestation in *tapasvins* than in *bhogis*, or indulgent persons. When people indulge too much through the sense organs, the mind and the sentiments become weak. Only the self-controlled are really strong. They are indefatigable. There is a divine *shakti* operating in strong people, the strength coming from *tapas*, or the freedom that one has from *raga*, *dvesha*, *kama*, *raga*. The greater is the desire to indulge in the sense organs, in the objects of sense and in the attachment to things, the weaker we become. The less is the attachment and the desire of the senses to plunge into activity and contact things, the less is the sense activity. The greater the energy inside, the stronger we become, and we will never be tired.

Kāmarāgavivarjitam, dharmāviruddho bhūteṣu kāmo'asmi bharatarṣabha: We desire always That. There are varieties of desires within That. A desire which is not opposed to dharma is an evocation from God Himself. If God were not present in some form in our desires, we would not have even the desire to attain God. When the desire gets diversified and split into fragments, as it were, when it passes through the sense organs, it becomes contaminated by the vicious forces of centrifugality; and that becomes a binding medium for the individual manifesting such a desire in an externalised form. If the desire is integrating—if it is a desire to unselfishly serve people in the world, a desire to study the scriptures, a desire to sit alone and meditate, a desire to be alone to oneself and not be in the midst of people, a desire to unite oneself with the Cosmic Being—these also are desires, but they are in consonance with the dharma, or the unifying principle, of the cosmos. “Such desires are Myself manifesting through you.” This is not the type of desire that is mentioned in the previous line as depleting our energy and decreasing our strength. *Dharmāviruddho bhūteṣu kāmo'asmi bharatarṣabha.* Dharma, artha, kama and moksha are the four objectives of life; and when they are blended in the proper proportion, they become the energy that is necessary for us to rocket forth to the Supreme Absolute.

Ye caiva sātvikā bhāvā rājasās tāmasās ca ye, matta eveti tāt viddhi na tvahaṁ teṣu te mayi (7.12): “Even the good things and the bad things seem to be really there due to My presence in them in some positive or negative manner.” People say that the world is unreal, that it does not exist. There cannot be a consciousness of the non-existence of the world unless it exists in some form, because if the world is not there at all, there is no necessity for us to say it does not exist. We have a suspicion that it exists and, therefore, we say it does not exist. If it is really not there, why should we go on saying it does

not exist? Even appearance cannot appear to us unless there is a reality behind it, as a snake cannot appear unless there is a rope on which it appears. The world may be an appearance, but how do we know that it is an appearance unless there is a reality behind it? Appearance *per se* cannot be known at all as an appearance. The knowledge of there being such a thing as an appearance implies that the appearance contacts reality, and it shines in borrowed feathers.

The qualities of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are the activities of *prakriti*—which correspond to light or radiance, desire, and torpidity of nature—and are various degrees of the manifestation of the Supreme Absolute. For instance, the Absolute exists in stone. Stone exists. It is. This is-ness, or the existence of stone, is due to the existence of something behind it—the be-ness, as we call it. Stone exists, but it cannot think. There is no consciousness in it. It cannot even know that it exists. The existence aspect of the Absolute is manifest in inanimate things like stone. The life principle, which is vitality, is manifest in plants and trees, which breathe and feel hunger and thirst. The consciousness aspect in a translucent—not transparent—form manifests itself in animals in the form of instinct; and in a more perspicuous way, consciousness, *chit*, manifests itself in the intelligence of the human being.

Thus, in the process of evolution, existence gradually becomes consciousness. But bliss is not fully manifest in the human individual. We have existence, we have consciousness, but we are not happy people. That is because our consciousness is mixed with a little of *rajas* and *tamas*. We are over-active in an externalised sense, taking the world as a total reality that is external to us. This causes distraction of the mind and senses to such an extent that the integral bliss of the Absolute cannot manifest itself in us. Thus the human being, though called the image of God, is only an image to

some extent in the existence and the consciousness aspects. The consciousness in the human being is distracted, so full insight is not available, and the bliss is completely obliterated. The bliss aspect of the Absolute is manifest in some way in the deep sleep state, where the mind and the sense organs do not operate. How can we be so happy in the condition of deep sleep, which is uncontaminated by the powers of the senses and the mind, and where we have no food to eat, no friends to talk to, no world to think of, and nothing whatsoever? In that state we are practically annihilated, and the bliss of that self-annihilation far supersedes all the best conceivable happiness of even an emperor. All these things can be found in great detail in the Panchadasi.

Therefore, whether these manifestations are *sattvic*, *rajasic* or *tamasic*, or even the so-called evil things in the world, they can exist only if there is an existent aspect to them. Evil cannot exist unless God's existence permeates it. The distortion that is the characteristic of the outer form of it makes it evil or a sin, but it cannot be unless the be-ness of God is at the back of it. *Ye caiva sātvikā bhāvā rājasās tāmasās ca ye.*

Api ced asi pāpebhyaḥ sarvebhyaḥ pāpakṛttamaḥ (4.36): "Whatever is *sattvic*, whatever is *rajasic*, and whatever is the worst of things conceivable, it manifests from Me. I am at the back of it. I am the destructive power also."

Matta eveti tāt viddhi na tvahaṁ teṣu te mayi: "Know that everything—*sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*, and all their permutations and combinations—manifests from Me. They are in Me, but I am not in them." Existence-consciousness is present in name and form, but name and form is not in existence. The variety is in the unity, but the unity is not in the variety. The integrality is present in the diversity, but the diversity is not in the integrality. God is in all things, but things are not in God. This is a peculiarity which we have to note when God

says, “Everything is in Me, but I am not in anything.” This is because all particulars hang on the Universal. The particulars cannot exist unless the Universal is there, but the Universal can exist without the particulars. Hence, “Everything is in Me, but I am not in them”—*na tv aham teṣu te mayi*.

Tribhir guṇamayair bhāvair ebhiḥ sarvam idaṁ jagat, mohitaṁ nābhijānāti mām ebhyaḥ param avyayam (7.13): “I am above the three *gunas*. Deluded and confounded by the dominance of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, which characterise the fourteen realms of existence, the entire creation is confounded because of the preponderance of the three *gunas*; but they do not know Me, and even the gods in heaven cannot know Me.”

Devair atrāpi vicikitsitam purā, na hi suvijñeyam, aṇur eṣa dharmah (Katha 1.1.21): Yama, the great Lord, speaks to Nachiketas, “The gods in heaven cannot understand what you are expecting from me, and you want it to be given to you so easily.” *Aham ādir hi devānām* (10.2): “The gods cannot know. I am prior to even the gods. I am the origin of even the gods and, therefore, how can the gods know? How can people who came much later know Me? Because of My transcendence, the divisions of the world, which are the particulars or the individuals, cannot know Me.” That which is the transcendent cannot be known by that which is subsumed under this transcendence. The higher can know the lower, but the lower cannot know the higher. God knows all things, but things cannot know God.

Daivī hyeṣā guṇamayī mama māyā duratyayā (7.14): Divine is this power of delusion which we generally call *maya*. It is nothing but the operation of the three *gunas*. The *trigunas* are the so-called *maya*. The power of the action of the *gunas* of *prakṛiti*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—blinds our vision completely. The *gunas* blind us completely, and it is not easy for anyone to overcome them. We cannot overcome them

because our very personality is constituted of the three *gunas*. Who are we to overcome them? The body, the mind and the sense organs, which are our property and our asset and our very existence, so-called, as we are constituted of them—how can we overcome them unless there is a power that is above what we are constituted of? *Mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te*: “You cannot overcome these three *gunas* until you resort to Me.”

This point can be illustrated by the action of a fishing net. The fisherman throws the net far away from him, and fish which are far away are caught by net; but those fish near the feet of the fisherman are not caught. The nearer is the fish to the feet of the fisherman, the less is the chance of it being caught. The farther it is, the greater the chance of it being caught. So, do not go away from God. Catch hold of His feet. Once we take resort at the feet of the Almighty, *maya* vanishes like mist before the sun. But if we try to overcome these three *gunas* with our own personal effort minus the grace of the Almighty, it will not work.

In a sense, we may say there is a power that is more than what we can conceive in this world, and only that power is the final resting place for us. It is the resort of all people. We must surrender ourselves completely and abolish our egos, and not project our intellectual, physical or mental powers too much—because, after all, these powers that we manifest through our individuality are the compositions of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. We must abolish the individuality itself in our self-surrender to God. “Those who come to Me in that way transcend *maya* and the three *gunas*.” *Mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te*: Unless we resort to God’s feet, there is no way of escape from the clutches of the three *gunas*. Human effort alone is not sufficient.

Discourse 21

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER CONTINUES

THE GOSPEL OF UNIVERSAL RELIGION

The glory of God and His creation is the subject of the Seventh Chapter, as we have been noticing; and the basic principles of a universal religion are laid down in this chapter and in the Ninth Chapter particularly, which we shall read later on. It is not possible to have contact with God if one's eyes are blinded by the operation of the three *gunas* of *prakriti*, which are also known as *maya*.

Na mām duṣkṛtino mūḍhāḥ prapadyante narādhamāḥ, māyayāpahṛtajñānā āsuram bhāvam āśritāḥ (7.15): “Dominated by the *asuric prakriti* of *rajas* and *tamas*, blinded by the power of the sense organs running in the direction of objects, conscious only of the external world of matter and knowing nothing of the higher values of life, such people cannot know Me.” They cannot have an insight into the Almighty's supra-conscious existence.

The Bhagavadgita says that there are four kinds of devotees, who approach God for various purposes. *Caturvidhā bhajante mām janāḥ sukṛtino'rjuna, āрто jijñāsur arthārthī jñānī ca bharatarṣabha* (7.16): When we are in distress, when we are in a state of utter poverty, when we are in a dying condition, when we are suffering from an incurable disease, when we are harassed up to the point of death, and when there is no help coming from anywhere and sorrow is hanging on our heads like a Damocles' sword, we cry to God for help. These are

one kind of devotee: they love God and cry to God because they are in grief, and they want God to redress all the sorrows in which they are sunk. Perhaps if they were well off—very healthy, wealthy, and all was well with them in this world—the idea of resorting to God might not have arisen in their minds. Nevertheless, God is very kind, compassionate and so gracious as to accept that even these people are His devotees, though they have come to Him only for material gains in the sense that they want only redressal of sorrow, and if they are free from sorrow they shall be highly satisfied. *Artha* is a person who is in grief, in a state of distress socially, politically, physically, mentally—in whatever way. A distressed person crying for God is a kind of devotion which is specific and unique in itself.

There are other devotees who do not cry for God to remove their suffering in the world. They are the *jijnasu*—those who want wisdom of life. Learning sometimes evokes a desire to worship Saraswati and such other goddesses. Those who want power, domination and might worship Lord Siva and such other gods, and so on. Those who are *jijnasus* are lovers of knowledge—of insight into the reality of things. We may even say they are lovers of spiritual knowledge. They crave that God should bless them with this wondrous wisdom.

It is described in the *Devi Mahatmya* that there were two devotees of Devi. One was a king and the other a Vaisya, a trader. When Devi appeared before them and asked them what boon they wished for, the king said, “I want to regain my kingdom, which I have lost.” But the Vaisya said, “I want wisdom of life.” Devi blessed both of them with the purpose for which they had worshipped her. Hence, there are devotees who are *jijnasus*—who want wisdom, knowledge, acumen, intelligence, genius, and spiritual realisation, and for that purpose they worship God.

There is a third kind of devotee, designated here as *artharthi*. Commentators have interpreted this word in various ways, because *artha* means an object of material satisfaction. These devotees want material gains—wealth, prosperity in this world socially or even politically; they want to gain earthly suzerainty. Maybe they even want to become kings and emperors, presidents and so on. These people who want the highest pitch of material glory are also devotees of God.

Artha means material value. But some interpreters of the Bhagavadgita feel that here, perhaps, *artha* has some other meaning, because there appears to be a gradual ascent in the sequence of the devotional spirit that is mentioned; and as a *jnani* is supposed to be the best, he would be mentioned last. The distressed is mentioned first, and the one who seeks knowledge is supposed to be the second. Naturally, we cannot say that the seeker of knowledge is inferior to the one who asks for redressal of sorrow. So there seems to be a superiority of the grade of devotion in each succeeding stage, especially as the last one is supposed to be the best. Thus, we should infer from this sequence that the third type, which is *artharthi*, cannot be a person who seeks material gains, because that would be inferior to the previous type, who seeks knowledge. Therefore, *artharthi* has been interpreted by others as one who seeks the fulfilment of the *purusharthas* of life. The supreme aims of existence are called *purusharthas*, consisting of dharma, *artha*, *kama* and moksha. Those who have a longing to blend these supreme values of life in their practical existence for the purpose of ultimate liberation may be considered to be *artharthi*—that is, *purusha artharthi*—superior even to those who seek knowledge. But—there is a ‘but’—God considers all these devotees as dear to Him in some way because they resort to Him. Even if a child cries, it is listened to and the proper response is given.

“One in distress seeks Me. Merely because he seeks Me, I consider him as My devotee, whatever be the motive behind it. Those who are in search of knowledge also seek Me. Those who are in need of material gain, or the *purusharthas*, also want something from Me. The whole point is, these people want something from Me. The distressed ones want Me to free them from sorrow. That is, they are using Me as a kind of instrument to free them from sorrow.” Those who want knowledge also consider God as an instrument for gaining knowledge. The other type also uses God as an instrument. They do not consider God as the ultimate aim. If we want anything from God—from God, through God, utilising God for the achievement of a purpose—we certainly consider that purpose as superior to God Himself. We are using God as an instrument in the fulfilment of our desires, whatever those desires be—even the most glorious of desires, the love for wisdom. We are asking God to give us wisdom, as if God Himself is not equal to that. But the Lord says that the *jnani* is the best of the devotees because he does not want anything from God. He has ceased to have any kind of expectation from the world, and does not have any kind of ulterior motive. The devotee who wants only God, and wants nothing from God or through God, is the *jnani*. Anybody who wants something from God or through God is a lesser devotee.

Udārāḥ sarva evaite (7.18). “All are good. I am pleased with them,” says the Lord. “But I consider the *jnani* as the supreme because he does not expect anything from Me. He wants only Me.” Do we not think that the giver of boons is greater than the boons themselves? So how is it that we are so foolish as to expect boons from God, not knowing that God is greater than all the boons that He can give? Only a *jnani* knows that. “I consider the *jnani* as the best of My devotees, because he loves Me as his own self.” If I love you as my own self, that

is showing a greater affection to you than showing my affection in any other way, such as by way of material gifts, by good words, by hospitality. Nothing that I can do for you or give to you is real affection in comparison with that affection which considers my self as your self and your self as my self. The identity of souls is the highest of devotion, and is the highest that we can expect from anybody in this world. The unity of one with the other is the highest friendship. Two friends cannot be real friends unless they are merged into a single soul. If they are two souls, they are ultimately not reliable friends. They will not be friends in need, because each one has his own soul and he has not merged his soul with the other. Even if the friends appear to be inseparable, if each one has his own egoistic individuality by maintaining his own individual soul, he will not be a good friend. He will desert you one day or the other.

Paul and Peter were very great friends. They were very close. One day when they were in the forest, a bear pursued them and wanted to pounce on them. Paul climbed to the top of a tree to save himself. Peter did not know how to climb. He lay down on the ground and held his breath as if he was dead, because he heard it said that animals do not attack corpses, they attack only living beings. Even lions do not eat what they themselves have not killed. The bear came and sniffed Peter in the ear and in the nose, and concluded that he was not a living being. It went away.

When the bear left, Paul came down and humorously asked, "What was the bear whispering in your ear, my dear friend?"

Peter replied, "It whispered to me, 'A friend in need is a friend indeed.' You simply climbed the tree, leaving me alone here."

The son of a king and the son of a minister were close friends; they were inseparable. They ate together, walked together, talked together and slept together. They were always together. The public felt that their friendship was very dangerous because one day one boy would become the king and the other boy would become the minister, and their closeness would not make for a good government. There must be some difference between the minister and the king. What is the use of having a minister if he is equal to a king, and what is the use of having a king if he is equal to a minister? Everybody felt that the two boys should be separated, but could not think of how, as they were always together.

One man had a brainwave and said, "I shall separate them in a minute."

The two boys were going for a walk, hand in hand. "Gentlemen!" he said and called the minister's son, "Please, come just for a minute. There is something that I want to tell you."

When the boy came, the man whispered in his ear, "One paddy contains only one grain of rice."

"Eh!" the boy said. "This is all that you want to tell me?" And he went back.

Then the king's son asked, "What did he say?"

"Eh! Stupid! He said that one paddy contains only one grain of rice," replied the boy.

"No, it cannot be," said the king's son. "A man will not call you to secretly tell you that. You are not telling me the truth."

Immediately the two boys were separated and their friendship was ended. They would not talk to each other after that.

Here is a mystery. Anybody who expects anything from God is not as dear to God as the one who wants God only. Vidura expressed his love to Sri Krishna and forgot himself completely in total communion with the Master. In the Bible

there is the story of Mary and Martha. When Christ went to their house, Mary just sat at his feet and did not ask him what he wanted. She did not offer even water or extend any kind of expected hospitality; she just sat. Martha was very busy cooking food and whatnot. She was not conscious of the presence of Christ but was conscious of the preparations that she was making for the honoured guest, whereas Mary sat still and did not offer even a drop of water. "Martha, you are too busy with things," Christ told her. Similarly, we may be too busy with things, and that is not what God expects from us. We have to be busy only with Him, and not busy with anything other than Him.

Udārāḥ sarva evaite. God's kindness is greater than anybody else's kindness. Most merciful is God that He considers even the littlest devotion to be a very wonderful thing. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to be so kind to people. He considered even the blabbering of a child to be a great lecture and presented the child with a tin of biscuits, praising the wonderful lecture, even though the child was just babbling nonsense. If anyone danced, even with crooked movements, it was praised as a wonderful dance, and a present was given. And if anyone sang, even with a hoarse voice and without any melody, they were given a present of a tin of biscuits and fruit. That is, encouragement was given in every line which a person wanted to pursue, even in the smallest, humblest way.

Draupadi cried to God because she was in distress, and her cry was immediately responded to. She was not asking for knowledge, she was not thinking of the *purusharthas*, nor was she thinking of communion with God. She was in intense distress, unimaginable distress; and there was an immediate response. So even the lowest category of devotion calls God with equal force as do the higher types of devotion. The way of God is a very great mystery indeed. He says the *jnani* is the

best, which implies that the others are naturally the second and the third categories, but He responded immediately to the call of Draupadi. Instantaneous, timeless action was taken, even if she did not fall into our definition of a *jnani*. So God's ways, only God knows. We cannot say anything about His wonderful ways.

However, Lord Krishna says *teṣāṁ jñānī nityayukta ekabhaktir viśiṣyate*: "Because of his unstinted, concentrated, whole-souled, communion-like devotion to Me, I consider the *jnani* as the best. The *jnani* is Me and I am the *jnani*, whereas other devotees stand apart, as they are individuals expecting something from God." *Teṣāṁ jñānī nityayukta ekabhaktir viśiṣyate, priyo hi jñānino'tyartham ahaṁ sa ca mama priyaḥ* (7.17): "I am dearest to the *jnani*, and the *jnani* is dearest to Me"—because what can be dearer than the self? If we love the self of God as our own self and God loves us as His own self, there is a communion of the so-called two into a single existence. That love is the greatest love which needs no object before it. That love is the greatest which does not want any kind of recompense. That love is not love which expects a response from the beloved. "If I love you, then you should also love me; but if I have no response from you in spite of my affection for you, then you are not worthy of my affection." This kind of affection is no affection. The soul has to commune with the soul, and this happens only in the case of *jnana* and not in the other cases, notwithstanding the fact that God is immensely merciful to consider even a child like Prahlada or Dhruva to be as great a devotee as Suka, Vyasa or Vasishtha.

Udārāḥ sarva evaite jñānī tv ātmaiva me matam, āsthitaḥ sa hi yuktātmā mām evānuttamām gatim (7.18): "All these devotees that I mentioned are very good people, yet he stands first who is a *jnani*, who is Me and is inseparable from Me." He who considers nothing else as the goal of life except God

Himself, who day in and day out plants God in the heart of his own personality, who feels God in the soul of his own self, who implants the Universal in his particular individuality and thus melts his individuality into the Cosmic Universality, who exists as the Universal Soul itself in meditation and experience—that person is a *jnani*. He is veritably God Himself. We can call him a *jivanmukta*, if we like.

It is very difficult to achieve this kind of devotion. *Bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavān māṁ prapadyate, vāsudevaḥ sarvaṁ iti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ* (7.19): It is difficult to love God. The love of things is so attractive, so promising and rewarding that the invisible God may not be as attractive to the senses. We take a series of incarnations—millions of births—to come to the human level, and then only is it possible for an individual to think in terms of pros and cons, and entertain logical judgments, which is not available in the animal, plant and mineral kingdoms. After taking many an incarnation and passing through many bodies of various species, we become human beings. Even as human beings, it is not easy for everybody to reach God because there are categories of human beings. There are demoniacal human beings, selfish human beings, cut-throat human beings, tit-for-tat human beings, so they are not in a position to attain God. It is a blessed one who has polished his personality through austerity, by means of the practice of the various stages of yoga in the different incarnations that he has taken. *Bahūnām janmanām ante*: “After the completion of many, many lives—then only the *jnani* attains to Me as the only goal, resorts to Me as the only purpose in life.”

Vāsudevaḥ sarvaṁ iti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ: Such a person is indeed rare in this world who has the conviction that God is all, that Narayana is all, Vasudeva is all, the Almighty is all. Such a conviction cannot arise in ordinary people. After many millions of births, such a conviction may arise. The

sense organs will not play havoc with that person who knows in an integral manner that God is all, because their feeling and understanding merge into a kind of intuition; and then there is no use of expecting anything from this world. “The world merges in God as I myself also merge in God.” *Bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavān mām prapadyate, vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ.*

Sri Aurobindo said that when the British put him in prison due to a bombing and he was summoned by the magistrate, suddenly in the courtroom he had the vision of Narayana. He saw the police as Sri Krishna, Narayana. He saw the magistrate as Narayana. He saw the doors, the windows and the iron bars as Narayana. Everything was Narayana shining everywhere, and even the prosecutor was Narayana. Narayana was flooding the entire court, right from the policemen and the prosecutor to the magistrate sitting there. He mentions this experience in a beautiful and powerful style in his speech called the Uttarapara speech. *Vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ.* Such an experience is rare.

Kāmais tais tair hṛtajñānāḥ prapadyantenyadevatāḥ, tam tam niyamam āsthāya prakṛtyā niyatāḥ svayā (7.20): “Not knowing Me as the All, people resort to so many gods.” The ‘so many gods’ are to be considered as influxes and emanations of the Supreme Being. We may worship Ganesha, Devi, Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Vishnu, Siva, Surya, Kartikeya, Skanda, or any god, provided we do not consider them as individual gods standing independently in their own sphere; otherwise, we will receive from them a blessing that is completely limited. A limited god can bless us only in a limited way. There is no harm in worshipping these gods, but we should consider them as a hand or a finger of the one Almighty. Whether it is Siva or Vishnu or Christ or Buddha or Mohammed or anyone, they are facets of the single crystal of the Supreme Being. Any facet

of the crystal reflects the whole crystal. Therefore, there is no harm in worshipping individual gods. But if we consider them as independent gods—Mohammed is different from Christ, Christ is different from Krishna, Krishna is different from Devi, and they have no connection with one another, we want something from Devi and something else from Krishna—if that is the case, we will get what we want.

Kāmais tais tair hr̥tajñānāḥ prapadyantenyadevatāḥ: With desires which are discrete and diversified in nature, people run to all sorts of divinities—a stone, a snake, a tree, a symbol, a diagram. Everything is a god for a person with desires of various types. Such people who have multifarious desires of a *rajasic* and perhaps a *tamasic* nature and who worship varieties of divinities independently, as it were, will have their own result granted to them. *Tam tam niyamam āsthāya prakṛtyā niyatāḥ svayā*: “In My ordinance, I have arranged that these people also shall be given whatever they want.” If we ask for a handful, we will get only a handful. If we ask for a bucketful, we will get a bucketful, and if we ask for the whole earth, we will get the whole earth. But we will get only what we want, not more than that.

There was a person who wanted that any thought that arose in his mind should materialise, and he was blessed with that boon. Whenever he thought something, it would materialise. He was very happy, and felt that now the whole world was under his control. He sat under a tree and thought: “Let there be mangoes on the tree.” Immediately mangoes dropped from the tree. “Let there be cool water for me to drink,” and immediately cool water flowed in front. “Let there be many servants to massage my feet,” and servants came. “Let me have a good bed to lie down on and rest,” and a bed immediately appeared. While he was lying down, he thought: “This is a forest. Suppose a tiger pounces on me, what will happen?”

Immediately a tiger came and pounced on him, and he was finished. This is what happens if we have desires which are not controlled by real knowledge, wisdom. Therefore, we should not propitiate small deities in order to fulfil petty desires when we have the great Master who can grant us all that we want with His oceanic mercy. Anyway, in His goodness and mercy He says: “Even if the little gods are worshipped, you will get something. Don’t bother yourself.” Immensely merciful is God. He knows the futility of our efforts and the foolishness of our worships, but in spite of that He says, “I’ll give you what you want.” So kind is God!

Kāmais tais tair hṛtajñānāḥ prapadyantenyadevatāḥ, taṁ taṁ niyamam āsthāya prakṛtyā niyatāḥ svayā: The universal religion of the equality of worship and the equality of the vision of all faiths, cults and creeds is a way to God. Whatever be the way in which we approach the Ultimate Reality, that is a religion, no matter how devious and circuitous that way may be, provided we are conscious that every other path also equally leads to the same goal and all religions merge into a single religion of man’s desire for God. This is the gospel of universal religion.

Discourse 22

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER CONCLUDES WORSHIPPING DEITIES

Devotees often have the erroneous notion that a god is only in one place—here is Ganesha, here is Devi, here is Surya—and one has no connection with the other. Devotees think that the different gods can grant different boons—that what one god grants, another cannot grant—and that for the purpose of a particular boon, they have to approach a particular god. Offering different prayers for different kinds of ailments—physical, social or mental—is a lesser religion of the masses. “They shall be granted their boons,” is the proclamation of the great Lord. *Kāmais tais tair hṛtajñānāḥ prapadyantenyadevatāḥ, taṁ taṁ niyamam āsthāya prakṛtyā niyatāḥ svayā* (7.20). This means to say that even if we want a cup of tea and expect to get it from our god, it will be given to us, though it is a petty, flimsy thing that we are expecting from our adored deity.

This is religion indeed, in the sense that there is a desire to be devoted to an ‘other than oneself’, which is considered as a god capable of bestowing all boons. But these are limited fruits consequent upon limited devotion coming from a limited god who appears to be in one place—in Kailasa only, in Vaikuntha only, in Brahmaloḥa only, or in the sky only as Suryanarayana—and not anywhere else. That the god is not anywhere else is the peculiarity of a limited devotion to a particular isolated concept of the deity.

Yo yo yām yām tanuṁ bhaktaḥ śraddhayārcitum, icchati tasya tasyācalām śraddhām tām eva vidadhāmyaham (7.21). The force of the Universal Being animates these different deities as the replica of that Supreme Being, and so they have in them a power to evoke devotion, and it is mistaken for the evocation coming from that particular deity only. The idea is that when we see a brilliant electric bulb, we are carried away by the bulb's power; we adore it, and worship it, and put a garland over it, saying, "O Thou that is giving me brilliant light every day" and so on, not knowing that the brilliance does not come from the bulb. It is pumped from a universal source whose generating centre is somewhere else. Similarly, even the capacity of a particular god to bless us comes from a universal source. The poor devotee who is clinging to a little concept of a localised entity does not know this.

Our own limitation of thought binds us, though there is a large reservoir of abundance that is ready to pour upon us whatever we want. But even if the granter is ready to give us all things, we ask for little; and so we are rewarded with that which we deserve. If we ask, it shall be given; but it shall be given only in the measure that we ask, in the manner that we expect, and in the quantum that we deserve. Here is a religious outlook which is so catholic in its nature that it does not condemn, denounce or deprecate any concept of god, any faith, any cult or any religious outlook. It only considers them as insufficient and inadequate for the purpose of attaining the final goal of life.

There are various degrees of satisfactions in this world. If we have a cool drink, it is a satisfaction. If we have a good meal, it is a satisfaction. If we have a good rest, it is a satisfaction. If we have glory, praise and status in society, it is also a satisfaction. But these are brittle, localised, with a beginning and an end, and so there is a desire in us to go for higher satisfactions

which are more than the meal or the available things in the world. That is why people worship gods. They have little gods in their homes, in their temples, on a shelf in a cabinet; and something called a little prayer is offered. This little prayer, this little *Jaya Jagadisha Hare* that we sing while lighting a candle or even an incense stick, is the outcome of our feeling of there being something higher than us.

We have kept a little idol in a corner of our room, but our feeling is of a different nature altogether. Though the sense organs tell us that it is a little piece of wood or metal, or a painted picture that is in front of us, we consider it as embodying some capacity to overcome our limitations. That means to say, we are somehow or the other conceptually implanting in that idol, or symbol, a power that is not easily available to any man in this world—not available even to all humanity. So there is a double-dealing on the part of the devotee, who knows that the little deity, the little idol is not going to bless him. It is made of a material substance. It is in one place. It looks small. What kind of blessing can be expected from it? Yet the feeling is so powerful that the devotee unconsciously feels the presence of something in it which he cannot easily comprehend intellectually. It is a superior inundation, a capacity that theoretically comes from somewhere else—just as a child knows that the light comes from somewhere else, though he does not know from where it comes.

Because of our persistent sensory limitation of that god—limiting that god to one particular place only—the blessing is delimited. Nevertheless, whatever our faith is shall be considered as worthwhile because of the fact that whatever our faith is, it is, after all, a faith in something higher than our own self. All religion is great, and every concept of God is adorable in the sense that it is a worship of something greater than one's own self and, therefore, it supersedes the individual ego. In

that sense, every religion is good and every notion of God is worthwhile. All concepts of spirituality are equally adorable from the point of view that they lift our minds from our own egoistic centre and we unconsciously ask for something that is beyond us, above us, more than us, and infinitely greater than us. Here is a beautiful presentation of universal religion—which has no communal touch and no hatred of any kind, and considers every cult, every creed, every type of worship, every faith, and every form of adoration as good enough from its own point of view, though inadequate from the highest point of view.

Sa tayā śraddhayā yuktas tasyārāadhanam īhate, labhate ca tataḥ kāmān mayaivaḥ vihitān hi tāt (7.22): “If Ganesha blesses you or Devi blesses you or Surya blesses you or anybody blesses you, ultimately it is My blessing that is coming. I am conscious of what you are thinking and feeling.” The omniscient Absolute is aware of our intentions, our limitations, our foibles, and our poor approach to the deity, which is based on our mental conception. Nevertheless, the omniscient eye, which sees through the very deity that we are worshipping, grants, with its omnipotence, the energy that our deity requires to grant the boon that is expected by us. Lord Siva’s power or Lord Vishnu’s power or anybody’s power is the power of the Absolute, and the omniscience and omnipotence of the Absolute is the reason why any god is capable of blessing us. But just as the quantum of water flows according to the thickness of the pipe, the blessings that we receive from these gods will also be limited by the ‘pipe’ of the personality that we have foisted on these deities. Yet, we will get it.

Antavat tu phalaṁ teṣāṁ (7.23): Poor indeed is the result that follows from this kind of limited worship. “Though I agree that worship is good in every way, you could have asked for better things.” But how can we ask for better things? Our

minds are limited, like little cups, and can contain only cupfuls and not the entire ocean. This is because our minds are limited to the concepts of space, time and objects and, therefore, even our spiritual expectations are limited to these objectively presented dimensions, which are limitations, and which will end. The whole point is that whatever has a beginning will also have an end. Therefore, it is good for us to ask for something infinite, which has neither a beginning nor an end. But that infinite can respond only if the infinite in us rouses its spirit and asks for the infinite. The infinite within us alone can ask for the infinite outside. The little soul in us cannot ask for the infinite. It can ask only for its counterpart. Just as a sweeper's friend is a sweeper, a labourer's friend is a labourer, a driver's friend is a driver, a fisherman's friend is a fisherman, and so on, we expect from our deity whatever we are in ourselves.

If our deepest soul does not rise to the occasion, the highest Universal Soul will not respond. If it is only a mental asking, a psychological, sentimental craving, and even a biological expectation, that will be given to us, but the infinite will not be given. The infinite can respond and grant us infinite blessing only if we approach it as an infinite soul. The total man has to rise to the total occasion in order that the total reality may respond. Otherwise, all results of worship will be limited. They will have a beginning and an end; and when we go, the result also goes.

Antavat tu phalaṁ teṣāṁ tad bhavatyalpamedhasām:
A poor understanding of the nature of spiritual life—not knowing that God is everything, and expecting something ulterior from God—is not true spirituality or religion. Not knowing this, people with a lesser intellect commit this error and get reborn—though perhaps into a better world on account of their devotion.

Devān devayajo yānti madbhaktā yānti mām api: We shall reach that which we are thinking in our minds. What will we reach after death? Whatever we are expecting now, that we will reach. If we want union with a particular deity, we will attain union with that particular deity in that particular higher realm—a different realm of being. “But those who worship Me as the total infinite, reach Me.” *Devān devayajo yānti madbhaktā yānti mām api.* Here *mām* means ‘Me, the total Absolute’ speaking through the personality of Bhagavan Sri Krishna and including all the gods. Did we not notice that all the gods were there in the Visvarupa? Right from earth to heaven—everything was spread out, and every deity was shining in the different limbs of the Virat Svarupa. That Visvarupa is speaking here as the All-in-all, the be-all and end-all of all things.

Avyaktam vyaktim āpannam manyante mām abuddhayaḥ, param bhāvam ajānanto mamāvyayam anuttamam (7.24). Here Bhagavan Sri Krishna is referring to Himself. “People think that I look like a human being. My higher nature is not known to those with poor understanding.” The personality of Sri Krishna is a concretisation and a beaming forth of a resplendence that is all pervading. There is a larger reality behind this presentation in the form of the personality of Sri Krishna. To the friend, he looked like a friend in human form; to the warrior, he looked like a warrior. But behind him, behind his personality, there was an oceanic expanse which was pumping energy into him indefinitely and infinitely. He wielded *purna shakti*. We say that Bhagavan Sri Krishna is *krishnastu bhagavan svayam* and *shodashakala purna avatara*. That is what is generally believed. The idea is that the perfect God manifested Himself in this perfect personality. The whole of the Absolute was concentrated into a pinpoint, as it were, and that was the power of Sri Krishna’s complete incarnation. Yet, “I am actually the Total Whole that is concentrated

through this personality, but do not mistake this personality itself for the Total Whole. Your senses see only My little form, but I represent another light altogether—which is beaming through Me, which is larger than this visible form. But those with poor understanding do not recognise this. People think that I am endowed with a human personality, that I think like a human being and walk like a human being, but I am the Infinite that is made visible to the eyes of man as an incarnation for a particular purpose that has arisen.”

Nāhaṁ prakāśaḥ sarvasya (7.25): “Everybody cannot see Me. I am not visible to all people.” Only our soul can behold it—not our sense organs, not our sentiments, and not our longing or desire.

Yogamāyāsamāvṛtaḥ: “I have covered Myself with the veil of the presentation of this world of *prakṛiti*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.” The Absolute has put on a dress, as it were, and we see only this dress of the manifestation in the form of the three *gunas* of *prakṛiti*. When we open our eyes and see, we see only the manifestation of *prakṛiti* in the form of this world—the three *gunas*. The essence behind it, the *purusha* behind the *prakṛiti*, is not cognised by the vision of our eyes or the action of any of our sense organs. *Nāhaṁ prakāśaḥ sarvasya yogamāyāsamāvṛtaḥ*. Here, *yogamaya* means the veil that God seems to be putting on Himself in the form of His creation. The radiance of the sun may blind our eyes to such an extent that we may not be able to see the sun.

Tat tvam pūṣaṇ āpāvṛṇu satyadharmāya dṛṣṭaye (Isa 15) is a prayer in the *Isavasya Upanishad*: “O Sun! Withdraw your rays, the golden cover that you are hiding yourself with, so that I may behold you in your essence.” The glory of God in the form of this creation blinds our eyes to such an extent that we cannot see God behind this glory. The radiance of a nugget of gold may blind us to the real perception of it. So too is the

wonder of this world that tantalises us, attracts us, promises us all things, and gives us immense satisfaction. It is a cover that God has put on Himself so that we may be blinded with the attraction for the things of sense—which is the veil that is referred to as *maya*—and, therefore, we will not be able to behold Him that is behind. We will see the dramatic personae, but the director Himself is not seen.

Mūḍho'yaṁ nābhijānāti loko mām ajam avyayam: “I am the eternal in the process of time, but the temporal mind that is in this world of space and time concentrates itself only on that which is visible to the eyes.” *Mūḍha* is the word that is used here. Fools are they, idiots, who think that the visible is the real while the invisible alone is the real. They go for the objects of visible perception. The invisible does not attract them in any way whatsoever because all attraction is sensory, and the senses cannot see or behold that which is unmanifest. They see only the manifest world of sense objects. Therefore, deluded are these people. *Mūḍhoyaṁ nābhijānāti loko mām ajam avyayam*: “The immortal and uncreated essence that I am cannot be beheld by deluded people who only look through their eyes, hear through their ears, and enjoy through their physical personality.”

Vedāhaṁ samatītāni vartamānāni cārjuna (7.26): “I know everything, Arjuna, but you do not know anything. I know all that was, all that is, and all that will be.” Sri Krishna also says, “I too have undergone many a form. Several incarnations I have taken, as you also have taken several incarnations, Arjuna. The only difference is that I know that I have passed through all these stages of incarnations, but you do not know that you have undergone these incarnations. I have detached Myself from the forms in which I appear to people, whereas you are attached to the form that you appear to your own self.”

Vedāhaṁ samatītāni vartamānāni cārjuna, bhaviṣyāṇi ca bhūtāni mām tu veda na kaścana: “I know everything, but nobody can know Me. I know everything because I am the universal light that permeates all things, and even the vision of the individuals is just a modicum of the reflection of this universal light.” So, it knows everything. It also knows how the individuals perceive things, but the individuals cannot know what is behind them.

Plato gives us the allegory of the cave. People are bound hand and foot in a dark cave for their entire life, without being able to see the entrance to the cave. But the entrance is open, and sunlight enters and falls on the wall of the cave. People are walking in the sunlight on the road above, and their shadows appear on the wall. The prisoners watch these two-dimensional shadow images dancing on the wall. Because they have been bound hand and foot right from the beginning and have never seen sunlight, they think that this is the only reality. They do not know what light is. They have always been under the impression that the whole world of reality is this two-dimensional dance. This world appears three-dimensional, but reality is four-dimensional. We are unable to conceive the four-dimensional reality, which is timeless and spaceless, because of our being bound to the concept of only three dimensions—length, breadth and height. But suppose these prisoners are released, and they are brought to the sunlit road. They will be surprised to see that the three-dimensional figures are people walking, and they will be blinded by the sunlight. They will not know what has happened to them because they have seen only the two-dimensional shadows cast by people who were walking on the road.

Due to a peculiar structure of our sense organs and mind, we see things only as length, breadth and height, even though there is no such thing as length, breadth and height.

It is an illusion that is created by the peculiar structure of our sense organs. There are actually no dimensions. That the world is dimensionless is proclaimed today by our modern scientists. So Sri Krishna says, “I know everything. But the world of three dimensions cannot know the four-dimensional Eternal.” *Vedāhaṁ samatītāni vartamānāni cārjuna, bhaviṣyāṇi ca bhūtāni mām tu veda na kaścana*: The four-dimensional Universal knows everything that is taking place in the three-dimensional world; but people bound to three-dimensional perception cannot know the transcendent, which is of four dimensions.

We think that there is no such thing as four dimensions, because we cannot imagine what it is. Dimensions are only length, breadth and height. What is the fourth dimension? That is the Universal. Nobody knows what universality is because they know only subjectivity and externality. Total universality is completely obliterated from our perception. It is only a dream for us, an imagination and an abstract concept. Yet, that is the true reality. The universal four-dimensional continuum—which is neither space nor time, which is neither object nor anything solid—is the reality, though we mistake solid, three-dimensional objects to be realities.

Hence, the Immortal Being, the timeless four-dimensional essence, says: “The Universal that I am, I know everything—past, present and future.” Because in a spaceless and timeless existence there is no past, present and future, at once there is a grasp of eternal instantaneous knowledge in the Supreme Absolute. One grasp is equal to a total grasp. The past, present and future are in the palm of our hand, as it were, because the past, present and future do not actually exist. They are only a three-partite division created by a peculiar structure of our mind and sense organs. In this sense, the world is illusory. It is not as it appears to be. Things are not what they seem.

Ichhādveṣasamutthena dvandvamohena bhārata, sarva-bhūtāni sammohaṁ sarge yānti paraṁtapa (7.27): The moment we are born, we are born into delusion. It is said in the Bhagavata Purana that when a child is in the womb, it knows its previous existence. It weeps and cries: “Why I am in this womb? Is it because of the karmas of my past? O Narayana! I shall not commit these mistakes, due to which I am in this womb now. I shall never make such mistakes. I will always resort to Narayana, and will never commit such mistakes which cause me to be born into the world.” Once the child comes out into the world, it forgets everything. The moment we are born into this world, the *maya* of the three dimensions, the *prakritis*, the *gunas*, catch hold of us to such an extent that all these prayers we made in the womb vanish into thin air and we are once again the same idiots, knowing not what has happened to us; and then we commit the same blunder. The mistake of erroneous perception is born together with the biological tabernacle which we put on at the time of birth. Ignorance is born with us and we get deluded right from childhood itself, right from babyhood, right from the time of coming into existence in this world.

What is the reason for this? *Ichhādveṣasamutthena*: Throughout the different incarnations, the soul has been involved in likes and dislikes. There is no way of thinking except through likes and dislikes. Psychoanalytically, we should go deep into our own mind and see if we can think without the touch of love and hatred. It is impossible for us to think anything without a touch of some like for something and dislike for something else. Therefore, this division that we have unnecessarily created in our psyche creates a split personality in our own self. We are not whole persons at any time. We are double dealers, two-partite fractions, as it were, dovetailed together—like Jarasandha.

Jarasandha, a famous man in the Mahabharata, was born in two halves due to a defect in the process of conception; and because a demoness called Jara joined the two pieces together, he was called Jarasandha. Likewise, we are Jarasandhas. We are two different things altogether. The love aspect and the hatred aspect of our personality become dovetailed into a single individuality, as it were, making it appear that we are one individual. Actually we are two individuals, loving and hating people. Therefore, our perceptions are dual, and we never have an integrated perception of anything. There is non-alignment of our inner psyche. We are double-dealers in our own selves, let alone in respect of other people. *Ichhādvēṣasamutthena*: Because of this involvement in love and hatred.

Dvandvamohena bhārata: Because of the delusion that this *dvandva*, or duality, is the source of joy. Do we not think that it is a great happiness to be in a state of love and hatred? “I love this immensely, and hate that immensely.” This is the way that we live in this world, and it gives us great satisfaction. It is a great satisfaction to love something, and it is a greater satisfaction to hate something. Both are satisfactions only; and it is this kind of satisfaction that we get in this world. *Mūḍhoyaṁ nābhijānāti*: The idiotic mind does not understand anything.

Ichhādvēṣasamutthena dvandvamohena bhārata, sarva-bhūtāni sammohaṁ sarge yānti paramtapa: All beings are deluded in this fashion. They see topsy-turvy. They do not know what is behind things.

In the Seventh Chapter of the Gita, we have been studying the essentials of a universal religion—an impartial religion of mankind with no denomination of any kind, where each god is equally as good as any other god, and yet no god is equal to the ultimate God. It was mentioned in this context that outside God nothing is—*mattaḥ parataraṁ nānyat kiñcid asti* (7.7)—and our aim is to attain God. The whole point in the practice

of religion is the learning of the art of conducting oneself in the way of God. Otherwise, what is the good of religion? It is a way to God.

The whole point is that we have to reach God through religious practice. It has been mentioned that God is such that outside of It nothing can be, and beyond It there is nothing. We have to reach a God outside of Whom nothing is. How would we reach a God outside of Whom nothing is? There is no question of reaching—because when we conceive a question of reaching or moving in the direction of something, there is an outsideness already created. We cannot move towards anything which is not outside, and there is nothing outside God. It appears, therefore, that there is no such thing as an ordinarily conceived movement towards God. Hence, realisation, attainment, moksha, the goal of life—which is God—cannot be conceived in ordinary space-time related terms.

Then how do we reach God? The Bhagavadgita is the gospel of the art of reaching God, yet it confuses us by saying that we cannot easily reach God. Why we cannot easily reach God has been already mentioned in the earlier verses. It is because our mind is confused by its lodgement in a kind of split-psyche personality caused by love and hatred, which are the principles of mental operation. In any way, we have to get out of it. There is a necessity to integrate the psyche; we cannot go on living a split life. The object of final spiritual realisation is the total God, not a partial God.

It was conceded that the lesser gods are also equally good. They are equally good in the sense that they will give us some benefit—a benefit that has a beginning and an end. But liberation is not something that has a beginning and an end. Hence, a beginningless and endless achievement cannot be attempted by the worship of any kind of localised god—a god that is placed in some heaven and distinguished from other deities.

Therefore, the merciful acquiescence of the Almighty in giving us permission to worship any kind of independent god does not mean that it is a solution to the problems of *samsara*. It is a solution to our daily problems, no doubt—problems regarding material prosperity, social status, freedom from illness, and joys of various kinds that this earth can give us. All these can be the boons that we can expect from our gods, but we will not get liberation. Liberation is a total merging in the Total Reality and, therefore, any localised god, conceptualised god, isolated god or limited god will not permit us this attainment.

Who is this ultimate God? How do we conceive Him? In his great compassion, Bhagavan Sri Krishna gives two verses which become the seed, as it were, for the next Chapter, which is the Eighth. These verses tell us how God has to be accommodated in our meditating consciousness. Meditation is the way in which we accommodate this total concept of God in our own self. We are not accustomed to total thinking. It was already mentioned that we are partial thinkers; we think along the lines of love and hatred. But that will not do. We have to learn the art of a complete thinking which will exclude nothing from its purview or its operation.

Jarāmaraṇamokṣāya mām āśritya yatanti ye (7.29). “Do you want liberation?” is the question that is raised here. *Jara* and *marana* are old age and death. “Do you want freedom from old age and death, and to not be born once again into this *samsara*, this misery of the earth? If that is the case, I shall tell you the recipe, and here it is: Resort to Me as the Ultimate Being for freedom from decay and death.” *Te brahma tad viduḥ kṛtsnam adhyātman karmā cākhilam*.

Sādhībhūtādhidaiṣvaram mām sādhiyajñam ca ye viduḥ, prayāṇakāle’pi ca mām te vidur yuktacetasaḥ (7.30). At the time of passing, at the time of leaving this body, what kind of consciousness is to take possession of us? It is told to us in the

Eighth Chapter that the consciousness that will take possession of us at the time of passing will be the same consciousness that we entertain in our daily life—because as is the tree, so is the fruit. We cannot have apples from pickles. If we have been living a very distracted, erroneous, confused kind of life, how would we expect this total awareness to arise in our mind at the time of passing? That is told to us in the Eighth Chapter.

Discourse 23

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER BEGINS

THE DIFFERENT FACETS OF THE SUPREME BEING

In the Seventh Chapter certain terms are used which are highly technical; and in the beginning of the Eighth Chapter, Arjuna raises a question regarding the meaning of these terms. These technical terms constitute the nomenclature of the aspects of God that make the Total—which have to be in our consciousness at the time of passing. The world is outside, but it is also inside. Therefore, we think of the Ultimate Being in our consciousness, as we cannot afford to limit God to something that only permeates the outside world.

Īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ (Isa 1), etc. We have heard that God pervades all things. When we speak of God's immanence in all things, we are likely to commit the mistake of thinking that 'all things' means all things that we see with our eyes. This delimitation of all things that we see to an external world is an error of concept because we ourselves are also one of the things of the world which God indwells. Hence, the *adhibhuta prapancha*, which is the externally perceived world, should not be taken as merely the world which God indwells. God also indwells the *adhyatma prapancha*, which is the inward reality of our own self. Our inner reality is also indwelled by the God who indwells the world of objective perception; but we will not be able to easily blend these two aspects in our mind. When we think something, do we think of the total—the merging of both the subjective and the objective sides?

Now I am seeing you sitting here: somebody is sitting. Can I, in ordinary circumstances, convince myself that the object that I see seated in front of me is organically inseparable from my existence here where I am seated? Normally this kind of thought is not possible and, humanly speaking, nobody in the world can think in this manner; the object and the subject cannot be taken together. But do we expect a cheap liberation? We have to pay a heavy price for it.

That heavy price is not only the concept of the blend of one's own self and the object that we perceive, which is the world. There is something more. *Adhidaiva prapancha* is also to be taken into consideration. There is something midway between the perceiving subject and the world of objects perceived. It was indeed difficult enough for us to conceive a blend of ourselves and the world outside. Now things are made even more difficult by it being said that we have also to think of a third thing, not merely the two things. The third thing is the consciousness that enables us to know that there is a blend between us and the world. The world cannot know that it is connected with us in any manner. Physically speaking, we also cannot know that we have any vital connection with the world outside, because we are independently sitting here. But there is a third person operating between us, as the individual perceiver, and the world of objects outside, whose preponderance in our mind causes an inference that it is not possible to have consciousness of an object outside unless there is a third element, a connecting link which is transcendent. This transcendent element is called *adhidaiva*. At the time of death, we are supposed to meditate on the total concept of an inclusiveness of ourselves, the world outside, and also the transcendent superintending principle—*adhidaiva*.

Other things are also mentioned. There is a thing called *adhidharma*, which brings into a focus of cohesion all these

three principles mentioned. It is not that I am here, the world is outside, and consciousness, the third thing, is hanging as a no-man's land. This idea should also be removed from our mind. The connecting link mentioned between the subjective side and the objective side is not a third element to be contemplated independently, because that third thing is a union of both the subjective side and the objective side. There is no subject and object in the third element; it is like a single body feeling the unity of the right hand and the left hand. For the physical consciousness, the right hand and the left hand are not two objects. In a similar manner, the transcendent individual—the *adhidaiva* mentioned—is not a separately existing third entity, in the same way as the body is not a third principle for the right hand and the left hand. It is an inclusive principle wherein the right and the left are subsumed. By thinking hard, we must be able to conceive this in our mind. This unifying principle is called dharma, the total ruling force of the cosmos. In Vedic terminology it is known as *rita* or *satya*. *Te brahma tad viduḥ kṛtsnam adhyātmaṁ karma cākḥilam; sādhibhūtādhidaivam mām sādhiyajñam ca ye viduḥ, prayāṇa-kāle'pi ca mām te vidur yuktacetasaḥ* (7.29-30).

So many difficulties will harass our minds at the time of meditation. We will begin to think that God is creating the world, or God has created the world. The word *visargaḥ* that is used here implies the force which generates the world and causes the emanation of the world from God. Sometimes we are unable to free ourselves from this idea that the world must have been created by God, and yet we are not be able to bring about a relationship between God and the world. Is God outside the world, is God inside the world, or is the world identical with God? God cannot be outside the world because if that is the case, nobody in the world can reach God. Nor can the world be outside God because if that is the case, it is

an external object with no substance, no existence whatsoever. This is because only God can be existence, and if the world is totally outside existence, it is non-existence.

We connect the cause with the effect—the cause which we have imagined as God, the Creator, with the world as the effect. These ideas must be shed, particularly when we think of the Total Reality, because the idea of the Total excludes the concept of causality. The relationship between cause and effect, the relationship between subject, object and the transcendent, all these ideas are removed at one stroke by an entry of consciousness into a peculiar kind of Self which the Upanishads call Vaisvanara, and is portrayed as the Visvarupa in the Eleventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgita.

“Whoever can conceive this Total in the mind—Brahman as the Absolute, which includes the *adhibhuta prapancha*, the *adhyatma prapancha*, and also the connecting link of *adhid-aiva*—and removes from the mind the idea of the causality of God in terms of the world, such people are really able to think of Me in the proper manner at the time of passing.” It is better we not pass so easily, because this kind of thinking is not humanly possible. Lord Krishna is trying to extract this idea with a heavy wage. For the gracious gift that we expect from the Almighty, we have to pay that price through hard effort of *sadhana* in this manner described.

*jarāmaraṇamokṣāya mām āśritya yatanti ye
te brahma tad viduḥ kṛtsnam adhyātmaṁ karma cākhilam (7.29)
sādhībhūtādhidaiṣaṁ mām sādhiyajñam ca ye viduḥ
prayānakāle’pi ca mām te vidur yuktacetasaḥ (7.30)*

With this tremendous, earth-shaking gospel given in two verses at the end of the Seventh Chapter, we are now introduced into the Eighth Chapter. It is indeed earth-shaking, because Arjuna himself was confused about what the Lord was saying.

Arjuna asked, “What is this that You are speaking? You said there is Brahma, the Absolute; then You said there is *adhyatma*; then You said there is karma; then You said there is *adhibhuta*; then You said there is *adhidaiva*; then You said there is *adhiyajna*. I cannot understand what all this is, and You want me to bring them together into a total focus?”

Kim tad brahma (8.1): “Which is that Supreme Absolute that You are speaking of, O Lord?” *Kim adhyātmam*: “Which is that subjective self?” *Kim karma*: “Which is that action that You refer to?” *Adhibhūtaṁ ca kim proktam*: “Which is the objective world that You are speaking of? What does it actually mean?”

Adhiyajñāḥ katham ko’tra (8.2): “Which is that transcendent element which You spoke of as being between the subject and object? You refer to *adhiyajna* as an activity that You are performing in the cosmos. What does it mean, Bhagavan Sri Krishna?”

The last question was: “Also, how am I to think of You at the time of death?”

These are philosophical, mystical, spiritual questions, no doubt, but they point to a final aim in our mind: how to quit this world honourably, and not be forcefully dispatched. *Prayāṇakāle ca katham jñeyo’si niyatātmabhiḥ*: “How do people with a restrained mind and senses contemplate You at the time of death?”

There are so many questions in this Eighth Chapter. Firstly, what is Brahman? Secondly, what is *adhyatma*? Then, what is karma? Then, what is *adhibhuta*? Then, what is *adhidaiva*? Then, what is *adhiyajna*? And lastly, “How to think at the time of death?” Arjuna raises seven types of queries for one answer to all these diversified questions, because it was pointed out in the concluding verses of the Seventh Chapter that these so-called diversities have to be put together into a pattern of singleness for the purpose of total liberation.

Śrībhagavānurvāca: The Lord answers these questions one by one. The indescribable, eternal, timeless and spaceless Absolute is called Brahman: *akṣaram brahma paramam* (8.3). It exists everywhere, and yet it appears to be nowhere. It exists everywhere and, therefore, everything lives and exists. It appears to be existing nowhere because it is not the object of the perception of anybody's sense organs. Inasmuch as the world is an object and the Absolute Brahman is not an object, the world appears to exist and the Absolute does not appear to exist anywhere at all.

Asad vā idam agra āsīt (T.U. 2.7.1): "Non-existence was there in the beginning" is a statement that is sometimes made in the Upanishads. The negation of all causes of duality and multiplicity—non-existence of every conceivable name and form, and non-existence of even the thinkers of the names and forms—ends in a tremendous positivity, and the so-called void becomes the complete plenum. *Bhuma* is the word used in the Chhandogya Upanishad for this utter perfection; such is the Absolute. *Akṣaram brahma paramam*: Eternal space and time—eternal reality, which is indivisible—that is Brahman.

The *adhyatma* that I spoke of is the *svabhava*, or the natural characteristic, of an individual person. The word *svabhava* has been used in several contexts when dharma, or duty, was described in the previous chapters, and it also will be mentioned in subsequent chapters, especially in the Eighteenth Chapter. The natural disposition of the individual is his *svabhava*. This disposition—the contour, the behaviour, the pattern of our movement, psychologically or even socially—is conditioned by a peculiar action of the soul on the structure of our psychophysical personality. That kind of peculiar individuality, conditioned by the mind and the body, differentiates one individual from the other—just as one house can be differentiated from another house, not because

of the building bricks which may be the same in all cases, but because of the different shape given by the architects. The permutation and combination of the physical elements and the psychic components differ in different individuals, though the soul that charges these components with life and intelligence is one and the same. The different individual disposition that each one has on account of a preponderance of a different permutation and combination of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* is called *svabhava*. In that, there is also an indwelling principle called *adhyatma*.

Bhūtabhāvodbhavadakaro visargaḥ karmasamjñitaḥ (8.3). The word 'karma' that is used here represents the power or the energy with which the whole cosmos emanates from the Absolute. Everything rushes out, as it were, from the bosom of the Ultimate Reality—the Mahat Brahma, as it is called. This great force, this complete potentiality rushing outwardly in the direction of space and time, is the originally conceived karma. This total karma, we may say, which is the action of God that causes the emanation of the world, gradually descends into lower categories of activity until it becomes an ordinary action of a human individual. In the process of the coming down of the intensity of this action, which was originally cosmic, it delimits itself into lesser and lesser dimensions of personality so that finally it becomes a very little individual. In the beginning, it was a cosmic action, then it became a space-time vibration, then it became *akasa*, then *vayu*, then *agni*, then *apa*, then *prithvi*, and finally it became the individual bodies. All these are karmas in different densities and areas of action.

But original action is the will of God. The Supreme Purusha's original will is the first action. The Purusha Sukta makes reference to this original dharma. That dharma subsequently conditions every other kind of dharma in the world by delimiting the process of creation through the *tanmatras* and

the five elements, etc. The original dharma is the will of God. But that will of God, which is the originality, also permeates all the other lesser wholes that act as the media of action, including our own selves. Even our will, which prompts us to act, is actually a reverberation, as it were, of the original will. But, unfortunately, we are unable to believe that our will is acting under the impulsion received from the cosmic will, so we get caught by the selfishness of wrongly thinking that our will is confined to our body, while actually it is a propulsion from a cosmic existence. It is said in the earlier chapters that no action is individual; every action is God's. So karma is defined here as the propulsion of the Cosmic cause for the purpose of the emanation of the effects in various degrees of descent, until the lowest atom is created.

Adhibhūtaṁ kṣaro bhāvaḥ (8.4): The perishable world is the *adhibhuta prapancha*. All the world of names and forms, including this body, is perishable. It is under mutation; it is a flux. It is a continuity of a succession of events, and no object in this world can be said to be existing individually or independently even for a second. Persons like Buddha have highlighted this aspect by saying that the world is like a flowing river, where we cannot touch the same water the next moment. Like a flame that is burning and every minute, every second, there is a new set of atoms of fire rushing forth, the world is not a total indivisibility, but a movement. As a flame is a movement, as water in the river is a movement, the world is a movement. Therefore, it is perishable because when it moves, it is conditioned at every minute into bits of process. Similarly, this kind of concoction of matter into the form of this so-called physical world is cut into pieces—into little processes which are like links in a long chain—and so it cannot be regarded as imperishable. It is perishable. *Adhibhūtaṁ kṣaro bhāvaḥ*: All the perishable nature that we see in this world, including

our own body and the entire structure of space-time-object, is *adhibhuta prapancha*.

Puruṣaś cādhidaivatam: There is a Supreme *adhidaiva* who brings everything together into a hierarchy of divine operations, even when the different gods act. Indra, Varuna, Mitra, Surya, Agni, Devi, Narayana, Vishnu, Siva, Ganesha—all these divinities represent facets of the Supreme Absolute—or, we may say, the fingers of God operating; and they have to be put into a pattern of harmonious action so that one will not do something which would contradict what the other does. Gods do not contradict themselves. Siva does not contradict what Ganesha does, nor does Ganesha contradict what Narayana does. There is a harmony of principle in the mode of behaviour and action of these gods. They are all conditioned by a supreme constitution of the Absolute, and that is the *adhidaiva*. The constitution of the government is the *adhidaiva* that rules the entire governmental system, and this *adhidaiva* comes down in lesser and lesser degrees until it becomes a little connecting link between you and me.

Adhiyajñoham evātra dehe dehabhṛtām vara: “The *adhiyajna* that I mentioned, which is the field of action, is nothing but Myself becoming intensely active through the forces of *rajas* and *sattva* for the purpose of the evolution of the cosmos.”

Discourse 24

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER CONTINUES

THE THOUGHT AT THE TIME OF DEATH

As we noticed yesterday, several questions were raised by Arjuna regarding certain technical terms that the Lord used at the end of the Seventh Chapter. Every one of us is required to present ourselves before the Supreme Godhead in a total fashion—not partially; and in that connection, questions were raised as to what is Brahma, what is *adhyatma*, what is karma in the cosmic sense, what is *adhibhuta*, what is *adhidaiva*, and what is *adhiyajna*. Yesterday these were all explained as representing the different facets of the Supreme Being, all of which have to be taken into consideration at the same time in the final meditation, in which we have to engage ourselves daily, and especially at the time of leaving this world. The last question of Arjuna is: “How are You to be contemplated upon at the time of passing?” *Prayāṇakāle ca katham jñeyosi niyatāt-mabhiḥ* (8.2): “How are we to know You at the time of quitting this body? What sort of awareness are we to entertain? What is the consciousness that has to envelop us at that time?”

Bhagavan Sri Krishna has already described what *akshara* is, what Brahma is, etc. Now he takes up the very important subject of the departure of the soul from this body, and the art of meditation that has to be our principle occupation at that time.

You may ask me, “How do I know when I will pass away? Should I think that I will pass away just now, and collect myself

in tremendous earnestness? Or should I be at ease with myself because I may not die so quickly, because I have a long tenure of life—for ten, twenty, thirty or forty years more, as the case may be? So are you telling me that I can postpone this meditation to later for consideration, and now I can be merry in this world?” Not so is the case. We cannot expect to have that blessing of concentration at the time of passing from this body unless we have cultivated that habit even earlier throughout our life. If we have lived a dissipated, indulgent life during our normal tenure here, our span of life, do we think some butter will come by churning water? Butter comes only by churning milk.

So it is necessary to expect that certain other factors also may prevent us from thinking of God at the time of death. We do not know what kind of physical ailment we may have at that time. Not everybody has physical illness at the time of death. Many pass away suddenly after a good meal; they sit on a chair, and just go. But one cannot say that it is always the case. Many are bedridden for months together and suffer; and at that time, what are they going to think in the mind? What is the use of postponing the concentration on God until the time of death? At that time, we may not be able to speak. Our minds may be disturbed, or we may be delirious. We may be in a coma. Anything is possible, although we need not expect all those unfortunate situations. So let our minds enter God's lotus feet now itself, and not later on when it is possible that we may be afflicted with physical illness and mental delusion. The whole of life is a preparation for death. The whole of the time process is a preparation for eternity. All our activities are a worship of God, and every step that we take in this world is a movement in the direction of the final liberation of the spirit. So there is no question of postponing this great duty on everyone's part to a future date, which may not come at all.

Antakāle ca mām eva smaran muktvā kalevaram, yaḥ prayāti sa madbhāvaṁ yāti nāsty atra saṁśayaḥ (8.5): “Whoever contemplates My Glorious Being while leaving this body will be inundated with that Being after death.” This is because the shape that the mind takes at the time of death will be the shape into which it will enter after death. Thus, the pattern of our future life in the other world is laid at the time of our passing from this body, depending on the state of thinking in which the mind is lodged.

“Whoever contemplates on Me only”—you may ask what this ‘Me’ is. Yesterday we had occasion to note this total vision that we have of God. The Supreme Being is a total blend of all the aspects of possible concepts—the *adhyatma*, *adhibhuta*, *adhidaiva*, etc. It is a timeless conceptualisation of an eternal possibility, whose details were briefly stated in the last two verses of the Seventh Chapter; and that is the kind of ‘Me’ on which we have to concentrate.

The Universal Being is telling us: “Concentrate on Me.” The Universal Being shall reveal itself completely in the Eleventh Chapter. Now it is preparing the way for it. It is gaining momentum; the tempo of the teaching is gradually rising. The heat is rising, as it were, in the very manner of the exposition, until it reaches the culmination in the Visvarupa Darshana. Therefore, it is this Universal Visvarupa, the Total Existence, that is the object of our concentration. “That is Me, and on Me (that type of ‘Me’) you concentrate yourself.” We should attempt to bring our mind to that point of meditation when we depart from this body. That is the *antakala*, or the end period of our life. If we think that any moment is the end period of our life, it will be good on our part to be meditating like this always. There is no loss in getting engaged in this meditation day in and day out. We will not lose anything by thinking of God.

Antakāle ca mām eva smaran muktvā kalevaram, yaḥ prayāti: “Whoever departs while deeply brooding over Me in My essential nature attains to the blessed abode, reaching which there is no return. There is no doubt about this.” God says: “There is no doubt about it. You will certainly reach it.” Do not have the apprehension that perhaps it is not possible. It is certainly possible. *Nāsty atra saṁśayaḥ:* No doubt.

Yaṁ yaṁ vāpi smaran bhāvaṁ tyajaty ante kalevaram, taṁ tam evaiti kaunteya sadā tadbhāvabhāvitaḥ (8.6): We will become after death whatever we have been thinking in our life now. This is the way we can know what we will become after death. We need not consult astrologers and palmists. Our conscience will tell us what kind of person we are. If we are a good person, to what extent are we good? Otherwise, to what extent are we something else? What is the percentage of our involvement in God-thought? What is the extent of our wanting God in our life? Is it an absolute necessity, or is it a need that we may consider sometime later? What sort of attitude do we have towards God? This concept of God will determine our future. Those who meditate on a particular deity by doing mantra *purascharanas* and daily ritualistic worship, etc., are supposed to reach only that particular deity. They will reach the world of Ganesha or Devi or Siva or Vishnu, or whatever it is; but there is a return. Even if they go to the abode of the Creator, they are likely to come back even from that stage, inasmuch as creation is involved in space and time: *ābrahmabhuvanālokaḥ punarāvartina* (8.16).

Whatever is our interest, whatever it is that we are attracted to, the life and death issues of our existence, whatever we brood on the whole day, day in and day out—the basic fundamental background of our thinking—that is what we are actually thinking. It is not that we are thinking only one thought every day. There are varieties of thoughts.

We have workaday thoughts of the business of life; but behind that, there is a background of thought which we cannot forget, and it is that background of thought that will determine our future life. Whatever be our business, whatever be our office-going, whatever be our secular occupation, that is not important. What is important is what we are, basically, when we are absolutely alone to ourselves. In our kitchen, bathroom and bedroom—when nobody sees us—what are we thinking? Are we thinking only of the office? Or do we have a little time to brood and go deep into our own aloneness? Religion is supposed to be that which one does when one is alone. It is the aloneness into which we enter. Religion is a kind of aloneness of spirit where we are isolated from all relationships which are secular, mortal, and relative.

Whatever be the thought that we have been entertaining in our life, that will be the pattern of our life in the next world. Hence, everyone can know to some extent what they will become in the next life. How much greed, how much anger, how much desire for wealth, property and position, how much prejudice, how much competitiveness do we have? If these things are inundating us, and our very fibre of existence and our very flesh and blood are made up of these prejudices alone, we can well imagine what we will be in the next birth.

The Chhandogya Upanishad tells us what our fate will be if that is the way we live in this world. However, here is a brief theorem laid down before us for a further elucidation through its corollaries: Whatever we think in our mind, whatever we brood upon, whatever our interest is, whatever our deepest love and longing is, that shall materialise into a shape in the next realm of being which we enter. But if our pattern of thinking has always been universal and never relatively construed, and we have been judging all things from the Universal point of view, we will enter into the Universal when we leave this

body. Inasmuch as the Universal is not here and there, it is not now and afterwards, it is not in space and time, the question of rebirth does not arise—because the Universal cannot be reborn. Eternity is our blessedness.

Tasmāt sarveṣu kālēṣu mām anusmara yudhya ca, mayyarpitamanobuddhir mām evaiśyasyasaṁśayaḥ (8.7): “Therefore, I tell you: be constantly devoted to Me day in and day out, and engage yourself in your prescribed duty.” The word *yudhya* is used here, which means ‘fight’. In that particular historical context of the Mahabharata war, the instruction was: “Resort yourself to Me, surrender yourself to Me, completely rely on Me, and then fight.” It may apply to any kind of fight. The confrontation that we feel in our life, the opposition that we have to face, the duties that we have to perform, the obligations which are incumbent upon us are actually the *yuddha*, the war in which we are engaged in this big battlefield of God’s creation. “Resorting to Me completely, engage yourself in this duty that is incumbent upon you.”

Sarveṣu kālēṣu. Lord Krishna said, “Think of Me at the time of death.” Now He says, “You must think of Me always.” This is because He was conscious that if He said to think of Him after many years, Arjuna would not worry about Him at all, and go on postponing until it is too late to do anything. Therefore, a proviso is added by the great Master: “It is not enough if you think that you will meditate on Me at the time of passing. Every moment you must be with Me, in Me, and in a state of total surrender to Me. I shall protect you and take care of you.” *Sarveṣu kālēṣu mām anusmara*.

Mayyarpitamanobuddhiḥ: “If your mind, intellect and reason are totally dedicated to Me, you shall certainly reach me. There is no doubt.” *Asaṁśayaḥ*: Here also it is declared that there is no doubt about it.

Abhyāsayogayuktena cetasā nānyagāminā, paramaṁ puruṣaṁ divyaṁ yāti pārthānucintayan (8.8): The supreme resplendent Puruṣha, the Absolute Being, is our goal. By the constant practice of the yoga of meditation, and not allowing the mind to flicker hither and thither, absorbing ourselves entirely in this practice of total concentration on the Universal Reality, we shall attain to that supreme Sun of all suns—*paramaṁ puruṣaṁ*—and we shall be most blessed. Eternity and infinity shall be the fruits that we gather by this hard effort of meditation on the Universal Existence of God Almighty.

Kaviṁ purāṇam anuśāsītāraṁ aṇor aṇīyāmsam anusmared yaḥ, sarvasya dhātāraṁ acintyarūpaṁ ādityavarṇaṁ tamasaḥ parastāt (8.9): For the purpose of enabling us to picture that Supreme Being at the time of death—or always, as the case may be—we are told what kind of person that Supreme Being is. That Being is All-knowing—*kavi*. There is nothing that we can hide from that Almighty Being. That Supreme Being is most ancient—*purāṇa*—because it was there even before creation. Before there was space, before there was time, before there was anything, it was there. Therefore, it is the *purana puruṣa*, the *adi puruṣa*, the most ancient one; the all-knowing ancient one: *kaviṁ purāṇam*.

Anuśāsītāraṁ: It is the ruler of all the worlds, the ultimate destiny of everything, the final authority of all things, and the great God of creation.

Aṇor aṇīyāmsam: It is subtler than the subtlest. Atoms, electrons and energy cannot be seen except in a mathematical fashion as points, but even such conception is not possible here. It is subtler than the subtlest, because of the fact that it is pure subjectivity. The grossness characterising objects of sense cannot touch this pure subjectivity. It is deeper than our ordinary physical subjectivity as Mr. So-and-so, etc. It is deeper than our psychological subjectivity as learned persons,

great persons, etc. It is deeper than even the causal personality of individuality. It is an unconditioned, deepest essence and, therefore, it is the highest subjectivity. The highest subjectivity means free from any kind of externality of space, time and connection. Therefore, it is called subtle—the subtlest of all—and not even the subtlest space can be compared to it.

Aṇor aṇīyāmsam anusmared yaḥ: Whoever can contemplate this Mystery of mysteries. What kind of mystery? *Sarvasya dhātāram*: The father and the grandfather of all people, the great protector of all beings, the final resort of everyone.

Acintyarūpaṁ: Unthinkable is that Being. Our eyes will be blinded, we will become deaf by the vibrations that it produces, and our sense organs will simply melt into the liquid of an experience that can best be described as spiritual realisation—*acintyarūpaṁ*.

Ādityavarṇaṁ: Solar light is the brilliance of that goal. The sun is like a shadow before that light. Thousands of suns cannot stand before it. *Na tatra sūryo bhāti* (Katha 2.2.15): The sun does not shine there. The rays of the sun, the light of the sun is like darkness before it—pitch darkness—because of the excess of light. When light increases in frequency, it becomes darkness. Because of a commonness of frequency between the apparatus of our eyes and the light of the sun, we are able to see it; but if the level of the sunlight's frequency is raised or lowered, we will not see the light at all, just as radio waves cannot be heard unless the radio's frequency is the same as the frequency in which the waves are being broadcast by the radio station. Hence, the solar description is symbolic and does not mean that God is merely like a sun. Millions of suns will be darkness before that light of all lights—*jyotiṣāṁ api taj jyotiḥ* (13.17); light that is beyond all lights, light that is *tamaśaḥ param*—beyond the darkness of the ignorance of people. *Ādityavarṇaṁ tamaśaḥ parastāt*: The whole world is darkness

in comparison with that light of all lights. We think we are in daylight, but it is pitch darkness before that utter luminosity. Can we contemplate on that? We must contemplate on that at the time of passing: *prayāṇakāle* (8.10).

Manasācalena: Without allowing the mind to go hither and thither, but getting absorbed in all love and affection and endearing feeling; pouring ourselves on that, and allowing it to pour itself on us without allowing the mind to flicker; full of devotion for that, and wanting nothing else, and crying for it always.

Bhaktyā yukto yogabalena caiva: Full of devotion to it, but at the same time we are highly determined to see that we get it. “Now or never! Let this flesh melt and the bones crack. I shall not get up from this place until I get it!” was the resolution of Buddha. If we have that resolution with a devotion that surpasses all understanding, we are really blessed. *Bhaktyā yukto yogabalena caiva*: *Yogabala* is the power of the will of concentration.

Bhruvor madhye prāṇam āveśya samyak is one type of concentration that is prescribed here: concentration on the point between the eyebrows because of the fact that in the waking condition the mind is supposed to be actively operating in the *ajna chakra*, which is located there. In the dream state, it is in the throat, as it were; and in the sleep state, it is in the heart. Inasmuch as we are mostly in the waking condition and the mind is already in the point between the eyebrows—which is its *svasthana*, or its own abode—it is profitable for us to concentrate on that point instead of dragging the mind from its abode to some other direction. So it is said to concentrate the mind on the point between the eyebrows and raise the *prana* to that point—because wherever the mind is, there the *prana* is. The *prana* rushes to wherever we are concentrating our mind, and even the bloodstream moves in that direction.

Sa taṁ param puruṣaṁ upaiti divyam: By this practice, we shall reach that Parama Purusha, Purushottama, the Being of all beings, the Supreme God, Whose realisation is our be-all and end-all.

Yad akṣaram vedavido vadanti (8.11): “I shall now tell you a secret—that imperishable secret which is known to the knowers of the Veda, the students of the three Vedas. There is a secret which is known to them, and I shall tell you what it is.” *Viśanti yad yatayo vītarāgāḥ*: “That secret which I am going to tell you is the quintessence of Vedic knowledge, and is that abode into which restrained *tapasvins* and *yogins* enter.” *Yad icchanto brahmacaryaṁ caranti*: “The longing for the union of which, people practise continence, and restraint of the senses and the mind.” *Tat te padaṁ saṁgrahaṇa pravakṣye*: “Briefly I shall tell you what this imperishable seed is on which you have to meditate always, and at the time of passing.”

Sarvadvārāṇi saṁyamya (8.12): “Close all the gates of your body.” The five senses of perception, these avenues which are the windows of knowledge, are closed completely. Do not see, or hear, or touch, or smell, or taste; and do not allow any agitation of the other active limbs such as the hands and the feet, etc. Neither the sense organs of knowledge, nor the organs of action should be active at that time. These principles of action are withdrawn completely into the mind, in which case the mind becomes intensely potent. Usually the mind is weak because more than fifty percent of its energy is depleted through sense perception—through the sense organs of knowledge and the activities of the other *karmendriyas*, or organs of action. A little knowledge is there, and that is also distracted by the activities of the senses. But when the activity of the senses is withdrawn, the holes through which the energy goes out in the direction of space and time are blocked. This is called *sarvadvārāṇi saṁyamya*: Blocking all the holes

which are the ten sense organs.

Mano hṛdi nirudhya ca. It was said that the mind is to be concentrated on the point between the eyebrows. Now it is being said that the mind will be concentrated in the heart. In deep sleep, in death, and in the samadhi state, the mind goes to the heart; but at other times it moves in the throat or the brain. In deep meditation, transcending the consciousness of the concentration that we are practising on the point between the eyebrows, we go deeper into the heart. When the mind is made to slowly descend to the position of the heart, it ceases from externalised ways of thinking, and settles in its true abode. The final abode of the mind is the heart. As the Upanishads tell us, in the state of deep sleep it is supposed to be lying in the *puritat nadi*.

Mūrdhnyādhāyātmanah prāṇam āsthito yogadhāraṇām: A very difficult technique is placed before us here. The *pranas* have to be raised to the centre of the head. At the same time, it is said that the mind has to be concentrated on the heart. This seems to be a very difficult injunction. The idea is that our reason, feeling, understanding and emotions should get blended together so that what we think through the brain—the concentration that is active through the reason—is blended together with our deepest feeling. We are not merely in a state of understanding or feeling; we are in a state of intuition, which is a direct grasp of the total essence of things. Therefore, it is an injunction for two things: concentration on the centre of the head, which is the abode of the activity of rationality, and concentration on the heart, which is the abode of feeling.

Āsthito yogadhāraṇām: Thus being absorbed in the highest mood of yoga meditation; *om ityekākṣaram brahma vyāharan* (8.13): chant Om. When we chant Om, we will feel that it finally becomes soundless. The *matra* of the *pranava*, or *omkara*, becomes *amatra*, or soundless vibration. The message

that we receive from the broadcasting station is not a moving sound. It is a vibration which is converted into sound waves in our receiving set. In a similar manner, the sound that is articulated in the form of chanting Om, or *pranava*, becomes rarefied into a soundless universal equilibrium of energy wherein we get lodged as the Soul of the cosmos. *Om ity ekākṣaram brahma*: The eternal Brahma it is, in His form of vibration. *Vyāharan*: Chanting like this, uttering this great *pranava*, and deeply concentrating on My Being; *yaḥ prayāti*: whoever departs from this body; *yaḥ prayati tyajan deham*: whoever leaves this world quitting this body; *sa yāti paramām gatim*: he reaches the eternal abode.

Discourse 25

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER CONTINUES

TYPES OF LIBERATION

In the beginning of the Seventh Chapter we are given a brief statement on what true religion can be, and ought to be. In the Eighth Chapter, we are taken further into the necessity to know the relevance of our present life in the future life. Religion is lived in this world for the sake of transporting us into a new realm of being, which is called after-death. The Eighth Chapter discusses what philosophers generally call eschatology, or the question of life after death. The kind of religion that we live in this world, of course, is a matter of this life; and it has been well described in the Seventh Chapter how we have to be truly religious, truly spiritual, in an unbiased and impersonal manner.

Now, what will happen to us after leaving the body? That question is very important to us because we will not be living in this world for an indefinite period of time. If a very good man—very religious, highly spiritual, practicing yoga—quits this world, what happens to him? The manner of conducting oneself inwardly at the time of passing has been described with poetic beauty, in a touching style, in the verses that I recited yesterday. It was pointed out that intense concentration has to be practised on a point which is a blend of the understanding and the feeling, wherein we enter into an insight to reality which will take us to that integral vision after death. We must chant Om while leaving the body, and that will create

a vibration of cosmic impetus: *om ityekākṣaram brahma vyāharan mām anusmaran, yaḥ prayāti tyajan dehaṁ sa yāti paramām gatim* (8.13).

Ananyacetāḥ satataṁ yo mām smarati nityaśaḥ, tasyāhaṁ sulabhāḥ pārtha nityayuktasya yoginaḥ (8.14): “I am very easy of attainment. Don’t be under the impression that I am unapproachable, that it is difficult to reach Me. I am very easy of approach.” But the Lord puts several conditions in order that He may be easy of approach. What are the conditions? *Ananyacetāḥ*: “One who is undividedly absorbed with his whole mind and soul in Me.” *Satataṁ*: “And this absorption is not only for a minute. He must be constantly absorbed in Me always, and he must be engaged in this meditation on Me daily. Such a person who is eternally and permanently united with Me in his mind and soul, to such a person I am very easy of approach.” Whether He is really easy of approach or not, we can find out from this condition that He has laid. Under so many conditions, everything will be available to us. This is a moot *sloka*. Devotees chant it something like a mantra: *ananyacetāḥ satataṁ yo mām smarati nityaśaḥ, tasyāhaṁ sulabhāḥ pārtha nityayuktasya yoginaḥ*. We can go on chanting this.

How kind God is, provided we are kind to Him! How can we expect Him to be so concerned with us if we are not equally concerned with Him? The whole point is that. He is not putting unnecessary conditions, like a lawyer. That is not what is intended here. It is a necessary equilibration of consciousness that we have to establish between our soul and the Universal Soul. The Universal Soul can respond only to an element of universality in us. Dissimilars cannot act and react with each other. There must be a content in us which is equal in kind to the universality that God is. Hence, these conditions are nothing but an instruction on the necessity to remodel

ourselves into an element of universality—a little universality, and not a particularity. It is the whole of God that we are aspiring for; and in that case, He also wants the whole of us—not our possessions, assets and legacies. These things we cannot offer to God. We have to offer that which is dearest and nearest to us. The most dear thing in us is ourselves. If we can offer that, then we shall be flooded with that great joy that we are expecting as God-realisation.

Mām upetya punarjanma duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam, nāpnu-vanti mahātmānaḥ saṁsiddhiṁ paramām gatāḥ (8.15): You shall not return from God. Is it worthwhile to go there if you cannot come back? Ninety percent of devotees have a question of this kind: “What good is there in reaching God if I cannot come back?” Sometimes they galvanise this desire to come back after plunging into God by saying that they will be able to do better social work in this world and be endowed with a greater capacity to transform the world. “Now I am a feeble man with little understanding and a frail body, but when I plunge into God-experience and then return, I shall be a master in this world for the benefit of all people.” But the Lord says we will not come back. Then, what good is there? If we are not going to come back to see our own brothers and sisters here, and see this great world which has supported us, educated us, taken care of us, fed us, are we going to desert this world?

This question, this doubt, is not a foolish question. It is a question and doubt that will arise even in the most intelligent of persons. Most learned philosophers, highly educated, will have this question: “Am I deserting this world in my desire to plunge into God? And what good is this desire of mine to plunge into God when many other people are suffering in deep ignorance here in this world? Should I not work for their welfare?” Have we not heard people saying that they shall not

attain God until the last man leaves this world and attains God? These are very touching sentences, which stimulate our emotions: "It would be good to postpone the idea of going to God until the time when the world is transmuted completely into the gold of God-consciousness. Until heaven descends to this earth, until the physical body itself becomes immortal, until every ant and crawling insect also is transformed into a divine superman, until the last individual reaches God, I shall not." This would be a so-called unselfish declaration of the charitable mood of a great saint and sage, but it is repudiated at once by the statement that we shall not come back after reaching God.

No impure mind can understand what this means. The impurities of the mind are social, physical, sentimental, and biological. They are limited to family and community—limited to the human species. Are we not thinking only of mankind, as if that is the only thing that God has created? When we say "work for the world", we mean work for only the human species. We are not interested in lions, tigers, snakes, scorpions and mosquitoes. We behave as if they do not exist at all, and do not care if they perish. "My species," the frog says. "My species," the snake says. "My species," man says. Thus, there perhaps is a little bit of idiocy at the back of this so-called pious aspiration of people to come back from God and work for the welfare of humanity, as if humanity is the only thing that God has created.

The Almighty Himself has told us that if we go to Him, we will not come back; and if we want to come back, we need not go to Him at all. He is not compelling us to go to Him. But our attitude is like a double-edged sword. On one side we say, "I'll reach God." On the other side we say, "I'll come back to work for my fellow humans." We decide which is good for us before thinking deeply.

Mām upetya punarjanma duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam: “After reaching Me, you shall not enter this impure, perishable abode of sorrow because I shall absorb you into the timeless state of eternity, and not send you back to the time-ridden, space-limited world of sorrow and death.” *Nāpnuvanti mahātmānaḥ saṁsiddhiṁ paramām gatāḥ:* They have reached utter perfection. Having attained Supreme Perfection in the Almighty Universal, the question of coming back does not arise. It is as if we want to go back to the dream world after having woken up. In the world of dream we had friends, relatives, large assets, money, and the goodwill of people. When we woke up, what happened to all those people? Have we not committed a deeply treacherous, selfish act by waking up and leaving all our relations in the condition of dream? If we think that we have done a treacherous, selfish act in waking up from dream, we will do the same thing when we reach God. Remember this.

Ābrahmabhuvanālokaḥ punarāvartino’rjuna, mām upetya tu kaunteya punarjanma na vidyate (8.16): Even if we reach Brahmaloka, there are certain conditions in which we may have to come back; but after reaching the Absolute, we will not come back. Many a thing is said regarding Brahmaloka in the Brahma Sutras and in certain commentaries on the Bhagavadgita. It is said in the Upanishads that after having reached Brahmaloka, there is no coming back; and *anāvṛttiḥ śabdādanāvṛttiḥ śabdāt* (B.S. 4.4.22) is the last verse of the Brahma Sutras. But the Gita says that we will come back.

The only person who has clarified this point is Madhusudana Saraswati, in his commentary. Mostly people go glibly over this *śloka*, and repeat what the original says: “Even after going to Brahmaloka, we will have to come back; but after reaching the Almighty, we need not come back.” They do not try to reconcile the so-called conflict, as it were, that seems

to be there between the Upanishads saying that there is no coming back after reaching Brahmaloka and the Bhagavadgita is saying that we do come back.

There are no contradictions. Both the statements are correct. The concept of Brahmaloka is to be clarified first. What do we mean by Brahmaloka? The concept of Brahmaloka that is in our mind is what will decide whether we will come back from there or not. Generally, Brahmaloka is something like our idea of the Universal Being: it is spread out everywhere as an all-pervading, brilliant, divine existence into which we enter, where we stay and abide in the glory, beauty and grandeur of that kingdom.

There is a kind of *mukti*, or salvation, called *salokya mukti*. We are liberated when we enter the kingdom of God. That kingdom of God seems to be something like a huge, expanded dimension where God rules like a president or an emperor; and a person living in a country need not necessarily have the privilege of an audience with the king or the president. Nevertheless, we have the contentment and satisfaction of being a citizen of the kingdom of that particular emperor. This is one kind of Vaishnava devotion, or even Saiva and Sakta devotion. Among many other types of liberation which people imagine, one lower kind of devotion giving us a passport to a lower kind of experience is the permission to stay in the kingdom of God—a kingdom conceived as a vast world, as this world is, but scintillating with beauty, grandeur, and deathless immortality.

There is another kind of *mukti*, which is called nearness to God. We live near Rashtrapati Bhavan or near the White House, etc.—just next door. Even then, there is a satisfaction that our president is next door. Even though we may not see him at all, there is a satisfaction that he is next door. Nearness to God, though we may not see Him at all, is *samipya*.

Higher still is *sarupya*. We assume the same power, same glory, same authority, and same dignity as God Himself, but we are not God. That is, we are empowered with the ability to do all the actions that the president can do—just as during a war the field marshal is sometimes given all the powers of the president of that country, and he can use his discrimination. With all the powers of the president of the country or the king himself, the field marshal is veritably, for all practical purposes, the be-all and the end-all of all things. He can do anything he likes at that time, yet he is not the king, and not the president. That is the kind of *mukti*, or liberation, that people sometimes expect—where they assume the same form as God, and have the same authority, but are not God Himself.

Sayujya is entry. We become the king himself, the very president himself, and we are not merely a deputy who has been appointed for a particular purpose. *Sayujya* is entry into God. If we enter into God, we cannot come back. Because God is not at a distance, and God is not in time, the question of returning back should not arise. What do we mean by coming back from God? Is God an object, a place, a location? Is God somewhere in space and time? Spaceless and timeless existence is such that the coming back from it would be like coming from eternity to time—as the entry from waking into dream. Hence, there is a great point in the enunciation that we cannot return from God, and that we will not be a loser by merging in God.

The Brahmaloka that is conceived by us has two characteristics: a universal in which we find our abode, and a universal that is we ourselves. Are we going to live in Brahmaloka as residents of that place, due to the *tapas* we have done? If that is the case, when the effect of the *tapas* is over by the exhaustion of the momentum thereof, we will come back. So, in a way, there is a possibility of our coming back from Brahmaloka if

we have attained it with the power of our meditation on objective universality—a vast kingdom of heaven, yet a kingdom into which we have to enter as individuals, with the prerogative of participating in the joys of that realm. If that is the case, we will come back. But if we identify with Brahmaloka as the essence of what we ourselves are—because Brahmaloka is universal, we cannot be outside it—the question of staying there as a citizen cannot arise. We have a very funny idea when we imagine that we can go and stay in Brahmaloka as a resident, as a guest, etc. Such a thing is not possible because Brahmaloka is all-pervading and inclusive of all things. If that is the case, we are also inside it, so how will we come back from Brahmaloka? We ourselves are Brahmaloka. The largest dimension of our soul is Brahmaloka. If this is our meditation, we will not come back; we will be lifted up in the Supreme Absolute. But if we think it is a kingdom which is vastly spread out, like this world, and we are only residents there, we will come back.

So, *ābrahmabhuvanālokāḥ punarāvartino'rjuna*: Even if we reach that abode of the Creator as an abode where we will reside, we will come back because it is in space and time; it is an extended kingdom. Because it is an extended kingdom, it is characterised by spatiality and temporality. That is the reason why when we enter there, we will have to come back.

Mām upetya tu kaunteya punarjanma na vidyate: “You will not be reborn after having attained Me.” Would we like to be reborn? If so, we will have freedom to be reborn as we like. But if we enter that which is not capable of coming back into space and time, we will enjoy that eternal beatitude.

Some cosmological information is given to us here in the succeeding verse, as a preparation for something more that is going to be told to us regarding the departure of the soul after leaving this body. The manner of going out of this body, and

ascending upwards, is described through the paths called the northern and the southern. In that context, we are told that Brahma's life is for one hundred years, and we have to imagine what kind of one hundred years it would be.

There are four *yugas*—called Krita, Treta, Dvapara and Kali. These are the time cycles or ages, as we say. We are said to be in Kali Yuga, the worst age, where there is conflict. The age of conflict is called Kali Yuga. This age is supposed to extend for 432,000 years. The duration of Dvapara Yuga is double that, the duration of Treta Yuga is triple, and Krita Yuga is quadruple. The total of all these figures is called one thousand divine years; but according to us, it is a multiple of several thousands of human years. Imagine what it means: 432,000 multiplied by 2, then multiplied by 3, and then multiplied by 4. That total is the duration of one day of Brahma. One day of Brahma is as long as this computation of the years of the four *yugas*, and one night of Brahma is equally long. This the is twelve hours of day and twelve hours of night of Brahma. What is the night? The *pralaya*, or the dissolution of the cosmos that will take place at the end of the *yugas*, is the night of Brahma.

There are two kinds of dissolution. There is dissolution of all life everywhere, but not dissolution of the elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether. They remain. The dissolution of all life takes place after one day of Brahma; and then he sleeps. When Brahma wakes up, he creates beings—gods, celestials, angels, men, beasts, etc.—once again, as he has done previously. But there is another kind of dissolution, which dissolves everything. The whole cosmos, including the five elements, is dissolved. After one hundred years of Brahma, the entire universe is dissolved, and Brahma also gets dissolved. He enters the Absolute.

Sahasrayugaparyantam ahar yad brahmaṇo viduḥ (8.17). One day of Brahma is one thousand years for the gods but,

according to the human concept, it is many millions of years. *Rātrim yugasahasrāntām te'ahorātravido janāḥ*: The length Brahma's night is the same.

Avyaktād vyaktayaḥ sarvāḥ prabhavantyaharāgame, rātryāgame pralīyante tatraivāvyaktasamjñake (8.18). When the day of Brahma commences, activity starts in the universe, just as we start our business after we get up in the morning. And, we do things today in the same way that we did them yesterday. *Yatha purvam akalpayat* (R.V. 10.190.3): Brahma created this world in the same way that he created it in earlier cycles of time. *Avyaktād*: When Brahma goes to sleep, all beings, including us, merge in the *avyakta prakriti*. It does not mean that we will be liberated. Just as in deep sleep we are not liberated, similarly, in this *avyakta prakriti*, or the unconscious universal where Brahma is in deep sleep, we too enter and sleep with Brahma; and when he wakes up, we also will wake up. The cosmic sleep does not mean liberation. This is referred to in Patanjali's Sūtras as *prakriti laya*, etc. Cosmic ignorance absorbs us in the same way that individual ignorance absorbs us in deep sleep.

Avyaktād vyaktayaḥ sarvāḥ prabhavantyaharāgame: From the unconscious, unknown, cosmic equilibrium of darkness which is the sleep of Brahma, arises the day of Brahma; and all creation sprouts forth, as plants rise up from the earth when it is raining. But when the day concludes, everything is withdrawn, and all life goes into sleep. *Rātryāgame pralīyante tatraivāvyaktasamjñake*: We are helplessly driven back to the cosmic sleep of Brahma in the same way that we helplessly go to sleep as individuals.

Bhūtagrāmaḥ sa evāyaṁ bhūtvā bhūtvā pralīyate (8.19): Endless is creation, and endless is dissolution. How many times we have come, and how many times we have gone! In all the eighty-four lakhs (8,400,000) of species through which

we have to pass, as they say, we are now at the human level. Perhaps we have passed through all these eighty-four lakhs of species. Many a time we have come, and many a time we have gone. Endless is creation, and endless is destruction. There is no beginning and no end for it. *Bhūtagrāmaḥ*: The total of all living beings enters and sinks into unconsciousness, and rises from unconsciousness, and again sinks into it, and rises up. Just as we sink into sleep and rise up to waking, and again sink into sleep and rise up to waking, etc., the same process also takes place in the cosmos: *bhūtagrāmaḥ sa evāyaṁ bhūtvā bhūtvā pralīyate, rātryāgamevaśaḥ pārtha prabhavaty aharāgame*.

Beyond that entanglement in *prakṛiti*'s ignorance, beyond that creativity and destructive process of the universe, there is the transcendent luminosity which is the Supreme Godhead—*paras tasmāt tu bhāvo'nyo'vyakto'vyaktāt sanātanaḥ*: Eternal radiance, light that shines beyond the darkness of the ignorance of the three *gunas* of *prakṛiti*.

Paras tasmāt tu bhāvo'nyo'vyakto'vyaktāt sanātanaḥ, yaḥ sa sarveṣu bhūteṣu naśyatsu na vinaśyati (8.20): If all people die, that Eternal Being will not die. Even if millions of Brahmas come and go, that unblinking Eternal is aware of all that is happening. In the Yoga Vasishtha, it is said that within the time that a great being like Vishnu or Siva closes his eyes and opens his eyes, millions of Brahmandas, or cosmoses, come and go. This is the mystery of the relativity of the cosmos.

Avyakto'kṣara ityuktas tam āhuḥ paramām gatim (8.21): The Supreme Abode of eternal beatitude is beyond even this cosmic ignorance, and that is the goal of all beings, including Brahma himself. *Te brahma-lokeṣu parāntakāle parāmṛtāḥ parimucyanti sarve* (M.U. 3.2.6): Together with Brahma, we merge into the Absolute at the end of time. *Avyakto'kṣara ityuktas tam āhuḥ paramām gatim, yaṁ prāpya na nivartante*

tad dhāma paramaṁ mama: Again it is said that after reaching That, we will not come back. *Tad dhāma paramaṁ mama*: “That is My abode.”

Puruṣaḥ sa paraḥ pārtha bhaktyā labhyas tvananyayā (8.22): That Supreme Abode, the great brilliance which is God Almighty, can be attained only by unconditioned devotion. This is only a repetition of the idea that has already been mentioned—that unconditioned devotion is the only way to God-realisation. Unconditioned devotion means wanting God only, and wanting nothing else at any time. *Puruṣaḥ sa paraḥ pārtha bhaktyā labhyas tvananyayā*. *Ananya bhakti* is a dispassionate devotion to God which cares not for the values of anything else in the world. *Anyā bhakti* is an adulterated kind of devotion which has love for something else also—*vyabhicharini bhakti*. *Avyabhicharini bhakti* is totally concentrated devotion on one thing only, to the exclusion of any other possibility. *Puruṣaḥ sa paraḥ pārtha bhaktyā labhyas tvananyayā*, *yasyāntaḥsthāni bhūtāni yena sarvam idaṁ tatam*: That transcendent thing beyond all concepts of even Brahmaloḥka is also here, just now. Do not be under the impression that it is a long journey in the process of time, for millions and millions of years, as if we are going to reach a distant star. It is nothing of the kind. It is a timeless experience and, therefore, it is an instantaneous experience. It is not dying and, therefore, it is not above us; it is also within us.

After the passing from this body, how do we approach the realms of being that are above us? Do we suddenly enter God as if we are shaken up by a kick, or do we move to God gradually, stage by stage? The stage by stage ascent to God is called *krama mukti*—a graduated ascent to the Supreme Being. The sudden illumination is called *sadyo mukti*—immediate dissolution in God. Immediate dissolution is like a drop on the surface of the ocean sinking into the ocean; it does not have

to travel any distance to go into the ocean. *Krama mukti* is like reaching a distant place by trudging along a long road and having many experiences on the way.

What kind of path it is that we are going to tread after the dispatch of the soul from this body? The coming verses describe to us the process of *krama mukti*, or gradual ascent through various stages—just as when we go to Badrinath there are so many *choultries* (halting places). We halt in one place and then move on, and halt in another place, and so on, until we reach our destination. We take rest in the *choultries* and resume our journey in the morning, and when it is sunset we halt at another *choultry*. We take rest there, have a little refreshment, and then continue onwards.

Similarly, there are various stages in our movement towards God. We do not suddenly jump like a rocket and rise to the topmost level. How are we going to ascend? What are the stages of the ascent? Here the ascent is to be taken in the sense of the ascent of a purified soul on the way to God. It is not an ascent to hell, or to a nether region, or treading the path of rebirth, etc. That is not described here, because after death we may tread the path of ascent towards God, or we may tread another path of coming back to this world through rebirth, or we may even go to hell; that is also possible. But that is not the subject here. The subject here is in connection with the purified soul who is going to reach God, and not the soul who not so purified as to deserve the instantaneous merging but has permission to go gradually by a self-purification process that takes place slowly, step by step.

Discourse 26

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER CONCLUDES

THE JOURNEY OF THE SOUL AFTER DEATH

The Eighth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita deals with the subject of life after death. The Puranas, the Upanishads, the Yoga Vasishtha and the Bhagavadgita contain many varieties of descriptions of the condition of the soul after it leaves this body. The Puranas, especially, go into a detailed, lurid description of the condition in which the soul finds itself—particularly if it has not done any merit, or if the merit it has done is so negligible that the wrongs it has committed outweigh the good or are on an equal footing with it.

The stories in the Garuda Purana and such other scriptures, even in the Bhagavata, are really frightening. When the soul departs from the body in the case of these lower, unpurified and negligibly religious souls, it is taken away by the messengers of Yama and placed before the Lord of Death for judgment.

It is said that Yama asks the soul, “What have you done?”

Ordinarily, it cannot remember anything. It will say, “I don’t know.”

The shock of separation from the body removes all memory, and it cannot remember what it has done in the previous life. It is said that then a hot rod, called a *yamadanda*, is kept on its head, and immediately it remembers its entire past. It knows every detail of the actions that it did, both good and bad.

The soul says, "I have done a little good, but have also made many mistakes and performed so many erroneous actions."

Yama asks, "What do you have to say about it now?"

The soul replies, "I have got relatives. They will expiate them for me. They will conduct *yajnas*, charities, worship, *sankirtans*, *bhajans* and meditations in my name, and I shall be free from the consequence of the sins that I have committed or the mistakes that I have made."

"Go then!" says Yama, "And see what they do."

Apparently, it takes ten days for the soul to be brought back, so some ceremony is usually done on the tenth, eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth days. The soul hovers around, observing what the relatives are doing, and Yama's messengers stand behind like policemen to see what is done. If an expiatory ceremony is done in the name of the soul, such as the Bhagavata Saptaham, the Rudra Yaga, the Narayana Bali and the Vishnu Yajna, and varieties of charities are done, and all those things that were dear to the soul are also given in gift, the effect of these good deeds is credited to the account of the soul and it is exonerated to that extent.

But suppose this is not done and, like modern boys, the relatives do not believe in these observances: "If our father died, let it go, that's all. We won't bother about it," and there is no charity, no goodwill, and they behave as if nothing has happened; or, they do not even believe that something happens after death because they think that there is no life after death. If that is the case, the soul is dragged back. When the policemen know that someone is a culprit, and it is confirmed, they deal with him very severely. If they know that he is going to be released and nothing is going to happen to him, they do not bother much about it. But if his relatives have done nothing, it is certain that he is going to be punished, so for one year they drag the soul to the kingdom of the Lord of Death. At

first they brought it within ten days because they wanted to know what was happening. When it is certain that it is going to be punished, they drag it, pull it, scratch and beat it, and it will be hungry and thirsty and bleeding. That is why another ceremony is done after one year; it takes one year for the soul to return to the abode of Yama. The *varshika* (annual) ceremony is very important. If nothing has been done on the tenth to thirteenth days after the passing of the soul, at least something should be done on the anniversary so that some mercy may be granted by Lord Yama before the sentence is passed.

If the soul has no merit at all, it will be sent to the land of punishment, whatever the punishment be. In the *Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana*, the *Garuda Purana*, etc., the type of punishment and difficulties that the soul has to undergo are described in such gory language that we would not like to be born into this world again.

When the soul is expunged of all its sins by suffering in the prison of Yama's hell, it is released. It is said that then it is sent to Rudraloka, and will not be allowed to leave. To release the soul from Rudra's clutches, Rudra Yajna is done. Then it is sent to Vaikuntha, so Vishnu Yajna is done; and after many, many years, the soul attains moksha. This is how a bad person gets purified in a very painful way, and then finally attains blessedness.

Or, if the soul has a tremendous attachment to relations and to wealth, it can be reborn into this world. A Muslim gentleman lived near a house in which a Hindu family had a little baby. The baby was very beautiful. The Muslim wanted to fondle it, sit it on his lap, but the Hindus would not allow the Muslim to touch the baby, which greatly disturbed him. The child grew up, and then the Muslim died. This child, which had grown up, started talking in Persian.

They asked, "What is this matter? Who are you?"

He replied, “I am that Muslim gentleman who wanted to caress this child, and you didn’t allow it; and now I am possessing it!”

This is the effect of attachments. And very intense attachments, which do not even give the soul time to take birth in this world, convert it into a ghost. *Preta yoni* is the outcome and, as described in the Bhagavata Purana, it hovers around in space, hungry and thirsty.

Here the Bhagavadgita describes the more glorious paths to the higher realms. Those who are not spiritually awakened but have done immensely good deeds reach a lower kingdom called Chandraloka, the realm of the moon, where they stay invisibly and enjoy the fruit of their good deeds. When the momentum of their good deeds, charitable deeds, etc., is exhausted, they come back into this world. But if a person is spiritually awakened and is not merely a good man—not merely a charitable or a philanthropic person—then the path is different. These two paths are called the northern path and the southern path.

Yatra kāle tvanāvṛttim āvṛttim caiva yoginaḥ, prayātā yānti tam kālām vakṣyāmi bharataṛṣabha (8.23): “I shall now tell you,” says Bhagavan Sri Krishna, “about that path treading which one returns, and that path treading which one does not return. These two paths I shall describe to you now—*uttaramarga* or *jyotirmarga*, and *dakshinamarga* or *dhumamarga*, as they are called.”

Agnir jotir ahaḥ śuklaḥ ṣaṇmāsā uttarāyaṇam, tatra prayātā gacchanti brahma brahmavido janāḥ (8.24): Everything is filled with light, everything is filled with divinity, and everything is superintended over by a divinity. The fire of cremation—that is the *agni*, the physical fire, which has a divinity of its own—assumes a divine form in the case of a person who is to rise up to the celestial realms. Then there is a divinity superintending

over the daytime, in contrast with the night. If a person passes away during the daytime, and during the bright half of the lunar month, and during the northern movement of the sun, he shall reach the solar orb—Suryaloka. From there, he will be taken up further.

The Upanishads describe many more stages than the ones mentioned here. And at a particular stage beyond the sun, a superhuman entity is supposed to come and take the soul by the hand. Up to the solar orb, or even a little beyond, is called the realm of lightning. That is, beyond the sun, the lightning of Brahmaloka flashes forth. The individuality consciousness of the soul slowly gets diminished at that time, and it is not aware of any self-effort. It does not know that it is moving at all, inasmuch as the ego is almost gone. It is said that at that time an *amanava purusha* deputed by Brahma himself comes down in a luminous form, and leads the soul to the abode of Brahma, the Creator. This is the path of *krama mukti*, or gradual liberation, in which the soul is supposed to be glorying in Brahmaloka until Brahma himself is dissolved at the end of time—at the end of a hundred years of his life—and then the Absolute Brahman is reached.

But there is a possibility of immediate salvation without passing through all these stages—a hundredfold promotion, as it were. It is the dissolution of the soul in the supreme Brahman at this very spot. The soul need not have to travel in space and time because it is a *jivanmukta purusha*, one who has attained to a consciousness where there is no distance to be travelled. For him, there is no solar orb or anything else. He has spread his consciousness everywhere, in all beings: *sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ* (12.4). He is the soul of all beings, like Suka Maharishi, Vyasa, Vasishtha, etc. When his soul spreads itself everywhere in the cosmos, where is the question of moving? *Na tasya prāṇā utkrānti* (B.U. 4.4.6): His *pranas* do not depart, as

is the case of other people. *Brahmaiva san brahmāpyeti*: They dissolve here, just now. That is, the moment the soul departs the body, it enters the supreme Brahman, the Absolute, then and there, without having to pass through all these stages. But in the case of *krama mukti*, the graduated steps mentioned in the Bhagavadgita, it is different.

The divinity of fire, the divinity of daytime, the divinity of the lunar month's bright half, and the divinity ruling over the northern movement of the sun will take care of the soul and bring it up. In the Moksha Parva of the Mahabharata there is the story of a great ascetic who rose up from his body, and a little flame rising up through the sky could be seen. It rose higher and higher until it reached the orb of the sun, where a divine being emerged from the solar orb and received it. According to our tradition, the sun is not a material substance. It is a divinity—*hiranmaya purusha*—in which a golden-coloured Narayana is seated. Just as a human being is not a body, the sun is also not a body; and just as we see only the body of a person and do not see what the person is on the inside, we do not see divinity of the sun. We see only its outer appearance, which we call helium, atomic energy, etc., in just the same way as we call a person bone and flesh, nerves, blood, etc.—which is not a correct description. So there is something beyond the human concept here. Divinities are everywhere in the cosmos, in every atom, which is also controlled and enveloped by the universal God. If God is everywhere, why should He not be in every atom and in everything? In the case of such a realisation, there is immediate dissolution.

Dhūmo rātris tathā kṛṣṇaḥ ṣaṇmāsā dakṣiṇāyanam, tatra cāndramasam jyotir yogī prāpya nivartate (8.25). There are those who have not spiritually awakened themselves, have not done spiritual meditation, and have an insufficient devotion to God. Even if they are very good people, highly charitable

and humanistic in their approach, they will not be allowed to move along this northern path to the sun. They will not go to Brahmaloaka. They will go to a lower realm, called Chandraloka. The smoke which rises from the fire during cremation will be their guiding principle. The dark half of the lunar month, and the southern movement of the sun, signify a deficiency in divine powers and a lesser chance of the soul going up along the path of brightness. It will reach Chandraloka, where it will enjoy the fruits of the good deeds it has done. Whatever good deeds were done will have their effect. Every action produces a reaction. Any good, charitable deed will bring the soul an abundance of joy in Chandraloka; but the soul will come back, because anyone who has not realised the universality of God will come back. Only a soul who is totally devoted to God will gradually pass through these stages of divine ordinances to the Ultimate Being. But if we are united with God here itself, we will immediately merge into God.

Śuklakṛṣṇe gatī hyete jagataḥ śāśvate mate (8.26). Broadly speaking, these are two paths of the soul after death. Either we go that way or we go this way, according to our karma and our spiritual status. *Śuklakṛṣṇe gatī hyete jagataḥ śāśvate mate, ekayā yāty anāvṛttim anyayāvartate punaḥ*: By the one path, one does not come back to this world; by the other path, one returns.

Naite sṛtī pārtha jānan yogī muhyati kaścana, tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu yogayukto bhavārjuna (8.27). Having known clearly that these are the two paths, who would like to tread the lesser path? “Therefore, be a yogi, O Arjuna, and try to tread the upper path.” Whoever knows the merits and demerits of these two paths will certainly pursue the path of merit rather than the path of demerit. It is the lack of knowledge that prevents us from working for our own salvation. But if we know that such a thing exists, and that even after death our karmas will pursue

us wherever we go—that even if we go to the nether regions, we will be caught by the nemesis of our actions, the results of what we have done, because there is a law which punishes us—we will obey the law. And if we know that there are these two paths, and there is a chance of our entering into the lower one, we will certainly work to attain the higher one. Knowing this, we will certainly become wiser and, therefore, work for a state of establishment in yoga—union with the divinities in the various graduated scales of development, or with the Supreme Absolute itself, whatever the case may be. Either way, one will be a supreme yogi who is united with the Absolute now, or one will be a graduated yogi who will move systematically through the stages mentioned. Anyway, knowing this, one will not come to grief. *Tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu yogayukto bhavārjuna*: “Therefore, become a yogi, Arjuna!”

Vedeṣu yajñeṣu tapaḥsu caiva dāneṣu yat puṇyaphalaṁ pradiṣṭam, atyeti tat sarvaṁ idaṁ viditvā yogī paraṁ sthānam upaiti cādyam (8.28). These discourses that you are hearing now as *satsanga*—the knowledge of these wonderful things beyond this world that you are gaining—is greater than all the good deeds that you do by way of charity, and all the sacrifices that you perform. All the merits that you will accrue by doing charity, good deeds and even the study of scriptures like the Vedas, and by doing austerity and living an abstemious life will bring you some good results. But this *phala* of *satsanga*, the blessing of this highly purifying training that your soul is undergoing by listening to these glorious eternal realities, certainly has a greater capacity to produce an effect than all the charities, studies and scriptures, etc. It transcends even the Vedas, and you attain to that place, that abode, which is the Ancient One. With this, we conclude the Eighth Chapter.

Discourse 27

THE NINTH CHAPTER BEGINS

THE KINGLY KNOWLEDGE AND THE GREATNESS OF GOD

The Ninth Chapter is something like the Seventh Chapter. Whatever we have been told in the Seventh Chapter by way of a universal religion is explained in a different way, in a more deviated style, with some detailed descriptions. Practically, the Ninth Chapter is a continuation of the very same theme that we had in the Seventh Chapter, with the Eighth Chapter in between with its message of it being necessary for us to know what will happen to us after death even if we are highly religious people. The Ninth Chapter is a highly religious scripture by itself.

Idam tu te guhyatamaṁ (9.1): “This is the secret of secrets that I am going to tell you.” *Pravakṣyāmy anasūyave*: “Because you are highly devoted to Me and you are not prejudiced against anything, I shall tell you this secret of secrets.” *Jñānaṁ vijñānasahitaṁ yaj jñātvā mokṣyase’śubhāt*. The reference to *jnana* and *vijnana* was also made in the Seventh Chapter. Now once again it is repeated: “I shall tell you everything regarding *jnana* and *vijnana*—that is, knowledge as well as spiritual experience. Or it can also mean the knowledge of everything connected with this world and the knowledge of the eternal realities. I shall describe to you what these are.”

This is called *rajavidya*, the kingly science and the kingly secret. *Rājavidyā rājaguhyam* (9.2): “It is as secret as the

king's abode, and as glorious as the king himself. Such is this *vidya*, this knowledge into which I am going to initiate you. *Rājavidyā rājaguhyam pavitram idam uttamam*: Most sacred is this knowledge; best of all learning is this. *Pratyakṣāvagamaṁ dharmyam*: You will know the result of it by direct experience. The proof of the pudding is in the eating of it. You will know what the meaning of all this is by direct experience, and you will rejoice to have that experience. *Susukham*: Immense rejoicing—from blessedness you move to blessedness by knowing this truth. *Kartum avyayam*: It is easy to practise, and the effect it produces is imperishable.”

Aśraddadhānāḥ puruṣā dharmasyāśya paramtapa, aprāpya mām nivartante mṛtyusaṁsāravartmani (9.3): “Those who do not have faith in this kind of teaching, and are attached to the objects of sense, come back to this world of mortality and this suffering of *samsara* because they do not know that I pervade all things. They are mostly motivated by the sense organs; they believe what they see, and their reason is not sufficiently operative. They are people without faith—*aśraddadhānāḥ puruṣā*. They do not know what the supreme universal dharma is. They do not reach Me and, therefore, they come back to this great sorrow-ridden world of materiality and sensuality.”

Mayā tatam idam sarvaṁ jagad avyaktamūrtinā (9.4): “Invisibly, un-understandably, as it were, I am pervading all things. There is no place, no nook or cranny or corner, where I am not. I bring about an organic relation among all the things in the world, though they are millions of light years away from the point of view of sense perception.” Something may be millions and millions of light years away, yet it is connected with us just here. The moment we sigh here on this earth, it is known in the abode of Brahma that we sighed. Such is the organic relationship of all things, because there is a life principle invisibly operating in all things. “I am present in all things.

Everything is pervaded by Me. There is no location where I am not. You cannot hide anything from Me.” *Mayā tatam idaṁ sarvaṁ jagad avyaktamūrtinā, matsthāni sarvabhūtāni*: “All things are located in Me.” This is also a repetition of something that is said in the Seventh Chapter. *Matsthāni sarvabhūtāni na cāhaṁ teṣvavasthitaḥ*: “I am not in them.”

All particulars are in the Universal; the Universal is not in the particulars. The waves are in the ocean; the ocean is not in the waves. We can draw a similar analogy when the Lord says, “I am in everything, but things are not in Me.” Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, or *sat-chit-ananda svarupa*, is present in every name and form, but name and form are not in *sat-chit-ananda*. God is in the world, but the world is not in God. This is the reason why the Lord says, “Everything is in Me, but I am not in them. I remain transcendent though, at the same time, I am immanent in all things.”

Na ca matsthāni bhūtāni (9.5): “I said that everything is in Me, but now I am also saying that, in another way, they are not in Me.” This is because the world of dream cannot be sticking to our waking consciousness. “Nothing in the world can be in Me, inasmuch as the world does not exist for Me. Though I said earlier that inasmuch as I am immanent in all things and I pervade all things, all things may be said to be in Me, now I say that I am without externality, without space, without time. Therefore, things cannot be there; and therefore, the question of things residing in Me also does not arise.” *Na ca matsthāni*—immediately the previous statement is contradicted. “Things are also not in Me, for another reason altogether.”

Paśya me yogam aiśvaram: “Look at My glory; see My majesty.” “Look at Me,” the Almighty says. “How wonderful is this majesty of My abode where I am everywhere. Everything is in Me, and yet nothing is in Me.”

Advanced thought on true religion was briefly delineated in the Seventh Chapter. Many of the ideas occurring in the Ninth Chapter are, to some extent, just expository of the thoughts expressed in the Seventh Chapter.

At the time of the dissolution of the universe, everyone is withdrawn into the cosmic bosom; and all individuals, all *jivas*, lie there in that state, like unconscious sleepers. When Brahma is dissolved at the end of time, after the period of one hundred years of his regime, the whole universe is dissolved. Not even the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether—remain. Everything goes, and all created beings are withdrawn into the causal sheath of the cosmos. In that condition of cosmic sleep, one will not know what ‘is’ and what ‘is not’.

The Manusmirti says: *asid asitidam tamobhutam aprajnatam alakshanam apratargyam avijneyam prasuptamiva sarvatah*. In the beginning, it looked as if the whole universe was sleeping. *Tamobhutam*: Darkness enveloped the whole cosmos. *Aprajnatam*: Unknown to everybody. *Alakshanam*: Indescribable—all were sleeping.

When another hundred years of sleep pass, there is a rising of Brahma once again; and one does not know whether it is the same Brahma who rises, or another. Evidently, it is not the same. It is mentioned in the Valmiki Ramayana that the next Brahma will be Hanuman: *svayam nava vyakaranarthavetta brahma bhavatyapi te prasadat*. Of all the created beings, only Hanuman has been found fit to be Brahma in the next cycle. We are also here, reading so much, but we have not been selected. The selection committee has been very strict, and it finally found Hanuman to be the best person: *brahma bhavatyapi te prasadat*. There are so many great men, but only Hanuman has been selected. He must be some great genius.

Even according to certain doctrines of modern science, there is the enunciation of this cyclic rotation of

the universe, in which the individual patterns remain the same while the spirits indwelling these patterns differ. It is a very strange doctrine, which is parallel in pattern to the Indian doctrines of cycle. *Yatha purvam akalpayat*: In the same manner as creation took place earlier, once again creation will take place. The same forms will be there, the same mould, the same shape, the same persons, the same *avatars*—the same Rama and the same Krishna—will recur again and again for millions and millions of times, but the inner soul indwelling these forms will be different. This is the doctrine of some modern thinkers like Alfred North Whitehead, and it is corroborated by Indian thinkers who believe in the cycles of creation.

When we enter into this cosmic bosom, it does not mean that we will be liberated. We will be only in a state of unconsciousness. The dissolution of the universe does not mean dissolution of our karmas. The karmas lie there, as creditors may sleep with us and get up in the morning with us in order to harass us for the dues that we owe them. All the good deeds and bad deeds—in a highly subtle, rarefied form—will stick to us, as they stick to us even in our ordinary deep sleep. Our karmas are not destroyed when we become completely unconscious in the state of deep sleep because when we wake up in the morning, we do not become different persons merely because we were unconscious. We remain the same person when we get up in the morning because what we deserve sticks to us like a fine potency—*adrishya*—invisible to the eyes. Our deeds cling to us even in the state of deep sleep, and they cling to us even when the whole universe is dissolved. So there is no great point in thinking that we will be absolved of all our commitments when the universe is dissolved and we merge into the bosom of the cosmic *prakriti*. It is another long, long sleep in comparison with the shorter sleep of ours.

The Lord says: *sarvabhūtāni kaunteya prakṛtiṁ yānti māmikām, kalpakṣaye punas tāni kalpādaḥ viśṛjāmyaham* (9.7). At the end of the *kalpa* (which is the cycle of time I described previously) the whole universe gets withdrawn into *prakṛiti*. The Puranas refer to it as the baby Narayana. The Puranas have a fantastic description of all these conditions, where the little baby Lord Krishna, Narayana—we may call him by whatever name—is lying on this cosmic ocean on a little banyan leaf, sucking his own toe as children sometimes do. *Vatasya patra-sya pute sayanam balam mukundam manasa smarami*: That crawling child sleeps on that little leaf. That child is physically very small, but inside that little baby the potentials of the whole cosmos are dancing. He is called *anantakoti brahmāṇḍa nayaka*: the ruler of the endless universes. Thus, this drama of creation goes on endlessly, endlessly, endlessly—without beginning, without end.

Prakṛtiṁ svām avaṣṭabhya viśṛjāmi punaḥ punaḥ, bhūta-grāmam imaṁ kṛtsnam avaśaṁ prakṛter vaśāt (9.8): Because of our involvement in the three *gunas* of *prakṛiti*, we neither have the choice whether to enter that ocean or not, nor do we have the option to come back from that. *Avaśaṁ*: We are helplessly driven into it, and are also helplessly brought back—as helplessly we go to sleep, and helplessly we wake up. We cannot stop our sleeping, nor can we stop our waking. A miniature cosmic drama is taking place in our own daily life. The universe expands into an endless dimension which includes all *jivas*. But the Lord says, “I am not doing anything, really speaking.”

Na ca mām tāni karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanamjaya, udāsīnavad āsīnam asaktaṁ teṣu karmasu (9.9). God is a transcendent Being, and therefore, even if He is immanent and actually indwelling in these potential individuals, He is not contaminated. He cannot be said to be doing anything at all. The

process of creation and destruction do not seem to affect the original will of the Supreme Being because of its being transcendent and immanent simultaneously. It is involved in every bit of creation, and yet it is not involved in anything. *Matsthāni sarvabhūtāni na cāhaṁ teṣv avasthitaḥ*: “I am in all things, and yet I am not in anything. All beings are in Me, and yet nobody is in Me.” *Na ca matsthāni bhūtāni*: “The whole creation is due to Me, and yet it is not due to Me.” The *gunas* of *prakṛiti* cannot in any way touch the supreme transcendence of the Absolute.

Mayādhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sacarācaram (9.10): “The whole cosmic dance is due to My presence, of course.” The progenating capacity of *prakṛiti* through the three *gunas* is due to the light of the Cosmic Being that is activating it, as our lives are activated by the light of the sun that rises in the morning. The whole world gets transformed constantly, and never rests in one condition—*jagad viparivartate*—on account of the restlessness that is inherent in the *gunas* of *prakṛiti*; and their activity is enhanced into a continuous movement by the action of the consciousness of the Supreme Purusha—Bhagavan, the Absolute. But, “People who are limited to their own bodies, and cannot think beyond their skin, cannot know that in My transcendent capacity I incarnate Myself as the *adhyatma*, or the essential soul of all beings. People who do not have proper understanding, who are involved in the clutches of the *gunas* of *prakṛiti*, cannot appreciate this mystery of Mine that I am transcendently disconnected from everything that is taking place in the realm of *prakṛiti*, though everything is taking place due to Me only.”

Avajānanti mām mūḍhā mānuṣīm tanum āśritam (9.11): “People imagine that I have got a form.” We say that Lord Krishna was in Brindavan, that he was in Dvaraka, that he was in Kurukshetra, and so on; but his essential nature was

nothing of the kind. That which is not human was masquerading in that apparently human form. Otherwise, that apparently human form could not have assumed a non-human Cosmic Form—which it did on various occasions. Bhagavan Sri Krishna's Visvarupa was shown four times during his life, including once in the Bhagavadgita, and each time the presentation was qualitatively different. The Visvarupa appeared in a particular manner the first time, it appeared differently the second time, was another thing altogether the third time, and was something altogether different the fourth time. It was a Universal manifestation, no doubt, but it looked different according to the conditions or the exigencies of the time. In the context of the Bhagavadgita, it appeared as the Time Spirit that was up and doing for the destruction of all beings, as will be described in the Eleventh Chapter. "People think that I am a human being—walking with two feet, living in a palace with a large family—but nothing of the kind is My nature. My body, My personality, is only a focusing point of a larger existence which is My real nature, which pervades all space and transcends space and time."

Moghāśā moghakarmāṇo moghajñānā vicetasah, rākṣasīm āsurīm caiva prakṛtiṁ mohinīm śritāḥ (9.12): People who are infested with the *rakshasi prakriti* of intense *rajas* and *tamas*, who believe in the reality of the external world of matter, who also believe, simultaneously, in the internal world of the physical body—these people who are of a *rakshasa* nature are deluded by their involvement in these *gunas* of *prakriti*. *Daivi prakriti* is a divine nature, to which reference was made in the Seventh Chapter. It is the higher *prakriti*, in contrast with the lower *prakriti* of instincts, sensations, mentations, intellections, etc.

Mahātmānas tu mām pārtha daivīm prakṛtiṁ āśritāḥ, bhajantyananyamanaso jñātvā bhūtādim avyayam (9.13):

“Knowing Me as the Origin of all things, knowing Me as Supreme beyond all things, knowing Me as All-in-all, knowing that in Me everything can be found, knowing that I am the source of immortality, these great souls, mahatmas, resort to Me, being endowed with the highest quality of *sattva*, which is *daivi prakṛiti*. They adore Me in their spirit, they worship Me in their spirit, they praise Me in their spirit, they concentrate on Me through their spirit, and wish that their spirit gets merged in My spirit.” *Ananyamanasaḥ*: “Those whose mind cannot be distracted in any direction other than My Universal existence, such people I consider as mahatmas, the great souls that inhabit this cosmos.” Such great souls are very few in number, as the Yoga Vasishtha tells us. It is said that they are very few in number because the earth cannot bear the weight of such great people. *Mahātmānas tu mām pārtha daivīm prakṛtim āśritāḥ, bhajantyananyamanaso jñātvā bhūtādim avyayam*: Great souls are very few in number; wicked people are multifarious. In one of his commentaries, Sankaracharya says that gods are lesser in number than demons.

Mahatmas are very few, and two mahatmas cannot be in one place. It is said that Bernard Shaw was invited to come to India during Mahatma Gandhi’s lifetime. He said, it seems, “I cannot go to India, inasmuch as two mahatmas cannot be in one country. Because Mahatma Gandhi is already there, and I am also a mahatma, and two mahatmas cannot be in the same place, I am not going. One country can have only one mahatma, as only one lion can rule in a jungle.”

Satataṁ kīrtayanto mām yatantaś ca dṛḍhavrataḥ, namasyantaś ca mām bhaktyā nityayuktā upāsate (9.14): “They dance and sing, and are in a state of ecstasy due to communion with My great, glorious spirit. They always sing about My greatness and glory, and speak of Me wherever they go. In the streets, in the marketplace, in the house, in *satsangas*,

in family circles—everywhere they talk of Me.” An example is Saint Tukaram, who had no other thought wherever he went. Whether it is in a shop, in a marketplace, in a house or in a *satsanga* hall, it is one continuous, ecstatic thought which compels them to glorify God wherever they go. *Satataṁ kīrtayanto mām yatantaś ca dṛḍhavrataḥ*: “And perpetually striving to come nearer and nearer to Me, so that they become one with Me.”

Namasyantaś ca: Always prostrating themselves in temples, in holy *tirthas*, near holy trees and to holy saints and sages. Wherever there is a pre-eminence of the manifestation of divinity in this world, to that place and to that thing they resort and offer themselves through deep prostration. These great souls are the humblest people in the world. They prostrate themselves before anybody, even before a child. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was one great example. He would touch the feet of anyone, even a baby; it did not matter. Humility is the prerogative of great mahatmas. The greater they are, the smaller they look; and they do not seem to exist at all in their personality because of their not being in one place as egos. They pervade all places as veritable representations of God’s glory in this world. They are called gods moving in the world, great souls veritably representing God.

“They worship Me not merely by dancing and singing and prostration, but also by an inward communion of their souls.” *Jñānayajñena cāpyanye yajanto mām upāsate* (9.15): “In this wisdom of the spirit which is *jnana yajna*, they behold Me in all varieties of forms.” *Ekatvena pṛthaktvena bahudhā viśva-tomukham*: “As I am everywhere, they can behold Me as one Being existing everywhere; or they can behold Me as two realities indwelling as a transcendent element and also as an immanent element; or they may look upon Me as a multifaceted Reality indwelling many souls.” God can be visualised as

a manifold manifestation, as the souls of all created beings; or He can be considered as a dual manifestation, transcendent and immanent; or He can be beheld as one only. It is said that Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa once came to Benares to have *darshan* of the great saint and sage Trailanga Swami, a great *siddha*. The greatness of that *siddha* was such that it drew even Ramakrishna Paramahansa. It appears that Sri Ramakrishna put a question to Trailanga Swami: “Maharaj, how many gods are there?” [Swamiji raises three fingers, then two fingers, then one finger.] That was the answer. “Yes I understand you.” The great disciple understood the great Master’s significant gesture: God is threefold, God is twofold, God is single. *Ekatvena prthaktvena bahudhā viśvatomukham*: In any form we can worship Him.

This is the great charity of feeling and vision that we develop when we become the greatest of souls. The greatest of souls are highly charitable in their feelings, in their gestures, in their speech, in their behaviour, in their actions. *Ekatvena prthaktvena*: *Prthakt* means double, two; *bahudhā* means manifold. *Ekatvena prthaktvena bahudhā viśvatomukham*. According to Sankaracharya, there is one reality; according to Ramanuja, there are two realities; according to Madhva, there are many realities. Therefore, all the three Acharyas are satisfied with this half verse that Bhagavan Sri Krishna speaks here, which satisfies all viewpoints, as it were.

Rama asked Hanuman, “Who are you? Please tell me. Describe yourself.”

Hanuman’s replied, *Dehabuddhyat daso’ham*: “If you think that I am a body, that I am totally different from you, I am your servant.” *Jivabuddhyat tvadamshatah*: “If you think that I am a soul, I am a part of you.” *Atmabuddhyat tvamevahanam*: “If you think that I am the spirit, I am you only.”

Ekatvena prthaktvena bahudhā viśvatomukham: “As totally different from you, I am your servant; as part of you, I am your soul; and as yourself, I am the Atman. I am everything.”

Now the spirit of the teaching rises into a great tempo of expression, preparing the field for the final Universal manifestation in the form of the Visvarupa in the Eleventh Chapter. “I am all the sacrifices that the Vedic seers perform.” *Ahaṁ kratur* (9.16): “All the *yajnas*, worships, sacrifices that people perform through the Smritis, or code of ethics such as Manu, Yajnavalkya, Parasara, etc., that is also Me.”

Ahaṁ kratur ahaṁ yajñaḥ svadhāham ahaṁ auśadham. Once in a month or once in a year there is the *śraddha* ceremony, in which rice balls are offered to the ancestors. “The spirit indwelling in that performance also is Myself. I am behind the medicine that you take when you are ill. I am the curing force, the curative element in all the medicines.” *Mantra’ham*: “The mantra that you chant during your *japa*, I am inside it.” *Ahaṁ evājyam*: “The ghee, or the clarified butter that you pour during your sacrifice, I am inside that.” *Ahaṁ agniḥ*: “The fire that is blazing forth in the *yajna*, that is also Myself. The *bhasma* that comes out after the offering is made, that is also Myself.”

“I am the grandfather of all creation. I am the father of everything.” *Pitāham asya jagata* (9.17): “I am the father, the Paternal Supreme. This world is my progeny, as it were. I am the father, the Supreme Father in Heaven, of this cosmos.” *Mātā dhātā pitāmaha*: “At the same time, I am also the mother.” “I am the sustainer, the father and the mother of all beings; and I am the grandfather of everybody, being the father even of Brahma himself. I am the one Supreme Reality that is to be finally known, after knowing which, there is no need of knowing anything else.” *Vedyam pavitram omkāra*: “I am the spirit behind the *omkara*, *pranava*. The cosmic vibration is

Myself only.” *Rk sāmā yajur eva ca*: “The three Vedas extol Me. The spirit behind the mantras of the three Vedas—Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda—is Myself only.” The one God is praised in all the mantras of the three Vedas—Rig, Yajur, Sama.

Gatir bhartā (9.18): “I am the final resort of all people. When everything goes wrong, finally you have to come to Me only. I am the *gati*, the final abode, the final resort, the *sarana*, the home and the resting place of everybody. I am the supporter, the sustainer and the nourisher of all beings. I am the overlord of all beings; all gods are below Me, and none is equal to Me. I am the witness, and yet not involved in all this drama of creation, notwithstanding the fact that nothing can move without Me. I am the abode supreme—*nivāsaḥ*—and the friend of all beings.” *Śaraṇam suhṛt*: “As I am the real friend of all created beings, the real friend of every one of you, you have to come to Me one day or the other as a final resort.” *Prabhavaḥ*: “Everything proceeds from Me.” *Pralayaḥ*: “Everything is dissolved into Me.” *Sthānam*: “It rests in Me, finally.” *Nidhānam*: “The very root of all things.” *Bījam*: “The essential seed of creation.” *Avyayam*: “Imperishable I am.”

Tapāmyaham ahaṁ varṣaṁ nigrṇhāmyutsṛjāmi ca (9.19): “I create heat through the sun. I create rain by the force of my will. I also withdraw the rain when it is my will. I release and I withdraw the forces of nature.” This sometimes looks kind, and sometimes looks very unkind. When God releases His energy through the forces of nature, nature seems to be scintillating, smiling and raining, and everything is green and flourishing; but when He withdraws His energy, it becomes dried up, as in a drought.

“I am the final immortal seat of all souls; I am also the death of all beings. Immortality and death, both are Me. It is I Who transforms all mortal elements into the deathless eternity of My own transcendent Being. It is also I Who

destroys everything by the process of the evolutionary advance of nature and the cycle of time.” The many cycles are referred to in the earlier verses. *Sad asaccāham arjuna*: “I am existence and non-existence.” He has left nothing unsaid.

“I am existence and non-existence, being and non-being, this and that, here and there, now and then. There is nothing which I am not. But very few people realise this glory of Mine.” They go to the sacrificial *yajnasalas* and temples of worship and externally offer adorations, and perform sacrifices for gaining joy in the heaven of Indra by employing the mantras of the Veda for *yajnas* like Rajasuya, Asvamedha, Somayaga, etc., as described in the Brahmana portions of the Vedas. They do this because they want to rejoice in heaven, and they expect this to be attained through the sacrifices that they make by means of the mantras of the Vedas. They do go to heaven, no doubt; but the merits produced by the performance of the greatest of sacrifices have a beginning and an end. As these merits originated in the sacrifice, they will also end, by the exhaustion thereof through experience. After we enjoy the glories of Indra’s heaven, we will fall headlong down to the earth. Therefore, there is no point in our asking for Svarga, or heavenly joys, through the performance of Vedic sacrifices or through externally motivated rituals of any kind, even if they be in the form of worship in a temple. Such people who go to Svargaloka, or heaven, enter the abode of Indra and enjoy the divine blessedness of that place. Then afterwards—*kṣiṇe puṇye martyalokaṁ viśanti*—when the *puṇyas*, or merits, of these people slowly diminish and finally get extinguished, they come to this world once again—*evaṁ trayīdharmam*.

Traividyā māṁ somapāḥ pūtapāpā yajñair iṣtvā svargatiṁ prārthayante, te puṇyam āsādy surendralokaṁ aśnanti divyān divi devabhogān; te taṁ bhuktvā svargalokaṁ viśālaṁ kṣiṇe puṇye martyalokaṁ viśanti, evaṁ trayīdharmam anuprapannā

gatāgataṁ kāmakāmā labhante (9.20-21): Those who run after the pleasures of sense, those who want to rejoice through the manifestations of their individual personalities—which persist even in heaven because of the fact of egoism persisting there even in a subtle form—their joys come to an end and they come back, like fallen angels bereft of all glory, suffering once again the turmoil of earthly existence.

Now comes a pendant verse. A pendant is a very significant ornamentation in a garland. Even in a flower garland, there is one big flower in the centre called the pendant, which glorifies and adds beauty to the entire garland, whether it is a gold ornament or a flower garland. Some such thing is this verse that we are hearing now. *Ananyāś cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate, teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānām yogakṣemaṁ vahāmyaham* (9.22): “I shall take care of everybody who is undividedly united with Me. I shall provide whatever they do not have, and after providing them with whatever they do not have, I shall also take care to see that it is not taken away from them.” This verse is highly significant, the meaning of which we shall consider a little later.

Discourse 28

THE NINTH CHAPTER CONCLUDES

UNDIVIDED DEVOTION TO GOD

Ananyās cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate, teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānām yogakṣemaṁ vahāmyaham (9.22): “If you resort to Me, it shall be My duty to take care of you. I shall provide you with all your requirements, and I shall also see that what you have been provided with is secure.” This is a compassionate statement. Not only will we be given what we want, but that which is given will be protected, safeguarded.

Commentators have a question: Is not God kind to everybody, or is He kind only to those who resort to Him in consciousness? Does He not provide food, clothing and shelter to everybody, or does He give it only to those who resort to Him?

Yes, it is true that everyone is taken care of by the Almighty Lord, and that even an ant that crawls is given what it needs. But it is said that in the case of ordinary individuals, the protection is granted through a series of operations. Their karmic bodies are associated with the Supreme Being in a very indirect manner, whereas direct action is different from indirect help that is given through accessories, agents, lesser gods, or through the fructification of karma. In the case of those who are perfectly united with God—like saints Tukaram, Jnanadev, Ekanath and others—God does not merely provide what they need; He becomes a kind of servant, as it were, of these *bhaktas*.

There was a Brahmin who was fond of this *sloka*. He devoted himself entirely to this one verse, and trusted entirely in God's mercy and compassion and capacity to provide him everything. He was a beggar, and had to go for alms every day. He had a family which he had to feed—children crying for food—and every day he had to go about to get enough alms for the maintenance of his family. One day it so happened that even though he had wandered throughout the streets the entire day until sunset, he could not get even one grain of rice. He came back disappointed.

The children asked, "Papa! Where is the food?"

His wife asked, "What has happened?"

He replied, "I do not know. God has deserted me. He has not fulfilled His promise. I tried my best by wandering throughout the day, but I could not get even one grain of cereal."

He children were crying, and his wife was anxious.

"False is this promise!" the Brahmin exclaimed in anger.

In those days, scriptures were written on palm leaves, as there was no printing on paper. So the verse from the Bhagavadgita—*ananyāś cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate, teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānām yogakṣemaṁ vahāmyaham*—was written on a palm leaf. He tore that *sloka* with a nail, thinking that is a false promise, and left the house in disgust.

About an hour or so after he had left, a boy came to the house with a big bag full of cereals and grains, etc., threw it on the veranda, and loudly called to the Brahmin's wife who was inside, "Here are the rations sent by your husband." But the boy's tongue was torn and bleeding.

The wife asked, "Who sent this?"

"Your husband has sent it."

"My husband? I am very glad. What is the matter with you?"

“He was very angry with me because I was a little late, so he tore my tongue,” replied the boy.

“This is a horrible man! What kind of person is he? You are a servant, you brought the rations, and he has the cruelty to tear your tongue?” As she was saying this, the boy vanished.

When the Brahmin came back, his wife said to him, “What has happened to you? You are a fool. Are you out of your mind? You tore the tongue of the boy who brought the rations which you sent.”

“I didn’t send any rations,” he said. “I didn’t tear the tongue of anybody. Where are the rations?”

She showed him the bag. “The rations are sufficient for a month,” she said, “but blood was pouring from where the boy’s tongue had been torn.”

He fell at the feet of that lady and said, “You are my Guru from today because you had *darshan* of the Lord. I am a sinner. Because I tore the *sloka*, I could not see Him.”

There are many stories of this kind. There was an incident that took place in the Punjab sometime back. A railway guard had to be on duty at 8 p.m. in the evening, and before that he happened to go to a *satsang*. He thought that he would remain in *satsang* until 8 o’clock and then go to the station. The *satsang* inspired him to such an extent that he fell into a state of ecstasy. He remained in this state all night, and forgot the time. In the morning, he became conscious that he had not gone on duty at the railway station and thought, “What happened to the train? What is the matter? Now what will happen to me?”

He repented very much, and went to the chief officer and said, “I am very sorry. I could not come on duty. I do not know what happened to the train. I was to be on guard duty.”

“What is the matter?” the officer asked. “You were on duty. I saw you.”

“Don’t talk to me sarcastically. I could not come.”

“What are you saying? The train went on time. You were there. See your signature in the attendance register.”

His attendance was marked, and his signature was also there. He was stunned. It seems he wept before the Almighty and said, “O Lord! If Thou art so kind to me, I shall devote my entire life to you only!” He immediately submitted a letter of resignation, left the service, and spent the rest of his life doing *bhajan* and *kirtan*.

The lives of saints are replete with instances of this kind. Another case is Bhadrachala Ramadas, who was put in prison because he could not replace the gold coins of a Nawab, which he had distributed to the poor. Immediately, somebody came with a bag of gold coins and threw it in front of the Nawab.

The lives of saints are standing illustrations of the truth of this great statement of the Almighty, which is applicable not only to saints and sages, but to every one of us. Perhaps we are saints in the making.

Ananyāś cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate, teṣāṃ nityābhiyuktānām yogakṣemaṃ vahāmyaham. If we are undividedly united with Him in our soul, in our heart, in our spirit, thinking only That, brooding over only That, and every day there is no occupation except this, to those who are ever united in the deepest spirit of their being, to them there is no lack, no penury, no sorrow, no suffering, no fear—because it shall be seen by God that all things are put in order. Eternally awake is the Almighty in His omniscience. Here is a gospel in a single verse, considered by devotees as a precious jewel, an ornament in the middle of the great scripture of the Bhagavadgita.

Ye’pyanyadevatābhaktā yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ, tepi mām eva kaunteya yajanty avidhipūrvakam (9.23). What about those who worship minor gods? They also get their fruits. It

has already been explained in the Seventh Chapter that the fruits they get will have a beginning and an end. They worship the Supreme Being unconsciously, through limited concepts of lesser divinities. They do not know what they are actually worshipping. They have only a narrow notion of a localised god, who will give only a prescribed grant of the thing asked for, for the given moment of time. “Unconsciously they are worshipping Me, because even the little blessing that comes from the lesser gods is actually a grant acceded to by Me.” We need not go into the details of this subject, as we already have studied it in the Seventh Chapter.

Ahaṁ hi sarvayajñānām bhoktā ca prabhur eva ca (9.24): “I am the Lord of all the fruits of sacrifices, I am the enjoyer of all these offerings made in the sacrifices, and I am also the impeller to the action of the performance of sacrifice; but people do not know that I am that.” *Na tu mām abhijānanti tattvena*: “In reality, people cannot know Me. They know Me only as invested with form and shape and name and location, according to their capacity to think in terms of space, time and objects. They suffer on account of limited vision, even though I pervade all things and am shining before their eyes as this world. But their inner perceptive insight cannot visualise that what they see with their eyes as this world of manifestation is I Myself, shining through these names and forms. Through all the eyes, I see; through all the ears, I hear; through all the feet, I walk; through all the hands, I grasp. All the activities of all individuals are really My activities. I am doing all things. Even the perception through the sense organs is conducted by Me only, but people do not know this reality.” *Ātaś cyavanti te*: “Therefore, they fall down into the state of rebirth on account of attachments to limited concepts of what is good and bad for them.”

Yānti devavratā devān (9.25): “If you worship gods like Indra, Varuna, Mitra, etc., you will go to them.” *Pitṛn yānti pitṛvratāḥ*: “If you worship the forefathers, *pitris*, you will go to them. *Bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā*: “If you worship demons, you will go to demons.” There are demoniacal *pisachas*, etc., who are sometimes considered to be lower divinities capable of granting small *rajasic* and *tamasic* blessings. If you worship them, you will become that. *Yānti madyājinopi mām*: “If you want gods, go to gods; if you want *pitris*, go to *pitris*; if you want demoniacal natures to immediately come to your help—okay, do that; but if you come to Me, you are really safe. Those who worship Me in truth—‘in truth’ is the word that has to be underlined, *tattvena*—not as I appear, but as I really am in Myself, if one can contemplate on Me as I really am in Myself, as the eternal principle not involved in the perishable names and forms, if they can resort to Me by meditating on Me in this way, they shall be really blessed, and they shall not return to a mortal coil.”

“I shall be easily pleased. My worship is not difficult.” We do not require large assets to please God. The *samarpana* or the *naivedya* that we have to offer to God is simple. *Patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam* (9.26): “You can offer a leaf, I shall be satisfied. You can offer a single flower, I shall be satisfied. You can offer Me a spoon of water with devotion to Me, I am fully satisfied with it. But it has to be offered with devotion.” What is offered is not of consequence in the eye of God. The *bhava*, or the feeling, or the mode, or the attitude with which it is offered is what counts. God does not want anything from us—not large estates, not many kinds of delicacies. God has enough of these in His Vaikuntha, in His Kailasa, in His Brahmaloaka. These are not going to be the means of His satisfaction. But if our heart is there, then of course He will accept it. If our heart is not there, the offering is devitalised. Devitalised offerings

are not accepted. And, finally, the vitality comes from us only. If we offer ourselves, that shall be the greatest pleasure to God. If we offer something that is dear to us, that is also a pleasure to God, but a lesser pleasure. But if we offer something that is not dear to us—an old coin or a torn note—that is not going to satisfy God because He knows our feelings, our motives. Even before we think, He knows what we are going to think. So no deception, no trick, can be played here. “I am simple and accessible in a very, very easy manner.”

It is said that Arjuna and Bhima were worshipping Lord Siva. Arjuna was collecting tons and tons of *bilva* leaves, and offering mountains of these leaves to Lord Siva in worship. Bhima was also worshipping Lord Siva, but he did it only in his mind. He had no physical leaf, and did not bring anything from the forest to offer to Lord Siva. One day, it seems, Arjuna and Bhima were taken to Kailasa for some reason. They saw cartloads and cartloads of *bilva* leaves being brought by the *ganas* of Siva, and they were poured at his feet. And some people were also bringing little handfuls of leaves and throwing them.

Arjuna asked, “Who are these people who are bringing little bunches of leaves and offering them, and who are these who are offering cartloads?”

“That little bit is what has been offered by Arjuna, and the cartloads are the offerings of Bhima,” they said.

“Bhima? He never does any worship,” said Arjuna.

“He has done the worship, and Lord Siva is pleased,” they replied.

Bhima offered cartloads because his mind was there; and Arjuna offered a little bit because it was a physical offering.

Tad ahaṁ bhaktyupahṛtam aśnāmi: A leaf, a little particle sticking to the vessel in which Draupadi had her meal, satisfied everyone in the whole universe. Their stomachs started

bloating with the satisfaction of overeating on account of the little leaf that went into the mouth of this Cosmic Person, Bhagavan Sri Krishna. “I am easily satisfied if it is offered to Me with devotion. Because you have come to Me with an utter spirit of self-surrender, I shall accept what you give—even a spoon of water or a leaf, or even a thought. I shall be happy even with the thought of your surrender to Me. Forget the leaves, etc.; even the idea is sufficient for Me. Your love for Me is enough for Me, and I know that your heart is for Me, and I shall take care of you.”

“Whatever you do, O Arjuna, offer it to Me.” *Yyat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat, yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva madarpaṇam* (9.27): “If you offer anything in sacrifice, *yajna*, let it be to My satisfaction. I am the Universal *bhokta*, or the enjoyer of all sacrifices. If you eat anything—a meal, breakfast, lunch—let it be offered to Me.”

This kind of offering of food which goes into our stomach as a dedication to the Almighty is described in the Chhandogya Upanishad. It is called *pranagnihotra*. *Pranaya svaha, apanaya svaha, vyanaya svaha, samanaya svaha, udanaya svaha*—people chant these mantras and sip water five times before they start their meal. This is a ritual known mostly to Brahmins. The idea is that we should not eat our meal like animals, gulping it like pigs or swallowing it like dogs. Our attitude towards food should not be that of an animal. Food is a sacred offering to the divinity inside, who digests whatever we eat through the Vaisvanara fire—*pacāmyannam caturvidham* (15.14). The *pranas* are the digesters of the food. If the *pranas* are not satisfied with the food that we throw into our stomach, it is not going to be received. Disturbed *pranas* will not receive any kind of delicacy; and if the stomach is not operated by the Vaisvanara *agni*, the food is not going to be digested.

“Whatever you offer outside in the form of sacrifices, in *yajnasalas*, that is also an offering to Me, and whatever you offer inside by way of a meal that you take, that is internal *yajna* that you perform as *prana-agnihotra*. Therefore, may your actions be devoted to Me, dedicated to Me. Whatever be these actions, whether secular or religious—clerical, military, business, sweeping the floor, or anything that you perform according to the station of your life and your location in society—let it be dedicated to Me, and you shall see that you are taken care of abundantly by the guardians of the earth.”

“If you do *tapas*, spiritual practice, *yoga sadhana*, let that also be a satisfaction to Me.” Do not be under the egoistic impression that you are independently doing some yoga for your personal salvation. If you are a spiritual seeker, this ego should not be there in you. You are a humble, simple ray of the Almighty that is seeking unity with it. Therefore, your meditations are actually the highest kind of worship that you perform, the greatest *naivedya* that is offered, the best gift that you can think of as pleasing to God.

Tat kuruṣva madarpaṇam: “Let all this be given to Me. Let there be no responsibility on your part. Place all responsibility in Me, and I shall feel very happy to take all the burden of the whole world on My head.”

It is said that Dattatreya, the great sage, carries a bag when he goes for alms, and he asks for the sins of people. The alms that Dattatreya seeks from people are their sins. “How many sins you have committed? Bring. I will put them in the bag.” He digests the whole thing. Like that, God will absorb all our errors, mistakes, misconceptions, and even sins; and we will find we are purified in an instant by the repentance for the sins that we committed, the determination not to commit these sins again, and a whole-souled devotion to God in Whom we have such faith that we believe entirely—without any doubt,

with all the recesses of our being—that He shall protect us. Whatever we think, that shall take place. Whatever we believe in, that shall materialise. Whatever we deeply expect, that shall be granted to us; and if we expect the grace of God, it shall be poured abundantly upon us.

Śubhāśubhaphalair evaṁ mokṣyase karmabandhanaiḥ, saṁnyāsayogayuktātmā vimukto mām upaiṣyasi (9.28). *Sannyasa* and *yoga* have already been discussed in earlier chapters—in the Third, Fourth and Fifth Chapters—and it is mentioned once again here. One who is an adherent to the dharmas of *sannyasa* and *yoga*—renunciation and actual practice—such a person is freed from all the results of good and bad deeds. *Karmabandha* is broken. Karma is supposed to be binding, and no one can be freed from the bonds of karma. But here is a recipe to break the chain of karma; and the laws that usually operate in the world of space and time, the three-dimensional realm, do not operate in the four-dimensional realm. That is the meaning of saying that even sins are pardoned and destroyed. If we commit a mistake in a dream, we are not punished for it when we wake up. Whatever be the mistake that we commit in a dream, it is absolved merely by the fact of our waking. So is the case with any mistake that we commit here. Any error, even any sin, is abolished completely, root and branch, because we have awakened into the consciousness of the eternal four-dimensional Absolute.

Samohaṁ sarvabhūteṣu na me dveṣyo'sti na priyaḥ (9.29): “I have neither friend nor foe. Like sunlight and rain, I pour myself on all people equally. But if you do not open yourself to Me, the light will not shine upon you and the rain will not affect you in any way. I am equally accessible to all.” The basic fundamental reality behind all the names and forms is one and same: *sat-chit-ananda svarupa*—Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. It is equally present in all names and forms—in

inanimate matter, in insects, in ants, in reptiles, in animals, in plants, in human beings, in the gods in heaven. It is equally present everywhere, as the ocean is equally present and at the root of all the ripples, waves, etc., that appear on its surface.

“I am equal to all. I have no friend or enemy, and I do not have any partiality in respect of any person. The intensity of your meditation will be the determining factor of the extent of grace that will be poured upon you automatically, and I do not look upon you as a friend or an enemy. You shall reach Me by the spirit of *sannyasa*, renunciation in respect of all names and forms, and yoga, which is inner communion that you practise daily as your *sadhana*.” He is like a judge of the Supreme Court whose dispensation is totally impartial.

Samohaṁ sarvabhūteṣu na me dveṣyo'sti na priyaḥ, ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktyā mayi te teṣu cāpyaḥ: “I am always inside you, and you are inside Me, if you are devoted to Me as Sudama was devoted, as Vidura was devoted, as Draupadi was devoted, as the saints were devoted.” God is so kind as to say that He shall dwell in us and take care of us, and shall put us inside Him and save us from all the sorrows of life.

Even the worst of sinners can be saved. There is no sin that cannot be burnt in the fire of wisdom. *Api cet sudurācāro bhajate mām ananyabhāk, sādhuḥ eva sa mantavyaḥ* (9.30): “He is to be considered as a saint—even though in the eyes of people he is a culprit, a criminal, a sinner—provided he has resorted to Me, and his heart has been purified by the repentance that he has felt in his heart and the devotion that he has shown to Me honestly, sincerely, without any kind of restriction.” There is no sin before God. There is no hell before Him, and there is no heaven before Him. If there was really a hell, God would also see it; and if He saw it, it would be in front of Him. But the Universal Being, Who is bliss and eternity incarnate, does not see hell in front of Him.

The mistakes, the karmas, the sorrows, and the hells and heavens that we speak of are the reactions set up from the forces of nature to our own actions; and these reactions cannot cease as long as we are bound hand and foot through this body in terms of space, time and objectivity. But if our soul rises beyond the limitations of this body and does not get attached to anything that is in space and time, the very concept of sin is destroyed because it is relevant only to the world of space and time. So when we are free from space and time, and our worship is through the soul rather than through the mind or through the hands and feet, then all forces—even the greatest gravitational forces of the planets—are overcome because no law in this world is a law in that eternal realm. The laws of eternity and of temporality which catch us here bit by bit and annoy us, and man-made laws, scriptural laws, or laws made by anybody—every law is completely negated. This is because they are valid only in the three-dimensional world of space and time, and are completely invalid in the waking of the soul into Universal Existence.

As I mentioned, all experiences of dream are invalidated in waking. Whatever be the experiences of sorrow or joy, emperorship or beggary—whatever we have been undergoing in dream—the whole thing is abolished in one stroke merely because we have woken up. Waking consciousness is superior to dream consciousness. A beggar in waking is certainly happier than a king in dream. The point is not whether one is a king or a beggar; the point is whether one's consciousness is superior or inferior. The superior consciousness of that eternity abolishes all the laws of this temporality of earthly existence. "So he is to be considered as a saint who has resorted to Me whole-heartedly, even if in the eyes of society he has been a very bad fellow, because *bhajate mām ananyabhāk*—undividedly, wholeheartedly, he is melting his personality. He

has poured himself into Me.”

Devotion to God is the subject of Chapters Seven and Nine, and it is difficult to put into words the spirit of the kind of devotion that is expected from us by the Almighty. An ordinary devotion of a ritualistic type, or *gauna bhakti*, as it is called—a secondary type of devotion—will not do. Only a devotee can have the vision of the Universal, and nobody else. Even with all one’s learning, with all one’s sacrificial merits and all one’s *tapasya*, one cannot have this vision. “Only *bhaktas* can see Me,” is the statement in the Eleventh Chapter. But what kind of *bhakti* is it? What kind of devotion is it that transcends *tapasya*, transcends charity, transcends Vedic knowledge, and transcends every kind of good thing in the world?

It is not something that we offer by way of scriptural study or a garland or ritualistic performance in a temple or a shrine. Superior to all this is the soul wanting God—not merely our mind or our physical personality feeling pain and expressing a desire to unite ourselves with God. The deepest in us asks for the deepest in the cosmos. That is the highest devotion, which is described here in various forms in the Seventh and the Ninth Chapters. It reaches its culmination in the coming chapters until the Eleventh, where only God is shining, to the exclusion of even the existence of the devotee.

Discourse 29

A SUMMARY OF THE FIRST NINE CHAPTERS

The brilliant thesis of the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Chapters of the Gita that we have been studying is a great theology compressed into a series of brief statements rather than a huge magnum opus, but each verse is a pithy seed sown for further consideration and delineation by philosophers, academicians and metaphysicians. The religion of God—we may say, the religion of man—is the real subject here. In the first six chapters, a kind of religion is adumbrated in the form of the impulsion and command to work for the sake of work, duty for the sake of duty, and performance of one's functions in society as a participation, a necessary cooperation with the scheme of *prakriti*. That was the emphasis laid in the first six chapters—culminating with *dhyana*, or meditation, for the purpose of the integration of the individual.

Work performed in the spirit of a voluntary cooperation with the forces of nature is also a religion of some kind, because religion is basically an attitude that tries to transcend itself. Whenever we expect values of life in some things that are above us, we are religious people. But if we consider that we are all-in-all and everything is just for us—the realities of life are centred in our personalities and in the personalities of others who are like us, and there is nothing qualitatively superior to human thought and action—if that is how we feel, we are irreligious people. But if we believe in a reality that is above human society and human individuality,

and perform our duties not as a compulsion from an outside mandate but as an impulsion from our own spirit for the purpose of the regeneration of our own spiritual nature, and also as a help given for a similar uplift of people around us—if this sort of attitude is maintained in the work that we perform, work is also religion.

When we bring God into the picture of our existence in the world, we feel that true religion begins. Though it is no doubt true, philosophically speaking, that participation in the universal activity of *prakriti* is a religion, and it cannot be anything less than true religion, we hanker for God, but do not hanker for work. It is a misreading of the values of life to think that God is outside the range of work. The mind, in its cleavage of psychic operations, creates a distinction between the world and God, and it is difficult for the human mind to believe that anything that is concerning this world has any connection with God.

Hence, we are hard-pressed to accept the doctrine that work is also a divine worship, though we have been told this twenty times, a hundred times, a thousand times. We are inclined to believe it due to our susceptibility to accept a larger reality in human society than our own selves, and also our acceptance of the fact that nature is compelling us to participate in its scheme. Philosophically, and in moments of rationality, we accept its scheme; still, we hunger for something which is not work. The word 'work' is an anathema because of our concept of the divinity that we wish to worship, so it has become very difficult for us to see divinity in work.

The Bhagavadgita has tried to dispel this misconception in our minds that activities in the world cannot also be divine worships, which is contrary to the ordinary belief of the sense organs and the mind involved in pleasures of the

body and the senses. The Bhagavadgita places tremendous emphasis on the fact that activity is not contrary to divinity, and work is not disharmonious with God. This is so because of the fact that work is connected with God's creation. Inasmuch as it has a vital relationship with God's creation, it also has a connection with God; hence, work is also religion.

In order to cater to the higher instincts of a call for God in His transcendent aspect, the Bhagavadgita goes into the essentials of an immortal essence presiding over our participation in religious work—God as we would like God to be, and not God as we would not like Him to be. In our restlessness, in our eagerness for pleasure and leisure, in our boredom with life as a whole, we do not wish God to insist on our performing work in this world. Rather, we very much wish that He asks us to redeem ourselves from any compulsion to work. But God is not of that nature. He wishes us to accept the organic connection between the world and God; therefore, work is religion.

The purely theological, religious doctrine that is presented to us from the Seventh Chapter onwards is a new kind of teaching: Divinity parades as all things in creation; the five elements are the manifestation of God's lower *prakriti*; the vitality, or *prana*, that is operating in the cosmos is the higher *prakriti*; devotees are of four kinds in nature; everyone is fit to realise God one day or the other, provided that one's devotion to God is pure. This is the emphasis of the Seventh Chapter.

In connection with this topic of true religion and universal religion, a question automatically arose: "What happens to the religious man after he dies?" Many a time this question arises within our own selves: "What will happen to me tomorrow? I am an old man. One day I will pass away from this world. In what way is my religion going to help me?"

The answer to this question comes in the Eighth Chapter. Life is continuous, and does not end with death, and so whatever religious performance that is to our credit will be carried forward to the next life. Our personality does not die psychologically when it dies physically, and all the things that we did in this world, good and bad, will be carried forward. Therefore, it is emphasised that we must think only of God at the time of death. Inasmuch as it is not easy to think of God as Absolute at the time of passing—on account of the many physical difficulties which may harass us—it is again emphasised that we must live a life of religion throughout our lives. The entire life of the human being should be a transmutation of personality in the form of divine worship; and it is incumbent that, at the time of passing, the thought should not be anything irrelevant, but should be of the supreme Absolute.

The Ninth Chapter continues this theme. An interesting verse which we discussed yesterday says that God takes care of all people personally, as it were, as His near and dear children, and He shall provide us with all that we require. Even the worst of sinners can become highly religious: *api cet sudurācāro* (9.30); *ye'pi syuḥ pāpayonayaḥ* (9.32). It is said towards the end of the chapter that even the worst of sinners—very bad people, wicked persons—can also reach God. They do not get damned to hell. Eternal damnation is not the doctrine of the Bhagavadgita. There is punishment, to some extent, meted out on account of erroneous actions performed in this world, with the nemesis following automatically. Action breeds reaction. It is not punishment meted out by somebody; it is a punishment meted out by the action itself as an automatic reaction that comes forth on account of an action—whether it is good or bad, positive or negative, harmonious or disharmonious. Complete rejection of any person is not in the constitution of God's ordinance.

“All are welcome to Me, whether they are high or low.”

The poem *Abou Ben Adhem* by Leigh Hunt describes how the humblest person, who was unknown and unrecorded in human history, received the first call from God. Famous people do not go to God so easily. The greatest sages and saints are unknown persons in the world; the known ones are second-rate heroes. The greatest of beings, who come to redeem humanity by merely their existence or thought, perform no action in the historical or political sense. They merely release some energy—an aura around them, a potential—that pervades the whole earth. We are told in our scriptures that Vyasa and Narayana are residing in the Badarikashrama for the solidarity of mankind, and are invisibly performing miracles by their very existence—and not necessarily by the movement of their hands and feet.

The Ninth Chapter clinches the whole subject by saying that the worst of people are also called. Actually, there is no such thing as the worst of people. As a matter of fact, sin cannot stand before God. There is no such thing as original sin, or Adam’s sin, or my sin or your sin, or imperishable sin; these doctrines are not there. Even hell is a kind of purgatory, like a temporary prison. No one’s spirit is damned forever to an eternity of suffering. On account of the compassionate presence of the immanent God in all things and there being nothing external to God, there is no such thing as an eternity of suffering or eternal rejection. Even hell cannot be outside Him.

Manmanā bhava (9.34): “Concentrate your mind on Me.” *Madbhakta*: “Be devoted to Me.” *Madyājī*: “Perform sacrifices for Me.” *Mām namaskuru*: “Prostrate yourself before Me.” *Mām evaiśyasi*: “You shall attain Me.” *Yuktvaivam ātmānam matparāyaṇaḥ*: “Eternally being in the state of yoga, of the unity of yourself with Myself, you shall be in Me and I shall

be in you.”

This has been beautifully put in the concluding verses of the Sixth Chapter:

*sarvabhūtastham ātmānaṁ sarvabhūtāni cātmani
īkṣate yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ* (6.29)

*yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati
tasyāhaṁ na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati* (6.30)

*sarvabhūtasthitaṁ yo mām bhajatyekatvam āsthitaḥ
sarvathā vartamāno'pi sa yogī mayi vartate* (6.31)

Here it is specifically said, “Whatever be your behaviour, if you really surrender yourself to Me, you are redeemed.” *Sarvathā vartamānopi*: “Whatever be a person’s behaviour, if his spirit is united with the Absolute—*sa yogī mayi vartate*—that yogi is in Me, lodged in My spirit.”

Ātmaupamyena sarvatra samaṁ paśyati yo'rjuna, sukhaṁ vā yadi vā duḥkhaṁ sa yogī paramo mataḥ (6.32). There is a gradual ascent of religious spirit from the beginning to the end of the chapters we have been studying. A distance between God and man is maintained in the earlier chapters, beginning with a very great distance indeed in the First Chapter. Gradually the distance goes on diminishing until we begin to feel that God is a teacher, a friend, a good philosopher and guide, and finally, a redeemer. We are taken to the heights of thought which declares that God is not merely a friend, philosopher and guide in the ordinary sense, as the historical Krishna may appear to the historical Arjuna. The heights become more pronounced in the Seventh Chapter, when we are told that God is much more than our ordinary human friend; He is the Creator of the universe itself. *Ahaṁ sarvasya prabhava* (10.8): Everything proceeds from Me. *Mattaḥ parataram nānyat kiñcid* (7.7): Nothing exists outside Me. The creative aspect of God is especially enunciated in the Seventh Chapter. Yet, a kind of distance is maintained

between God and the world, because we feel that God created the world and, therefore, He must be a little away from the world. Do we not say that God is in heaven?

While in the earlier chapters, up to the Sixth, there is a great distance indeed between the world and God, in the Seventh Chapter we are given a little comfort by the doctrine that God, being the Creator of the universe, is immanent and, therefore, is with us at all times. God is both within and without us. The distance between God and man again becomes a little pronounced in the Eighth Chapter, which presents the theory that God is reached after death. *Antakāle ca mām eva smaran muktvā kalevaram* (8.5); *sa yāti paramām gatim* (8.13): “If you think of Me at the time of death, you shall reach Me.” It is not mentioned that we can reach God now, in this world. Can we reach God while we are alive? Or do we reach God only after death?

The Creator’s distance as a supernal transcendence, as a Father in heaven, is an idea that may arise in our minds in the Seventh Chapter; and that we can reach God only after death is an idea that may arise in the Eighth Chapter. But God is not to be considered to be reachable only after death. That God can look to our needs even today is especially emphasised in the Ninth Chapter. *Ananyāś cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate, teṣāṃ nityābhiyuktānām yogakṣemaṃ vahāmyaham* (9.22): God is not transcendent, sitting in heaven and gazing at us dispassionately and unconcerned, but He is greatly concerned. God comes down to the very earth and the kitchen of the human being, and provides us rations and all our needs, and protects us in every way. Thus, in the Ninth Chapter, the religious spirit brings God to the very earth, as it were, and the distance between God and man diminishes very palpably. “I am everywhere,” is the statement made in the Ninth Chapter.

Discourse 30

THE TENTH CHAPTER BEGINS

THE GLORIES OF GOD

In the Tenth Chapter we go further, to a greater emphasis of the immanence of God—not God coming sometimes when we are in a state of distress, not a God who provides us with what we need when we need it, but God perpetually residing in all things which are the glories of this world.

There is such a thing called glory, enhancement of spirit, genius, supernal power, high respectability, the power to attract—something that will not allow us to take our mind away. There are certain things from which we cannot take our mind away, due to their beauty or grandeur. When we look at the beautiful full moon in a clear sky, we do not want to look away. We go on gazing at that scintillating, beautiful, soft, honey-exuding glow, as it were—the full moon, radiating calmness and coolness with its beams. The beauty of the full moon attracts us; but the beauty of the ocean is of a different kind. It exalts our spirit by the magnitude of its superiority over us. Take the example of an elephant. We would like to go on looking at it again and again, for some reason which we cannot understand. For a particular reason, we would not like to take our eyes away from the full moon because of the beauty. Why do we like to look at an elephant? Is it beautiful? It is majestic, and it humbles us to some extent. Our ego feels very small before the might of the elephant and, therefore, we feel the greatness and power of the elephant. We maintain a

respectful distance from it on account of the humility that we automatically feel due to the largeness of its body and the greatness of its power. So it is majesty that attracts us here, not beauty. Similarly, the grandeur, the power, the terror, the capacity of the ocean to destroy us, and the largeness which is far beyond our egoism, makes us look at it with great wonder. "Oh, what a wonder is the great ocean of waves, terrific in their nature!" Hence, we can be attracted to things either because of their beauty or because of their grandeur.

God is both beauty and grandeur. Mostly, religions do not consider God as a beautiful person; there is no emphasis on that. So we always fear God as a justice of the Supreme Court or a policeman, and we think that He has to be respected because of His power and His capacity to punish us. We fear God. We do not embrace God as if He is a beautiful, beloved thing. Why is it so? It is because of the emphasis in religious circles—in all religions, whether Semitic or Indian—on the fatherhood of God. That the fatherhood of God is emphasised in all religions is something very peculiar. It may be due to the historical circumstances, or because the prophets and the progenitors of the scriptures happened to be mostly men. Whatever the reason be, it appears that the fatherhood of God has been overemphasised in religions, as if He is only father.

God is also mother. In India, mother worship—Shakti worship—has been inculcated. This other side of God, the feminine aspect, is not completely cut off from the male aspect as if God is only male, and not female. The *ardhanarisvara tattva*, or the unity of the two polar essences, the positive and negative, are considered in the *ardhanarisvara tattva* of Lord Siva, where Siva and Shakti are one person. As it is said in religious parlance, especially in India, husband and wife constitute one person. They are not two different persons.

Though physically they appear to be two persons, their soul is one.

The idea of Shakti worship—the spirit of there being unity between the positive and the negative, and there being no cleavage between man and woman—was introduced in India; yet, the concept of fatherhood prevails. Though we may accept that God can also be conceived as mother and worshipped as Shakti, or Devi, we think of God predominantly as supremely just—a lawgiver, a judiciary, and a terror Who blesses us only if He is pleased, and punishes us if He is not pleased.

Do we think that God is beautiful? *Sakshan manmatha-manmathah* (S.B. 10.32.2) is a term used in the Bhagavata: “He is the cupid of cupids, the beauty of beauties.” Even if the essences of all the beautiful things in the world—the quintessence of the most beautiful things, human or otherwise, whatever they be—are taken together, it will not stand before the beauty of God. It is very unfortunate that God should be regarded only as a terror, as a justice, and as a fearful person. He is the most enchanting. The enchanting, beautiful character of God is especially brought into high relief in the life of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, who is the might of might, the power of powers, and represents the fatherhood of God in this tremendous incarnation as the height of yogic ecstasy and power; and yet, he was the beauty of beauties. The Bhagavata Purana and the Mahabharata also describe Bhagavan Sri Krishna as an incarnation of God, and they remove the partial notion of God as only a father who is merely just and legal in His attitude, rather than compassionate and friendly. The friendliness of God, the power of God, the transcendence of God, the superiority of God, the beauty of God, the enchanting capacity of God, the tremendous attraction that He exerts upon us is delineated in Bhagavan Sri Krishna, who is the full incarnation of God.

The glories of God are detailed in the Tenth Chapter. These glories can be seen in certain enhanced, exalted things which are beyond ordinary human concepts.

“Where are You actually present in this world, O Lord? You said that You are in all things. Are You in an atom? Are You in a dustbin? Are You in a tree? Are You in a stone? Where are You?”

“I am in everything, no doubt, yet My presence can be especially felt in certain exalted manifestations.” Towards that description we are entering the most glorious chapter, the Tenth—where Sri Bhagavan Himself starts speaking without Arjuna raising a question. “I shall speak to you further about My glories and My supernal greatness.”

Śrībhagavānuvāca: bhūya eva mahābāho śṛṇu me paramaṁ vacaḥ, yat te'haṁ prīyamāṇāya vakṣyāmi hitakāmyayā (10.1): “You are very dear to Me, and I am dear to you; and because of this fact, I feel prompted to tell you a little more for your own welfare, for your *hita*, for your goodness. I will tell you something that is very secret, something that is supremely good for you.”

Na me viduḥ suragaṇāḥ (10.2): “The gods do not know Me, really speaking, let alone human beings. They cannot know Me in My true essence because I am the origin of all these gods.” *Aham ādir hi devānām maharṣiṇām ca sarvaśaḥ*: “Even maharishis cannot know Me in full. Nobody can know My origin because I am prior to the manifestation, or the coming into being, of their existence.”

Yo mām ajam anādim ca vetti lokamaheśvaram, asaṁmūḍhaḥ sa martyeṣu sarvapāpaiḥ pramucyate (10.3): “Whoever knows Me as the ancient one, prior to all manifested forms, greater than all the gods of religions—such a person completely non-deluded in mind is free from every kind of fault, and no sin can accrue to that person.” God is not merely

in things—in personalities and objects—He is also in the relations between things. That which is between things is also God's operation, and to that He directs His attention.

Buddhir jñānam asaṁmohaḥ kṣamā satyaṁ damaḥ śamaḥ, sukhaṁ duḥkhaṁ bhavo'bhāvo bhayaṁ cābhayaṁ eva ca; ahimsā samatā tuṣṭis tapo dānaṁ yaśo'yaśaḥ, bhavanti bhāvā bhūtānāṁ matta eva prthagvidhāḥ (10.4-5): “The intelligence in some people, and the absence of intelligence in other people; the capacity to forgive; truthfulness; self-restraint, externally as well as internally; the experience of pleasure and pain; the coming and going of things; fear, and the absence of fear; the capacity of a person to feel the feelings of other people, and be compassionate to others, and not hurt others' feelings, and maintain an equilibrated attitude towards all people; the charitable nature of people; the glories, and even the absence of glories of people—all these proceed from Me.” *Bhavanti bhāvā bhūtānāṁ matta eva prthagvidhāḥ*: Night and day, life and death, light and darkness, good and bad, necessary and unnecessary—everything is subsumed under this integrality of the supreme inclusiveness of the Absolute Supreme Being.

The Tenth Chapter is a preliminary to the exposition of God's greatness and glory that is to come later: “Everything comes from Me. Even the gods and the rishis are emanations subsequent to My existence.”

God's existence is a difficult thing to conceive. We say that God is all-pervading. This idea of the all-pervadingness of God arises due to the space which we see before our eyes. Pervading all things means existing as a vast expanse, like space; but this comparison is inept for God Himself because God is prior to the manifestation of space. He is said to be omnipresent because of our idea that there is an extended spatial universe. If there is no space and no expanse of the three-dimensional world, the idea of omnipresence will not arise in our mind.

We say He is omniscient—knows all things; but where were the ‘things’ before creation took place? So the idea that He is all-knowing is also not a good definition of God. We say He is all-powerful, omnipotent; but on whom does He exercise His power if there is nothing external to Him?

Where was God sitting before He created the world? Because of the world, because of this created universe, we say He is everywhere, He knows all things, and He is all-powerful. Do we describe Him in terms of what He has created? What was He before He created? Where was He seated? Such difficulties are beyond human comprehension. The statement “Everything comes from Me—even the universe, the gods, and the rishis” leaves us in a state of mental perplexity as to how God could be the Creator and yet remain transcendent. And, in His transcendent state, where does He exist? This question is very intriguing because the term ‘where’ implies space, location, distance, and a situation. We would realise and appreciate that, because of this difficulty, God cannot be defined. It is Pure Existence.

Maharṣayaḥ sapta pūrve catvāro manavas tathā, madbhāvā mānasā jātā yeṣāṃ loka imāḥ prajāḥ (10.6): The prominent great rishis are supposed to be seven in number. They are Marichi, Atri, Angirasa, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, and Vasishtha. Though there are many rishis, these are the most prominent, highly exalted spirits. The *chatvāraḥ*—Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana, and Sanatkumara—are the four original emanations of Brahma, the Creator. There are fourteen Manus, who are the rulers of the fourteen worlds. All are God’s emanations. *Madbhāvā mānasā jātā*: “My will—My mere thought, My determination—projected these great rishis.”

Brahma, the first born in the cosmos, thought that he should manifest the variety of this creation, so in the beginning he thought of the four Kumaras: Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana

and Sanatkumara. They looked like small children. Brahma told them, “Help me with creation.” They were inwardly established in the eternal Almighty. They said, “We are not going to help you in creation. We are established in our own Self.” The first sons of Brahma were disobedient, and he was very angry with them. Brahma’s anger rose to the midpoint between his eyebrows, but he could not pour that anger on them because they were established in the Almighty Supreme Being. As he could not pour this anger on the Kumaras, what would he do with that fury that rose up? That fury came out as Rudra, who is also known as Siva, and Brahma said, “Please create.” Rudra created demons, goblins and all kinds of *ganas*, which were not what Brahma intended. Brahma told him, “Please stop your creation. I have had enough of it. Go and meditate somewhere. From now on, you should only meditate, and not create. Go from here.” These are some of the stories in the Bhagavata Purana. All these emanate from the Supreme Being, in the sequence mentioned.

Etām vibhūtiṁ yogaṁ ca mama yo vetti tattvataḥ, so’vikampena yogena yuhyate nātra saṁśayaḥ (10.7): “My glory is that I am beyond the world of space, time and objects. I am transcendent in My essential nature, and yet I pervade all things. *Aham ādir hi devānām maharṣīnām ca sarvaśaḥ* (10.2): The gods and the rishis, who are the greatest of beings, are emanations from Me; therefore, they cannot know Me. Even such great spiritual stalwarts cannot have an access to My real secret, because I am prior to them. How can the effect know the cause? Hence, nothing in creation—in all the fourteen realms—can know what God ultimately is. “One who knows this secret of Mine—this great yoga through which I manifest Myself and yet seem to be not manifesting anything at all, and remain transcendent and immanent in all things at the same time—such a person is established in unshakeable

yoga. *Sovikampena yogena yujyate*: Not a shakeable, transitory, ‘coming and going’ yoga, but a permanently established unity with Me, which is the highest yoga. That is called unshakeable communion—*avikampa* yoga. Such is the blessing of that supreme seeker who resorts to Me in My essential nature—*tattvato jñātvā*.”

Ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavo (10.8): Again He repeats, “All things come from Me.” *Mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate*: “Everything is an effect manifested from the ultimate cause, Myself.” *Iti matvā bhajante mām budhā bhāvasamanvitāḥ*: “All difficulties vanish in one moment in the case of those great devotees who realise that even the worst of things have a location in My existence.” It was already mentioned that even the worst of sinners have a place in God. “Whoever is established in this conviction that all things emanate from Me—the whole world of goodness and badness, beauty and ugliness, permanence and impermanence, all arise from Me and, therefore, I am the cause of all things—knowing this, they never get disturbed or perturbed in their minds. They resort to Me day in and day out, undisturbed by the events taking place in the world.”

Maccittā madgataprāṇā bodhayantaḥ parasparam, kathayantaś ca mām nityaṁ tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca (10.9): “These devotees of Mine are always happy. They smile and dance in ecstasy at all times because their mind is absorbed in Me, and their *prana* is absorbed in Me. And when they talk among themselves, they talk only about Me and My glory; there is nothing else in their minds. They tell stories about Me—about My incarnations, My manifestations, My performances in this great creation. Every day they are involved in this spiritual activity of contemplating on Me, singing My glories, mutually instructing one another on the mystery of My life. Thus they remain very happy, and are delighted in their life.”

Teṣāṁ satatayuktānāṁ bhajatāṁ prītipūrvakam, dadāmi buddhiyogaṁ taṁ yena mām upayānti te (10.10): “In great compassion, I endow these devoted souls with the highest kind of understanding by which they cannot forget Me at any time. Those who are perpetually united with Me—*satatyukta*—and who worship Me and adore Me and praise Me in intense devotional love, to them I give this great blessing and grace of Mine in the form of superior understanding.”

If the gods want to help us, they do not come to protect us with a stick in their hands like a shepherd protecting sheep. Their help always comes in the form of an enhanced understanding, a blessing which they pour upon us in the form of an increased insight into the nature of things. This is because knowledge is the greatest blessing, insight is the greatest power, and there is nothing in this world equal to illumination. Objects, property, wealth, social status—none of them can stand before illumination and insight into the true nature of things, with which God blesses those who are eternally, perpetually, united with Him.

Teṣāṁ evānukampārtham (10.11): “I am immensely compassionate and merciful towards these people. I think of them, and they are in Me.” *Aham ajñānaṁ tamaḥ nāśayāmy*: “I shall destroy even the ignorance in you.” In *bhakti marga*, the emphasis is on God being entirely responsible for the welfare of the devotee, both here and hereafter. He shall see to it that we are provided with all physical, material amenities for our daily sustenance. He shall also see to it that we are properly educated in the spiritual sense. He shall see to it that all our ignorance is destroyed. He shall see to it that we are absorbed into Him.

When effort is necessary, and we do not merely depend on the pouring of God’s grace from above, this is called *markatanyaya*, or the monkey doctrine, because when a

monkey runs about with a little baby, the baby clings to it with its effort. But where the emphasis is only on God's grace that He shall take care of us, it is like a cat carrying its kitten. A cat carries its kitten by its neck, and the kitten need not have to cling to it.

Sarvathā vartamāna (6.31): Here God stresses the point that "Whatever you be and in whatever condition you may be living, if your heart is in Me, you need not bother about anything, either of this world or of the other world." He is emphasising that even the ignorance in our mind will be destroyed. We need not have to read scriptures and go to lectures, or make any particular effort in the direction of what is called spiritual practice. The only *sadhana* that we are required to perform is surrender. *Ananya saranagatih* is the pinnacle and the last point in *bhakti marga*. Love of God is the entire *sadhana*. There is no need to roll the beads or do different breathing techniques and sit in certain postures; nothing of the kind is necessary. And all these techniques are futile if the love of God is absent.

The highest *sadhana* is the pouring forth of our soul into the Universal Soul; then everything shall be taken care of automatically. We need not bother about tomorrow: "What shall I eat? Where is my raiment? How long shall I live? Who will take care of me?" We shall be taken care of, and what is to be done tomorrow shall be told to us tomorrow. *Jñānadīpena bhāsvatā*: "I shall illumine the personality of these great devotees with the light of wisdom, destroying their ignorance and blessing them with the highest illumination, by which they will know the truths of all things."

This is an introductory oration by Sri Bhagavan Himself in the beginning of the Tenth Chapter, before Arjuna could raise any question. Now Arjuna starts speaking. He is really startled, wonderstruck, after hearing all these things that have

been told to him. Arjuna says, “Thou art the Supreme Being. I see that You are inseparable from the Ultimate Reality. I appreciate it, I can understand it, and I accept it. You are the Supreme Abode, O Lord! The greatest of purities, the Purity behind purities, Supreme You are. The Eternal Purusha You are.” *Ādideva*: the original God; *aja*: immortal.

Param brahma param dhāma pavitraṁ paramaṁ bhavān, puruṣaṁ śāśvataṁ divyam ādidevam ajaṁ vibhum (10.12). Here Arjuna addresses Sri Krishna; and this is a kind of prayer that we can recite every day: “O God! You are the Eternal Absolute, the Supreme Abode, the Purity behind purities, the Eternal Purusha, the God beyond gods. Rishis glorify You. Narada and other minstrels of God sing Your glory. I have been told by such seers like the rishis Asita, Devala, and Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa that You are the veritable Immortal Being masquerading in this world. You are the Absolute masquerading in this world. This has been told to me by Vyasa and other rishis.”

Āhus tvām ṛṣayaḥ sarve devarṣir nāradas tathā, asito devalo vyāsaḥ svayaṁ caiva bravīṣi me (10.13): “Now You Yourself are telling that. You have declared Yourself to be the incomparable, secondless Being. It is a great wonder indeed to hear all this. I accept all this *in toto*, and I am highly delighted to hear all this discourse of Yours, O Lord!”

Sarvam etad ṛtaṁ manye yan mām vadasi keśava (10.14): “The highest Truth of truths are revealed to me now.” *Na hi te bhagavan vyaktiṁ vidur devā na dānavāḥ*: “Who am I to understand what You are? Not the gods, not all creation, not all the demons, nothing anywhere can know what kind of person You are. Who am I to understand what You are? Only You know Yourself.” God knows God, and nobody else can know God. You cannot know God. I cannot know God. Nothing of the world can know God. The entire creation cannot know God,

because it is subsequent to God's existence. Who knows God? God only knows God and, finally, God attains God.

Svayam evātmanātmānam (10.15): "You know Yourself, and nobody can know You. Thou knowest Thyself." *He puruṣot-tama*: the Supreme Being, Supreme Puruṣa; *bhūtabhāvana*: the blessing for all people; *bhūteśa*: the Lord of creation; *devadeva*: the God of gods; *jagatpate*: the ruler of the universe. "I prostrate myself before You. I shall be happy to hear some more details about this. How do You pervade this universe in Your eternal glory? In what forms can I worship You in my daily life, in my behaviour, from morning to evening? Will You kindly dilate upon this subject a little more, to my great satisfaction and happiness?"

Vaktum arhasyaśeṣeṇa: "Without leaving anything out, tell me everything about Yourself—Your glories, Your divine immanence in this world of manifestation." *Vaktum arhasyaśeṣeṇa divyā hyātmavibhūtayāḥ, yābhir vibhūtibhir lokān imāms tvaṁ vyāpya tiṣṭhasi* (10.16): "What are the ways in which You manifest Yourself in this world? In which place in this world of manifestations, in which object, in what manner can I recognise You? How can I know You? Please tell me."

Katham vidyām ahaṁ yogiṁs tvāṁ sadā paricintayan (10.17): "Day and night I would like to meditate and contemplate on You. In what manner should I contemplate? Please tell me in detail." *Keṣu keṣu ca bhāveṣu cintyosi bhagavan mayā*: "In this world which is constituted of millions of forms, in what forms should I contemplate on You? Where are You manifest more, and in what forms are You manifest less? Please detail all these wondrous glories of Yourself."

Vistareṇātmāno yogam vibhūtiṁ ca janārdana, bhūyāḥ kathaya (10.18): "Repeat it once again. You have already told me something about Yourself. I would like to hear it again and again because it is *amrita*, it is nectar to my ears. Please tell

me in all detail Your glories, Your powers and Your manifestations. Tell me once again, though You have already told me once. Please tell me in greater detail because my satisfaction has no end. Let my satisfaction rise from lower to higher states. I am already satisfied. May I be further satisfied, and may I be blessed with immense infinite satisfaction. My ears are never satisfied with any amount of nectar of Your speech that is poured into my ears.” *Tṛptir hi śṛṇvato nāsti me’mṛtam*: “You are pouring nectar into my ears and I am delighted, but I should be more delighted if You describe Your further glories in Your own way so that I may find it easier to behold You in all things and unite myself with Thee.”

“It is very difficult,” says the Lord, “to tell you in words what I am.”

There was a great sage called Muchukunda, who helped the gods in a war with the demons. Indra, who was highly pleased with him said, “Ask for a boon.”

He said, “I am very much tired. The only thing I need is a good sleep. This is the blessing: Let me sleep somewhere in a corner without disturbance, and bless me also that if anybody disturbs me while I am asleep, he shall perish in one second.”

“Be it so!” said Indra.

Then Muchukunda, with post-war fatigue, went into a cave and fell asleep. Meanwhile, Kalayavana, a demon discharged by Kamsa under the instigation of Jarasandha and others, was pursuing Sri Krishna; and Sri Krishna, with a double motive in his mind, entered the cave in which Muchukunda was sleeping, which Kalayavana saw.

Sri Krishna was dark blue in colour and, fortunately or unfortunately, Muchukunda was also the same colour. Sri Krishna entered the cave and stood in a corner, and the demon Kalayavana also entered. When he saw someone with almost the same colour as Sri Krishna lying down, fast asleep, he said

“Oh, you are sleeping here!” and kicked him with his foot. The sleeping man slowly opened his eyes, and immediately the demon was reduced to ashes.

Then Sri Krishna came forward. Muchukunda looked at him and said, “Who are you, this great mysterious magnificence that is standing before me? Will you kindly tell me your name?”

Sri Krishna replied, “Infinite are My names. You can count the grains of sand on the shores of the ocean, but My glories and My names are larger in number than the sands on the beach of the ocean.”

Likewise, here Sri Krishna tells Arjuna, “It is impossible to tell you *in toto* all the manifestations in this world in which you can behold Me; but briefly, in essence, I shall outline where My excellence can be beheld.”

Śrībhagavān uvāca: hanta te kathayiṣyāmi divyā hyātma-vibhūṭayaḥ, prādhānyataḥ kuruśreṣṭha nāstyanto vistarasya me (10.19): The Lord says, “I will tell you briefly. The details that you are speaking of are endless, infinite. How will I go on telling you all that is infinite in its nature? But I will give you an outline of where you can locate Me in this world.”

Aham ātmā guḍākeśa sarvabhūṭāśayasthitaḥ (10.20): “I am the soul of all beings. Wherever you see existence, there you see Me present as the basic fundamental reality of all. The love of life, which can be seen even in the worst of creatures, is actually a distorted love that they are manifesting towards the existence of their own individuality—but actually, that existence is borrowed from My universal existence. I am the soul, the basic reality, the undiminished essence, the fundamental existence bereft of association with the body, mind, and all other social connections. That deepest essence, the ‘I’ which you refer to, the ‘I’ that is in everything—in plants, in animals, in insects, in gods—that ‘I’, the soul, as it were, of all things,

is Me. The deepest reality, the soul, the Self, the indubitable fundamentality in all things, is Me. Wherever you see love of life persisting and a clinging to existence, realise, notice and understand that everybody is clinging to My true universal existence that operates through their individual bodies, which they mistake for real existence. The Atman, the Self of all beings, is Me. I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all things. If the universe has come from somewhere, realise that it has come from Me. If it is existing now, it is due to My existence; and one day or the other, it shall be absorbed into Me. This is to tell you, briefly, the cosmic aspect of My manifestations. Now I shall tell you the individualised, specialised forms of My manifestations, which are such glories as the sun and other things.”

Discourse 31

THE TENTH CHAPTER CONCLUDES

GOD'S SPECIAL MANIFESTATIONS

God manifests Himself in creation through His essential natures. His natures can be classified as existence, knowledge, power and bliss. God is existence. Existence is common to all things. Even a rock, even a hill, even a stone exists, and in that sense, philosophically, we may say that God is present even in inanimate things. But the quality of existence seems to be a special consideration in the assessment of any kind of value. If a person merely exists, we do not feel that it is adequate. If a person exists and also has knowledge, we consider that person to be superior to the person who merely exists. If a person exists, has knowledge, and also has some power, we consider that person as superior to the person who has existence and knowledge but no power. But if a person has existence, knowledge, power, and also immense bliss characterising his personal life, we consider that person to be almost superhuman.

What are the degrees of the manifestation of God in this world? We can rule out the characteristic of existence, inasmuch as it is present everywhere and we cannot say that God is not manifest in anything. God is manifest everywhere. The point made out in the Tenth Chapter is that He is especially manifest in certain things, though He exists uniformly everywhere as pure Being. Wherever there is knowledge and power, there God's manifestation seems to be superb. In the list that is

given here in the Tenth Chapter, the emphasis seems to be on knowledge and power.

We can appreciate that knowledge cannot be found anywhere except in a human being. There is some kind of knowledge in everything—even plants have an inkling, and animals have some knowledge. When we speak of knowledge, we generally speak of the understanding that characterises the human species. But power can be either physical or mental. In physical power, animals are superior to man. Man cannot stand before animals as far as physical strength is concerned; but man has a mental power which is superior to animals. Hence, while any animal can terrify man physically, man can subdue any animal mentally.

Therefore, here in the delineation of the glories of God, various aspects of manifestation are taken into consideration. Very strong animals like lions are also considered to be manifestations, though their strength is only physical. A king is considered to be a manifestation, though we cannot say that the power of a king is mental; his power is administrative, and it has to be equated with physical power. And certain creatures, like alligators or crocodiles, are also considered to be specimens of the manifestation of God because crocodiles have a special strength of their own—a purely physical strength.

Thus, in the delineation of the categories of the manifestation of God in the Tenth Chapter, perhaps God—the Lord—wants His glories to be seen where there is intense knowledge and intense power, both physical and mental. Wherever we see supreme physical strength, we may say there is an inkling or a little expression of that which surpasses all that is inferior to us. As far as mental power is concerned, there is no need to say much about it because it is supreme power. Mental power can control the whole world, while physical power is local and it can work only at a particular place, and not everywhere.

The God that is supposed to be manifest in all things is mentioned here as revealed throughout creation—in all the realms of being, right from Brahmaloḥa downwards, because even the names of celestials are mentioned here as manifestations. Briefly, it is said that the supreme manifestation of God is in the Selfhood of all people. *Aham ātmā guḍākeśa sarvabhūtāśayasthitaḥ* (10.20): Wherever there is an enhancement of the character of Selfhood, or pure subjectivity, there we may say that God is predominantly manifest. Where there is too much expression of objectivity, and the consideration that material value surpasses spiritual and religious values, there we may say that God's presence is less. Hence, the Selfhood, which is the spiritual character of things, is to be regarded as the principal manifestation of divinity in all things. *Aham ādīś ca madhyam ca bhūtānām anta eva ca*: It is said briefly that God manifests Himself as the beginning, the middle, and the end of all things. Everything originates from Him, all things are sustained by Him, and all things will return to Him in the end.

Now the specific manifestations are mentioned. The general manifestations are as the Creator, the Sustainer and the Destroyer, the Self and the Soul of all things. These are the general Supreme manifestations; but there are lesser manifestations as particular items of creation.

The greatest and the most adorable of the particular units of creation before us is the sun god. *Ādityānām aham viṣṇuḥ* (10.21): "Among the Adityas, twelve in number, Vishnu Aditya am I." *Sūrya ātma jagataṣṭa* (R.V. 1.115.1). Surya is supposed to be the self of everything that moves and does not move. *Sūrya ātma jagataṣṭa* is a Vedic statement, and we know very well the extent to which the sun god determines life in this world. Verily, the sun is God. *Suryah pratyaksha devata* is also another saying, which means the sun is the visible god. If we

want to see God in this world, we have to see God in the sun, as no glory can equal the sun.

It is said there are twelve manifestations of the sun. It is difficult to explain as to what these twelve are, because it is mentioned “among the Adityas, Vishnu am I”. Towards the end of the Bhagavata there is some mention of twelve suns, which are just nomenclatures of the manifestation of the same sun during the twelve months of the year. But there are other interpretations which say that the twelve suns are not just the names of the same sun during the twelve months of the year, they are concentric circles of solar manifestation in the cosmos, which is something very difficult for us to understand. It is a purely theological, astronomical or mystical concept which we usually never hear of. It is believed that because this earth is one of the planets going around the sun, the sun may be said to be the father of the entire family of the planets. This solar system is also like one of the planets that goes round another sun, and there are many other solar systems also going around it like planets. That second sun, which is a superior central luminosity which regards this solar system as its planet or satellite, is itself a satellite of another sun; and the entire superior second solar system goes around that sun as a planet. In this way, it goes on higher and higher until we reach that supreme state, which is the twelfth sun, identified with Lord Vishnu himself—that is, God Himself is the final sun. That is what we can make out, if at all we are able to understand the sense of this statement *ādityānām ahaṁ viṣṇuḥ*: “Of the twelve Adityas, Vishnu am I.” *Jyotiṣām ravir aṁśumān*: “Of all brilliances, the brilliance of the sun is Me.”

Marīcīr marutām asmi: “There are forty-nine Maruts, of which Marichi, the pre-eminent one, is Myself.” *Nakṣatrāṇām ahaṁ śaśī*: At night, the biggest luminosity is the moon. Though the moon is not a star, it is figuratively considered

to be a star because of the luminosity that it sheds. Because it is the biggest luminosity at night, it is considered to be star-like in appearance. “That is also My glory—particularly the luminosity of the full moon.”

Vedānām sāmavedo’smi (10.22): “I am the Sama Veda among the Vedas.” Because of its intonation, the beauty of its melody and the belief that it is the quintessence of even the Rigveda—and, in addition, it is set to music—the Sama Veda is considered to be especially sacred. *Devānām asmi vāsavaḥ*: “I am Indra among the gods” because he is the king of the gods. *Indriyāṇām manaś cāsmi*: “Of all the perceptive capacities, I am the mind.” This is because even though the sense organs are organs of perception, no doubt, without the mind they cannot perceive anything; the eyes cannot see, the ears cannot hear, etc. The central cognitive or perceptive faculty is the mind. The mind is the king in this body, operating its satellites which are the sense organs. So “I am the mind among the sense organs—that is, the cognitive functions.” *Bhūtānām asmi cetanā*: “I am consciousness among all people. Wherever there is awareness, consider Me as manifest there.”

Rudrāṇām śaṁkaraś cāsmi (10.23): Just as there are twelve Adityas, there are eleven Rudras, of which the most peaceful and compassionate one—the salubrious and most easily approachable, calm and quiet one—is Siva. Rudra is supposed to be very angry, ferocious and active; but all forms of Rudra are not like that. Rudra is also Siva. There is the Siva aspect which is calm and blessed and subdued, and there is also Rudra which is fierce. “There are eleven Rudras, of which the glorious, peaceful Sankara am I, radiating love and compassion.”

It is said that Ravana worshipped Rudra in all the forms. Ravana had ten heads. The story goes that Ravana cut off one of his heads and offered it to one form of Rudra. He then cut off another head and offered it to the second Rudra. In

this manner he offered his ten heads to ten Rudras; but the eleventh Rudra could not be appeased because Ravana did not have eleven heads. The eleventh Rudra became angry because nothing had been offered to him, so he appeared in the form of fierce Hanuman. It is said that Hanuman in Lanka was a manifestation of the eleventh Rudra—Rudravatara—who destroyed Lanka because Ravana could not satisfy him. It seems that Ravana wept and said, “If I had eleven heads, I would not have suffered like this. I had only ten.”

Vitteśo yakṣarakṣasām: “Among the Yakshas and Rakshasas—the demi-gods, who are neither brutal Rakshasas nor gods, but are something midway between them—I am Kubera, the lord of riches, the treasurer of Rudra, or Siva.” *Vasūnām pāvakaś cāsmi*: “There are eight Vasus, called Ashtavasus, who are also demigods. Of them I am Agni, the fire god.” *Meruḥ śikhariṇām aham*: “Of all the highest mountains with towering peaks, I am Meru Parvata.”

Purodhasām ca mukhyaṁ mām viddhi pārtha bṛhaspatim (10.24): “Among all preceptors, guides, and all Gurus, I am Brihaspati.” This is because Brihaspati is supposed to be the most intelligent and wisest of all teachers. He is the Guru of the gods, and is a god himself. *Senānīnām ahaṁ skandaḥ*: “Among military generals, I am Skanda.” Skanda, or Kartikeya, was the most powerful leader of armies. *Sarasām asmi sāgaraḥ*: “Among reservoirs of water, I am the ocean” because it is the vastest reservoir of water.

Maharṣīṇām bhṛgur ahaṁ (10.25): “Among rishis, I am Bhrigu.” Among the sons or progeny of Brahma, Bhrigu is considered here as representing all the might and glory of all the rishis. *Marīcir atry-aṅgirasau pulastyah pulahaḥ kratuh, bhṛgur vasiṣṭha ity ete mad-antā brahma-vādinah* (S.B. 4.29.43): Of the ten sons who were born to Brahma, the Lord considers Bhrigu as supreme in his power and glory. Therefore, “I am

that Bhrigu himself.”

Girām asmy ekam akṣaram: “Of all the roots of the style of language and sound, I am Omkara, or *pranava*.” Every sound, every intonation, everything that we speak, and every kind of language and sound formation is a manifestation of Omkara. “I am that Omkara itself.”

Yajñānām japayajño’smi: “Among all spiritual sacrifices, I am *japa yajna*.” Neither sacrifices in which different forms of oblations such as ghee, etc., are poured into the fire, nor material sacrifices or even ritualistic worship are equal to *japa yajna*, because it is the most harmless and non-material of all sacrifices. Therefore, “I consider *japa* as the greatest of spiritual *sadhanas*.” *Sthāvarāṇām himālayaḥ*: “Among immovable things, I am the Himalayas. Nobody can shake Me.”

Aśvatthaḥ sarvavrkṣāṇām (10.26): “Among trees, I am the sacred Asvattha.” This is the peepul tree, which is considered as the most sacred of all trees. People worship the three gods—Brahma, Vishnu and Siva—through this tree, considering Brahma as the root, Vishnu as the middle, and Rudra as the top. *Mūlato brahmarūpāya madhyato viṣṇurūpiṇe, agrataḥ shivarūpāya hyekabilvaṁ shivārpanamḥ* (Bilva 8): People prostrate to the Asvattha tree and circumambulate the tree again and again to expiate all their sins and receive divine blessings. Most sacred is the Asvattha tree.

Devarṣiṇām ca nāradaḥ. “Among all the Deva rishis, I am Narada.” There are varieties of rishis—Brahma rishi, Raja rishi and Deva rishi. If a spiritually adept supreme genius becomes a rishi, he is called a Brahma rishi. Vasishtha is a Brahma rishi. Janaka is a Raja rishi. Narada is considered to be a Deva rishi because he is one of the celestials and yet he is a seer.

Gandharvāṇām citrarathaḥ: “Among all the Gandharvas, who are the leaders of music and of aesthetic science—art of every kind—I am Chitraratha.” The Gandharvas are

celestial musicians and dancers. Together with Apsaras, they are supposed to decorate and entertain the celestials in heaven, especially in the court of Indra.

Siddhānām kapilo muniḥ: “Among perfected *siddhas*, I am Kapila.” Kapila was the progenitor of the Sankhya philosophy, and was also the teacher of a special kind of *bhakti* yoga. In the Third Skandha of the Srimad Bhagavata, he speaks to his own mother, Devahuti, about the highest philosophy of *bhakti*, divine devotion. A *siddha* is one who has all the eight powers of yoga. A yogi who has eight powers can become small or big, light or heavy, pervade everywhere, and can even touch the moon with his fingers. Rishis have such powers. “Among them, I consider Siddha Kapila as supreme, and I am manifest in him.”

Uccaiḥśravasam aśvānām (10.27): “Among the treasures that rose from the ocean when it was churned for nectar by the gods and the demons—as it is told in the Puranas, and especially in the Srimad Bhagavata—among these treasures, the divine horse called Uchchaihshravas is Me.” It is the most powerful, most beautiful and most glorious of horses, and it is now under the control of Indra. “Such horse, which is divine in nature, which came from Amrita Manthana, the churning of the Milky Ocean, that Uchchaihshravas am I.” *Viddhi mām amṛtodbhavam*: Know me as that which came from the nectarine ocean.

Airāvataṁ gajendrāṇām: “Among mighty elephants, I am Airavata.” Another treasure that came from the churning the ocean is Airavata, an elephant—the ideal of elephantine strength. It is the vehicle of Indra.

Narāṇām ca narādhipam: “Among human beings, I am king” because a king controls all persons.

Āyudhānām ahaṁ vajraṁ (10.28): “Among all destructive weapons, I am Vajra.” Vajra is the weapon of Indra. It was

made of the spine of a rishi called Dadhichi, and because of the *tapas shakti* of that sage, Vajra is an invincible weapon. Because it is an invincible weapon, God is supposed to be manifest in it.

Dhenūnām asmi kāmadhuk: “Among other treasures that came from the churning of the ocean came Kamadhenu, a wish-yielding cow. Anything that you want will be given by that cow, and that cow am I.” The daughter of Kamadhenu, called Nandini, who used to pour forth anything that one wanted, was taken care of by Vasishtha. When King Visvamitra went to Vasishtha’s ashram, Nandini entertained him with such a glorious repast that Visvamitra was stunned; and we have the story of the battle that then took place between Vasishtha and Visvamitra over this cow, which is the daughter of Kamadhenu. Kamadhenu is the most divine of all cows, and is in heaven.

Prajanaś cāsmi kandarpaḥ: “Of all the impulses to create, the power of reproduction is Myself, because it is the most powerful impulse in people. That which alienates itself into another, the self-reproductive instinct, is the most powerful instinct in a person; that acts because of My being behind it.”

Sarpāṇām asmi vāsukiḥ: There are two kinds of snakes, poisonous and non-poisonous. “Among poisonous snakes, I am Vasuki.”

Anantaś cāsmi nāgānām (10.29): “Among non-poisonous snakes, I am Ananta”—on whom Narayana is reclining in the milk ocean.

Varuṇo yādasām aham: “Among aquatic beings, I am Varuna.” Because Varuna is supposed to be the king of all waters, he is the aquatic god and rules over all that is inside the ocean.

Pitṛṇām ariyamā cāsmi yamaḥ: “Among the *pitris*, I am Aryama.” Just as there are many Adityas and many Rudras,

there are also many *pitris*; and Aryama rules over the *pitris*.

Yamaḥ saṁyamatām aham: “Among those who restrain, control, punish, and exert law and order everywhere, Yama am I.” *Yamadanda* is the punishing principle which maintains law and order in the universe.

Pralhādaś cāsmi daityānām (10.30). “Among Daityas, because of the goodness and devotion of Prahlada, I consider Prahlada is Me.” Demons are very terrible, and we cannot find a demon who is a devotee of God; but Prahlada, the son of the demon Hiranyakashipu, happened to be a devotee of God. Therefore, even among Daityas there are some devotees, such as Prahlada.

Kālāḥ kalayatām aham: “Among all transforming principles, time am I. Because the succession of events and everything that takes place in a historical process has a beginning and end, and because the very principle of evolution or involution is time, I am at the back of it.”

Mṛgāṇām ca mṛgendro’haṁ: “Among all animals, I am the lion.” We know the glory and the power of the lion. He is the king of the forest, and the king of animals.

Vainateyaś ca pakṣiṇām: “Among birds, I am Garuda.” Garuda is one of the celestial birds, and is mentioned at the beginning of the Mahabharata. Narayana, or Vishnu, is supposed to be riding on him. Garudadhvaja is Narayana, or Vishnu. Garuda is the most sacred and most powerful of birds.

Pavanaḥ pavatām asmi (10.31): “Among all purifying principles in this world, breeze, air, wind am I.” Nothing can purify more than air. There must always be a breeze. Just as light is purifying, air is also purifying.

Rāmaḥ śāstrabhṛtām aham: “Among all the warriors, Rama am I.” Nobody is equal to Rama. When he takes up his bow and arrow, the earth simply trembles.

Jhaṣāṇām makaraś cāsmi: “Among aquatic fish-like creatures, the crocodile am I.” The crocodile is not a fish, but lives in the water and is the biggest and most powerful; therefore, it is considered as a special manifestation.

Strotasām asmi jāhnavī: “Among all rivers, Ganga am I.” Ganga is the most holy of rivers. It comes from heaven itself, and passes through all the three regions—Svarga, Bhuloka and Patala.

Sargāṇām ādir antaś ca madhyaṁ caivāham arjuna (10.32): “Of all creative processes, the beginning and the middle and the end I am.” He is repeating once again that He is all-in-all: the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer.

Adhyātmavidyā vidyānām: “Among all learning—all sciences, arts and academic acquisitions—spiritual knowledge am I.” All other knowledge is secondary, because it is only spiritual knowledge that takes us to the immortal Self-realisation.

Vādaḥ pravadatām aham: “Among discussions, I am the art of argument and logical disquisition, producing proof by deducing inferences from premises.” This is because all discussions culminate finally in the production of a proof by logical demonstration.

Akṣarāṇām akārosmi (10.33): “Among all the letters of the alphabet, I am the initial primary vowel ‘a.’” The vowel ‘a’ has to be with every other kind of intonation and letter of the alphabet—*ka, kha, ga, gha, cha, chha, ja, jha*. Whatever we may say, *akara* is at the back of it.

Dvandvaḥ sāmāsikasya ca. Samasa is a kind of grammatical combination where two words of equal importance are joined together. It is a peculiar Sanskrit-oriented argument—*ramascha krishnascha ramakrishnau*—which is a joint presentation of two things in one word, and both words are equally important. Therefore, they are called *dvandva*, one

being equal to the other. And because of the equality of the two principles involved—*samasa* and *dvandva*—the Lord says He is that. “One is not inferior to the other. I equilibrate both things.”

Aham evākṣayaḥ kāla: I am the imperishable time that controls and restrains all creatures.”

Dhātāhaṁ viśvatomukhaḥ: “I am Brahma himself, with faces all around, who creates this cosmos.”

Mṛtyuḥ sarvaharaś cāham (10.34): “I am the destroying principle at the end of time. I become Rudra and dance to the tune of the dissolution of the whole cosmos. The *tandava nritya* of Rudra will take place at the end of time. When the music of the *damaru* starts, the earth will tremble and become pieces; the sun, moon and stars will fall down, and the whole of creation will become liquid. I am that destroying principle.”

Udbhavaś ca bhaviṣyatām: “I am also the principle that will re-create after the destruction.”

Kīrtiḥ śrīr vāk ca nārīṇām: “The beauty, the glory, the modesty and the grace that is found in women, that also am I.”

Smṛtir medhā dhṛtiḥ kṣamā: The power of memory, understanding, fortitude, and the capacity to forgive is a glorious quality of people. All these qualities are Me.”

Bṛhatsāma tathā sāmnam (10.35): “The Sama mantra, which is called Brihat Sama, am I.” Among Sama mantras, there is a special Sama called Brihat Sama. It is a highly spiritually charged invocation of God; therefore, it is called Brihat Sama—large Sama—the most powerful of Samas. It is the most important mantra, and it is chanted with music in the Sama Veda.

Gāyatrī chandasām aham: “Among all the mantras of the Vedas, the Gayatri mantra am I. Also among all the metres, I am Gayatri.” The Gayatri mantra is the very root and essence of all Vedic mantras.

Māsānām mārگاśīrṣo'ham: “Of the twelve months, the month of Margasirsha is Myself.” This is because of the subdued atmosphere of that particular period of the year when it is neither hot nor cold. Therefore, the Lord describes himself as present in this harmonious presentation of atmospheric conditions, the spring and the autumn. Margasirsha corresponds to autumn, to some extent.

Ṛtūnām kusumākaraḥ: “I am also the spring.” He is the spring and autumn both, because these are the two periods of the year when it is neither too hot nor cold, when it is pleasant. “I am that pleasant time.”

Dyutam chalayatām asmi (10.36): “Among the deceivers, I am the gambler.” Very strange! That is, “The best and the worst am I.” It comes to that. Both that which is extremely good and extremely bad meet at one point, one day or the other; therefore, God should be considered to be present even in an expert trickster.

Tejas tejasvinām aham: “Among people who have great grace, power and energy in them, that energy, glory and *varchas* (radiance in one's face arising out of spiritual awakening), comes from Me.”

Jayo'smi vyavasāyo'smi: “I am victory. Wherever there is success and victory, it is Me that brings out victory and success; and all activity that leads to success—*vyavasaya*—is Me only.”

Sattvaṁ sattvavatām aham: “I am the *sattva* in those people endowed with modesty, calmness, sobriety, intelligence, and goodness.”

Vṛṣṇīnām vāsudevo'smi (10.37): “Among the Vrishnis, I am Krishna.” The Vrishnis are a kind of clan; the Yadava clan is called the Vrishni clan, of which Krishna was their leader. Vasudeva is Sri Krishna himself. Here the Supreme Being refers to Vasudeva as Sri Krishna—the leader and the best among the Yadavas.

Pāṇḍavānām dhanamjayaḥ: “Among the Pandavas, I am Arjuna.” He does not say “I am Yudhishtira”, even though Yudhishtira is supposed to be the most virtuous, because extremely virtuous people are not useful. They create trouble. And so Sri Krishna is Arjuna, who is moderate.

Munīnām apyāhaṁ vyāsaḥ: “Among *munis*, great saints and sages, I am Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa. The great Master, the omniscient one who wrote the Mahabharata, the Brahma Sutras and the Puranas and classified the Vedas, that great being is Myself.”

Kavīnām uśanā kaviḥ: “Among political experts, the leaders of ethical and moral principles in political science, and very wise ones in administration, I am Usana—Sukracharya.”

Daṇḍo damayatām asmi (10.38): “Among restraining forces, punishment am I.”

Nītir asmi jigīṣatām: “I am polite behaviour in people who want to win success.” Whenever we want to win victory, we must be polite in our behaviour—*sama*. This is the first method that we have to adopt. The other three—*dana*, *bheda*, *danda*—should come afterwards. “*Niti*, or proper behaviour, and administrative and diplomatic ability, should be regarded as Myself because it is the best way of winning victory.”

Maunaṁ caivāsmi guhyānām: “I am the silence of secrets. All secrets merge into pure silence. You don’t say anything, you don’t think anything, you just ‘be’ yourself. That kind of spiritual inwardness, which is called silence, is Myself.”

Jñānaṁ jñānavatām aham: “I am the wisdom of all those who are wise.”

Yac cāpi sarvabhūtānām bījaṁ tad aham arjuna (10.39): “Whatever be there in this creation—wherever it be, in whatever form—the seed of it is Me; it arises from Me.”

Na tad asti vinā yat syān mayā bhūtaṁ carācaram: “Without Me, nothing can come into being. Neither the moving nor the

non-moving—*sthavara-jangama*—nothing can come into being without Me. Therefore, I am the seed of all.”

Nāntosti mama divyānām vibhūtīnām param̐tapa (10.40): “What is the use of talking much, O Arjuna! There is no end to My glories. How long will I go on describing them? I have told you a little bit—an outline of the main principles of My manifestations. I can go on endlessly telling stories of My manifestation. There is no limit, no end to My glories.”

Eṣa tūddeśataḥ prokto vibhūter vistaro mayā: “I have specially mentioned certain things as examples because it is not possible to delineate or describe everything in this world of time.” Even if we live as long as creation, it will not be possible to delineate or explain all the names and glories of God, because the glories of God are infinite. “Wherever there is special excellence, consider Me as present there.” Excellence means a special manifestation of ability which ordinarily cannot be considered as possible for people. In the Guinness Book of Records, records of exceptional performances can be found. We may say even those are manifestations of God because they are something exceptional, and cannot be done ordinarily. That is why they are entered in the Guinness Book. So we can add here: “The Guinness Book also is Me.”

Yad yad vibhūtimat sattvaṁ śrīmad ūrjitam eva vā, tat tad evāvagaccha tvaṁ mama tejoṁśasaṁbhavam (10.41): “Wherever there is glory, power, radiance, energy and aura spreading itself around, wherever there is manifestation of prosperity of every kind, high excellence, in that you can consider Me as present.”

Athavā bahunaitena kiṁ jñātena tavārjuna (10.42): “What is the use of talking more? Why do you want to ask so many questions?” *Viṣṭabhyāham idaṁ kṛtsnam ekāṁśena sthito jagat*: “In brief I shall tell you: With a little fraction of Myself, I am sustaining the whole cosmos.”

Discourse 32

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER BEGINS

INTRODUCTION TO THE VISVARUPA DARSHANA

We concluded the Tenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita, which gave a fairly good account of the glories of the Almighty as manifest in prominent and excellent forms in this world. The Lord said, “Wherever there is immense knowledge and immense power, I am manifest there.” If great genius, great strength, dexterity and great capacity to execute any work is discovered in a person—such as in geniuses like Srinivasa Ramanujan and Albert Einstein, who were exceptional human beings—it can be said that they are also one of the Vibhūtis. Though poets like Shakespeare and Kalidasa are not mentioned in the Gita, we may infer that they are all exceptional human beings, not ordinary persons.

We have been gradually moving onward in the direction of comprehending God in His Reality as He Himself is. The emphasis in the early chapters was on discipline and the performance of one’s duty. Then it became the duty of self-integration through *dhyana*, as explained in the Sixth Chapter. In the Seventh Chapter, when we were found to be fit seekers to understand the mystery of the cosmos, we were introduced into the cosmology of the entire creation of the universe. In the Eighth Chapter, we were told what happens to a seeker after he departs from this body. In the Ninth Chapter, further light was thrown on the religion of humanity, what may be called true religion, and God gave us His promise that *ananyāś*

cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate, teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānāṁ yogakṣemaṁ vahāmyaham (9.22): “Whoever is undividedly united with Me, him I shall take care of, and all shall be well with that person.”

Then Arjuna put a question: “I have understood everything that You say, but I want to know how You are visibly present in this world. What are Your special manifestations? I understand that You are, generally speaking, present everywhere; but where are You especially manifest?” Then Lord Sri Krishna gave a long list of special manifestations of great glories, powers and magnificences.

The whole point is that the Lord wants to drive into the mind of Arjuna the truth of God not merely being all things, or God being everywhere, God being present in highly excellent manifestations, God being the Creator, and God being the Procurer of all the welfare of people. This kind of teaching is good, but it is not enough for God, because God does not tolerate the presence of anyone outside Him. He is a supremely selfish person, we may say. God does not tolerate anything outside Him, not even the world. There is no question of transmigration, going to another realm, taking rebirth in some other place, becoming a yogi and again practising yoga to reach God, and contemplating on the creation of the universe as if creation is outside God—as if there is a material out of which He fashions the world. These ideas must be completely removed from the mind.

Though the intention of the Almighty is to say that nothing exists outside Him and He alone is, He did not proclaim it immediately because it is a hard nut to crack. Such a thought cannot easily enter the mind of a person. Hence, He slowly polished the mind of the student through karma and *bhakti* and philosophical initiation, in order to finally say something startling which nobody would have expected. We would like

to reach God and we would like to enjoy the presence of the Almighty, but we cannot understand anything at all when it is said “God only is”. This statement has no sense for us because we are here as devotees of God and we pray to Him and do yoga, and our entire ambition in life is to unite ourselves with God. We are here as seekers of God, and the world is there as an evolutionary process tending to perfection in Godhead. If that is the case, the meaning of “God only is” is incomprehensible to anyone who sees a world, who sees himself or herself, who sees the evolutionary process taking place, who deduces effects from causes and knows that when somebody dies they will be reborn. This conglomeration of ideas is the stock-in-trade of human thought, and the only way in which the human mind can operate. With these appurtenances of confusion in the mind—though they are philosophical confusions and metaphysical chaos—with all this, we are not prepared to understand when God says that He alone is.

“I cannot understand. Please tell me what exactly it is that You mean when You say that outside You nothing is. You have told me about Your glories as manifested in this world, but You also told me that finally the world is not in You though You are in the world.” Thus, the Eleventh Chapter starts with a prayerful question by Arjuna. *Madanugrahāya paramam guhyam adhyātmasaṁjñitam, yat tvayoktam vacas tena moho'yaṁ vigato mama* (11.1): “The nectarine teachings which You have poured into my ears have dispelled all my confusion and ignorance. All my delusion has gone. I understand what You say about the coming and going of beings.”

Bhavāpyayau hi bhūtānām śrutau vistaraśo mayā, tvattaḥ kamalapatrākṣa mātmyam api cāvyayam (11.2): “I heard Your glory from You Yourself. Who can describe You except Yourself? You have told me everything. You have glorified Your Atman, Your Self, as the be-all and end-all. Now I would

like to see this wondrous existence of Yours, outside which nothing is. It startles me out of my wits when I hear that You are the Creator of this universe, that the universe is in You and yet You are not in it, that nothing can operate anywhere, not even *prakriti* and the three *gunas*, without Your being there as the substratum. You have told me all that. You have asked me to discipline myself through the performance of duty, and You have asked me to contemplate and meditate through the yoga techniques which You have mentioned. But You have also perplexed my mind by the additional statement that You frequently make together with other instructions: that everything is You, everything proceeds from You, everything is sustained by You, and everything recedes back into You, and finally saying that only You exist. This true existence of Yours, which is independent of all the manifestations that You speak of, is the true glory that You have been referring to now and then. I would like to be blessed with this vision. O Supreme Purusha! Purushottama! I would like to behold Your glorious Being, if You deem it proper for me, if You condescend to grant this boon to me, and if You graciously accept that I am fit enough to visualise this Great Form.”

Manyase yadi tac chakyaṁ mayā draṣṭum iti prabho (11.4): “O Supreme Lord! Master of yoga! If You think that I am ready for this vision, let me be granted the vision of the immortal Universality that You are.” This is the introduction to the Visvarupa Darshana in the Eleventh Chapter.

We also have a curiosity, as Arjuna did, in the matter of this Universal vision. Every one of us would also like to behold it. And our desire to behold this Universal Form has a peculiar conditioning factor which perhaps prevented Arjuna from actually uniting himself with it, and left him in the same condition that he was after the vision was withdrawn. He was the Arjuna that had the blessing of the great radiance, but he

did not in any way become a different person. He could not get transformed and transmuted into that light, because he *saw* it, but he did not *become* it. The vision of God that we think of in our meditations is mostly of this kind. We say that so-and-so had *darshan* of Lord Krishna—which means to say, we want to see Lord Krishna with our own eyes, standing before us, but we do not know the fact that Lord Krishna, or whatever our concept of God is, is an all-pervading presence and, therefore, we cannot stand outside God.

A dry piece of grass cannot carry hot embers; the grass will be reduced to ashes. So when we ask for the vision of the Almighty, perhaps we do not know what it is that we are asking for. We are asking for the abolition of our existence in order that God may exist. There is an old saying: Where there is desire of any kind in terms of the mind and the sense organs, there God is not. Where God is, this kind of operation through the mind and the senses cannot be there. Either we are or God is; we can choose between the two. There is no bargaining: “Let me be there a little bit, and You also be there a little bit.” This kind of bargaining is not possible with God. He is utterly special, Who wants everything to be cut and dried. “Do you want Me? Then you should not be.” We will be frightened. “If I am not there, what good is there in my asking You to have this vision? If You are there, how will I know that You are there? You say I should not be there. Okay, maybe You are there. How would You expect me to know that You are there if I am not there?” God says, “I do not know all that. Either you are and I am not, or I am and you are not.” We are not prepared for this kind of logic on the part of the Absolute. This is the reason why none of us can be said to be wholly fit for this kind of realisation, and neither was Arjuna.

After the entire war was over, one day Sri Krishna and Arjuna were sitting leisurely in a garden and chatting. Arjuna,

who had doubts about this vision, asked Sri Krishna: “Great Master! You said something to me at the beginning of the war. I do not remember it fully. Will You kindly recount it once again?”

Sri Krishna replied: “Foolish man! I thought you were very intelligent, but you have forgotten everything that I told you.” *Param hi brahma kathitam yogayuktena tanmayā* (Anu 1.12): “At that time I was one with That which alone is. I shall not summon this kind of unity at all times. At that time I assumed the form of Supreme Yoga, and the words were spoken by that Universal Existence with which I was one at that time. I will not once again summon that form, that vision, that power, that perfection, merely for titillating your curiosity. Anyway, I will tell you some stories, which are a kind of secondary substitute for what I told you earlier.”

That secondary substitute in the form of certain stories, illustrations, etc., that occurs towards the end of the Mahabharata epic is called the Anugita—a secondary Gita, not the primary one. The primary Gita is here; and once it is told, it is told forever, and nobody can repeat it. *Krishno janati vai samyak kinchit partho dhananjayah, vyaso va vyasa-putro va* is an old saying: Only Sri Krishna knows the real meaning of the Gita. Arjuna knows something. Vyasa and Suka know. Others only hear it.

So here is a great treasure for us, and in this wondrous treasure of the Gita we have the supreme treasure of the description of the eternity and infinity that God is, the form which is called Visvarupa Darshana—Vaisvanara Tattva, which was revealed to Arjuna.

Sri Krishna showed this Visvarupa four times in his life. When he was a little baby, his elder brother complained to their mother that he was eating mud. His mother caught hold of the child and gave him a slap, “You are eating mud!”

“No, I didn’t eat mud. You can see my mouth,” he said.

He opened his mouth, and that lady saw the whole universe—all the oceans and rivers—and she was stunned. Then *maya* immediately cast a veil over her and she entirely forgot the vision, and placed the child on her lap.

The second time Sri Krishna showed this terrific vision was in the court of the Kauravas, when Duryodhana would not listen to any good advice. The third time was this Bhagavadgita Visvarupa Darshana. The fourth time was when Sri Krishna was returning to Dvaraka after the war was over and on the way, near Rajasthan, he met a sage called Uttanka.

Uttanka stopped Sri Krishna and said, “Please! What happened, after all? There was a quarrel between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, and you were trying to mediate. What was the outcome of it?”

Sri Krishna replied, “Oh, it was all no good. I tried my best to make peace, but Duryodhana would not listen. War took place, they were destroyed, and the Pandavas were crowned king.”

“Oh! You are a very partial person. This is very bad. You could have stopped the war if you wanted to. No! I’ll curse you just now,” said Uttanka.

Then Sri Krishna said, “Why do you waste the little *tapasya* that you have gained by the service of Guru, etc.? Your curse cannot affect Me, because the Universal Power is in Me.”

“Is it so? Is it? Are you the Universal Power? May I know that, then?”

Immediately Lord Sri Krishna showed the Visvarupa once again, and then he left for Dvaraka.

Discourse 33

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER CONTINUES

THE VISVARUPA DARSHANA

It is very difficult to explain the Visvarupa unless you yourself become it. Unless you ‘be’ it, you cannot explain it; and I cannot ‘be’ it at present.

Arjuna’s request was: “May I, O compassionate Lord, be blessed with this grand Universal vision of Yours, to which You have made reference here and there in Your instructions to me—and especially Your emphasis on the presence of Your glories in different forms. May I know? May I see? Would You condescend to grant me this vision of Your grand, grand, great, glorious Universal Form, which I shall have the blessing and fortune to behold?”

Suddenly there was a blinding light dazzling the entire space, as if thousands of suns were rising together in the sky. One can only imagine what kind of light it could be, because such a thing we can never behold. Suddenly, distances vanished. Stars in the heavens seemed to touch the dust of the earth. A tiny object like a little flower in a cranny of a wall in a garden was seen to be touching the galaxies. The entire earth started glowing as if it was molten gold. Every leaf, every plant, every rock, every mountain—the entire space started exuding a light which was impossible for anyone to see with physical eyes. It was only light and light everywhere. The forms melted, as it were, into their original essence of light.

Today modern physics tells us that matter can be converted into light. There is an inter-convertibility between matter and form, and all the contents of the physical universe can be decomposed into a rarefied radiance. Actually, the sun and the stars, which are repositories of light, are constituted of rarefied matter which becomes gaseous; so light is also a kind of gas. But light is something more than gas. It is impossible to know what physical substance light is made of. We do not know whether it is made up of particles or waves. Light is just radiance, and such light flooded the entire atmosphere even as Arjuna asked to see the Lord's grand Universal Form. The materiality of the world, the outsideness of the world, the visibility of objects, vanished into the menstroom of this inundating blaze, the ocean of light. "Arjuna, you cannot see this form with your eyes."

Śrībhagavānuvāca: paśya me (11.5): "Look at Me!" Sri Krishna also said this to Duryodhana, in the court of the Kauravas: "Look at Me!" And immediately there was a burst of light that made everyone shut their eyes, and nobody could see what it was. *Paśya me pārtha rūpāṇi śataśoṭha sahaśraśaḥ*: "In hundreds and thousands, in myriad forms, am I manifest here. Look at Me!" That is what the Lord said in answer to Arjuna's query.

Nānāvidhāni divyāni nānāvarṇākṛtīni ca: "Every form, every colour, every detail, anything that you would like to see is here just now. And it is not just spread out in a distance or a spatial expanse; it is a distanceless compactness of the presence of all things at one and the same place." There, when one thing was touched, everything was touched. Everything looked like a mirror reflecting every other thing. It appeared that everything could be seen everywhere. "Look at Me then, in this Form. Look at the suns dazzling everywhere! Look at the Vasus, the Adityas, the Rudras!" Everywhere these

divinities could be seen. “You see here whatever you want to see—Asvinau, Maruts, all divinities, and all those things which you cannot even imagine with your mind. Those gods, divinities and powers which are not described even in the scriptures because the human being cannot comprehend them even with the farthest stretch of imagination, those too you see here. The whole world is concentrated here. You need not travel by air or by any vehicle to see other parts of the earth. It is here just now—every part of the earth, every part of creation, all creation in the fourteen worlds. It can be contacted, touched and experienced without travelling, because space has vanished.”

There is no need of travelling anywhere because at one moment, in an instantaneous consciousness of grasp, one comes in contact with the total whole of the entire universe—without distance, without time, without duration, without having to travel, without using any instruments. Unimaginable! One does not know what one is talking about!

“You cannot behold Me like this. I have to bless you with another eye altogether, called the eye of insight, which will enable you to behold this togetherness of things.” We see things in succession; here is one thing, here is the next thing, here is another thing. We see objects in a series. But here, in this vision, the succession of events, and also the succession of the series of objects and things in the world, gets melted down into a simultaneity of perception. It is what is called the ‘here and the now’ of all things. Anything whatsoever, whatever it be, whatever we can think of in all the heavens, it is here just now, and at this point.

Here, I am reminded of that majestic power that Bharadvaja Rishi exercised when Bharata, the brother of Rama, went to the forest in search of Rama. Bharata was accompanied by a large retinue, with elephants and horses and chariots, thousands

in number. I do not know why he took such a large retinue. Perhaps he was under the impression that Rama would yield and come back, and he would take him back in all glory. That may have been the pious intention of Bharata. Otherwise, what is the purpose of taking this army? Anyway, he happened to pass through the ashram of Sage Bharadvaja, who was living in a little hut; and he wanted to offer his obeisance to the great Maharaj before continuing. Three miles from the ashram, Bharata told the army, "Stop here. No noise should be made here." He removed his shoes, removed his royal attire, put on ordinary clothing, and walked barefooted.

When he went to the sage's ashram and prostrated before him, there was a little conversation between the sage and Bharata.

"Have you come alone, all the way from Ayodhya?" asked Sage Bharadvaja.

"No, Maharaj. There is a big army with me," replied Bharata.

"Why did you not bring them here?"

"I did not want to disturb the sanctity of this place. The elephants and horses will neigh and make noise, and I would not like to disturb your holy atmosphere."

"I would like to entertain you today with dinner for all people," said the sage.

Bharata could not understand what Sage Bharadvaja was talking about. Bharata had some thousands and thousands of people, and animals of various kinds, and here was a sage sitting in his hut, with nothing in his hand. They could not sit in a forest full of thorns!

Bharata said, "Maharaj, we don't require any dinner. We have got our own preparation. We require only your blessing."

Bharadvaja knew that this boy was thinking that he had nothing, and said, "No! You shall bring all of them. It shall be

a pleasure to serve you with a repast. Let there be thousands of people; let all the elephants and horses come. Everybody will be fed.”

It was very difficult for Bharata to understand what this instruction was, but he summoned his entire host.

The sage went to his *yajnasala*, lit the fire and poured ghee, and said, “*Indraya svaha*. Indra! Come with all your glory, retinue, everything. I want to serve Bharata and all his host with a repast. Varuna! Bring rivers of honey and milk here. Let the rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati flow here, just now. Let them all take bath here itself. Visvakarma! Come just now and build palaces, hundreds in number. Remove this forest. Make the ground level, and let there be scintillating light everywhere. Kubera! Send all your musicians and dancers immediately. And the best of dishes have to come just now, in a few minutes. Let it be done! Let my wish be fulfilled! Let all the denizens of the heavens descend just now to serve these people whom I consider as my guests.”

When he uttered these words, immediately, there was a dazzling light. The forest vanished; there was no forest. Celestials carrying golden plates started descending from the skies. Visvakarma levelled the whole ground in one minute, and thousands of palaces started shining everywhere—with swimming pools, with attendants, musicians, dancers, and all sorts of servants. Thousands of cooks, with food which was so fragrant that it could be smelt even from a distance, started serving such delicacies that even the emperor had not tasted. All the elephants and horses were properly groomed by suitable persons coming from heaven itself. Each person was served by four or five people from heaven; and all were bathed in oil and warm water. There were beautiful rivers flowing with cool refreshing water, rivers flowing with honey, and rivers flowing with milk. During dinner there was beautiful music,

and celestial Apsarasas came and danced. There was celestial bedding for everybody, thousands in number, which had been instantaneously manufactured by Visvakarma.

Nobody could imagine what was happening. They wondered whether they were blind or had gone mad by what they were seeing. They all had such a beautiful dinner that, it seems, the soldiers said, “Let Bharata go in search of Rama. We shall be here.” This was because they had not seen this glory, this entertainment, even in Ayodhya. Then they all slept, and had a good rest. In the morning, everything vanished. There were no Apsarasas, no palaces, nothing remained.

The sage called Bharata and enquired, “Did you have a good dinner? Did you have a good rest?” Bharata did not know what to say. He was weeping with joy.

The idea is that these people are Godmen; and what God can do, these great heroes of spirit also can do. So when Sri Krishna assumed this Cosmic Form, the very earth started melting down into the liquid of consciousness, and it was God everywhere; the great ‘I’ was scintillating in everything. Brahma, Rudra, Asvinau—all the gods were there in different forms, the very limbs of this Virat Purusha.

Bhagavan Sri Krishna said to Arjuna, “I shall give you an eye with which you can instantaneously see this great, wonderful joy.” *Paśya me yogam aiśvaram* (11.8): “Look at My glory! Behold this majesty of My yoga, Arjuna. See, I am here! See that which you wanted Me to show you. Look!”

Evam uktvā tato rājan mahāyogeśvaro hariḥ, darśayāmāsa pāṛthāya paramaṁ rūpam aiśvaram (11.9). Sanjaya then spoke to Dhritarashtra: “O king! Look at this miracle! Having uttered these words, the great Lord of yoga revealed His majesty.” The Mahayogesvara, Lord Krishna, revealed His eternal form, *aishvara rupa*—His supreme, deathless form.

There were faces everywhere—everywhere eyes, everywhere hands, everywhere feet, everything was grasped by everything, as it were. *Sarvataḥpāṇipādaṁ tat sarvto'kṣiṣiromukham, sarvataḥśrutimal loke sarvam āvṛtya tiṣṭhati* (13.13) is a verse in the Thirteenth Chapter. Everywhere were faces and eyes and hands and feet of this Mighty Being. *Anekavaktranayanam* (11.10): Marvel of marvels, wonder of wonders, giddy does the mind become even by thinking about it. All glorious ornamentations, attractions, all kinds of weapons, even of war, were lifted up. Not only the glories of beauty, but also the glories of power and energy—all things were seen there at once. Celestial garlands were decorating every form. All the faces were radiant with ornamentation.

Sarvāścaryamayam (11.11). Again Sanjaya says, “Wonder! What can I tell you—wonder of wonders! Glory of glories!”

Even Sage Bharadvaja’s act was really a glory of glories. We will not sleep after hearing all these stories.

Anantam: The Infinite Form was shown, with faces spread out everywhere. Wherever Arjuna cast his eyes, he saw the face of this Almighty gazing at him in different forms—in beautiful forms, in terrific forms, in blazing forms, in fierce forms, in kind forms, in every kind of form that we can imagine. How many kinds of attitudes and formations of psyche can we imagine in this world? All the *navarasas*—*sringara*, *vira*, *karuna*, *adbhuta*, *hasya*, *bhayanaka*, *bibhatsa*, *raudra* and *shanti*—were manifest in all things. The whole essence of attraction through the *kavya rasas* that we read in books were visibly manifest in this form.

Divi sūryasahastrasya bhaved yugapad utthitā, yadi bhāḥ sadṛśī sā syād bhāsas tasya mahātmanaḥ (11.12). Here, 1,000 does not necessarily mean 999 plus 1. The word ‘*sahasra*’ is used for an infinite number. *Visvam anantam sahasram sarvam akshaya vachakam*: In the Amara Kosam, *visvam* and

sahasram also mean infinite. Infinite suns rose, as it were. We only hear these words, but we do not know what kind of light it is, because the sun does not shine there. *Na tatra suryo bhati*, it has been said. The sun will not shine; the sun's light is like darkness before this great light. And yet, for our entertainment and for our education, we are told it is the light that surpasses all sunlight.

In that vast, mysterious, spread-out Universality, Arjuna saw the whole creation somewhere in a corner. The *ananta koti brahmāṇḍa nāyaka* was showing His Visvarupa. This Brahmanḍa is not the only thing that God has created. Endless, endless, endless are the worlds that have been created. This particular world, these fourteen realms that are called this Brahmanḍa, which is ruled by Chaturmukha Brahma, is only one; and that entire thing was seen in some corner. Millions of them were rolling as fireballs, like solar orbs, and this universe was seen in some corner.

Tatraikasthaṁ jagat kṛtsnaṁ pravibhaktam anekadhā (11.13): Divided into multifarious shapes, this entire creation was seen there as if it is only a fraction of this total manifestation. *Pādo'sya viśvā bhūtāni* (P.S. 2): Only one-fourth of the Supreme Being is manifested in this cosmos, as it were. *Tripādasyā'mṛtaṁ divi*: Three-fourths is invisible. The immanent form of God is only one-fourth, as it were; the transcendent form is three-fourths, as it were. It is not actually an arithmetical division that is intended here; the idea is that it is a very small fraction. *Viṣṭabhyāham idaṁ kṛtsnam ekāṁśena sthito jagat* (10.42): "With a little fraction of Myself, I am supporting the entire cosmos." The idea is that a little bit of the glory of God is revealed in the whole cosmos, and the real glory is transcendent. *Estasyaivānandasyānyāni bhūtāni mātṛām upajīvant* (B.U. 4.3.32). Yaṇavalkya says that with a little spoonful of the bliss of the ocean of Brahman, the whole

universe is sustained. And we are licking it in a mild, adulterated, spread-out, dense, concretised form of one spoonful only. What would be the ocean of that bliss? Such a thing Arjuna beheld.

Tatraikasthaṁ jagat kṛtsnaṁ pravibhaktam anekadhā, apaśyad devadevasya śarīre pāṇḍavas tadā (11.13): In that great God of God's Being, Arjuna had the blessing of beholding the wonder. There is no word in language to describe this wonder, except that it is a wonder.

Gaganam gagana karam sagarah sagaro panam, rama ravanayor yuddham rama ravanayor iva (Ramayana): "How was the battle of Rama with Ravana? Can you compare? What was it like?" somebody asked. It is like asking what the sky is like. The sky is like the sky only. What is the ocean like? The ocean is like the ocean only. How was the battle between Rama and Ravana? It was like the battle between Rama and Ravana; there is no other comparison. Such superb events which surpass understanding cannot have a comparison. In this wondrous Form which cannot bear comparison with anything else, Arjuna lost his consciousness, as it were, and he prostrated himself in dizzy heights of awareness when he beheld this might.

Tataḥ sa vismayāviṣṭa (11.14): Wonderstruck, fear struck, dizzied with horripilation; *hṛṣṭaromā*: prostrating himself in utter surrender; *praṇamya śirasā devaṁ kṛtāñjalir abhāṣata*: "O God! What can I say?"

Arjuna uvāca: paśyāmi devāṁs tava deva dehe sarvāṁs tathā bhūtaviśeṣasaṁghān, brahmāṇam īśaṁ kamalāsana-
thaṁ ṛṣīṁś ca sarvān uragāṁś ca divyān (11.15): "O Lord! I behold everything here. Brahma, the Creator himself, is seen here. I am seeing him." Who can have *darshan* of Brahma? We cannot see him, but here he was, and here Rudra was. "In Your form, I see all the gods. Every form of creation, including

every created essence—all animals, all creatures, all human beings, all the denizens of heaven—I am seeing here just in front of me. I am seeing all the rishis. All the Nagas, Yakshas, Gandharvas, Kinnaras, I am seeing them here just now. All the multifaceted forms of Yours, I am beholding in front of me.”

Anekabāhūdaravaktranetraṃ paśyāmi tvāṃ sarvato'nantarūpam, nāntaṃ na madhyaṃ na punas tavādiṃ paśyāmi viśveśvara viśvarūpa (11.16): “In this multifaceted manifestation of Yours, with faces everywhere turned in my direction, with all eyes gazing at me, I see the infinity of Yours everywhere. I cannot know where You begin, where You end, or where is Your middle is. I cannot understand how vast is this personality of Yours. Hey Visvesvara! O Lord of the universe! O Visvarupa! The All-form, Omni-form! I am not able to gauge how vast You are. I am simply struck with surprise.”

Kirīṭinaṃ gadināṃ cakriṇaṃ ca tejorāśiṃ sarvato dīptimantam, paśyāmi tvāṃ durnirīkṣyaṃ samantād dīptānalārkadyutim aprameyam (11.17): “With diadems on every head of this multifarious form, I am seeing you shining. With *gadas*, with *astras*, together with this radiance that You are manifesting, I am unable to locate what is what at any place. Like blazing fire, I am seeing Your form spread out everywhere. You have a *gada*, *chakra*, *shankha* and *diadem* on Your heads—on all the millions of heads that I am seeing in front of me. And all these heads, all these faces, look like masses of fire. Columns of radiance, that is what I am seeing in front of me, and they have dazzled the whole space. I cannot see anything properly because my eyes are dazzled, dimmed completely in this light. Impossible it is for me to behold You, O Lord!” *Durnirīkṣyaṃ*: “Really I am speaking, I cannot behold You. It is not possible for me even with this blessing of a new eye that You have given me. This is too much for me, and I cannot behold You any more because You are fire, You are radiance, You are the

Sun of suns. Immeasurable Thou art, O Lord!”

Tvam akṣaram paramaṁ veditavyaṁ tvam asya viśvasya paramaṁ nidhānam, tvam avyayaḥ śāśvatadharmagoptā sanātanas tvaṁ puruṣo mato me (11.18): “Lord! Thou art the Eternal Being.” Arjuna is in ecstasy. He does not know how to express himself. He does not even know what he is speaking. “Thou art the immortal essence! Thou art the thing that is to be known through the scriptures, the Vedas, the Upanishads and all the texts that deal with liberation! O Supreme Being! O the Abode, the very support and substratum of this universe, I am addressing You. You are really the endless Being that is making me behold You here as something located in some place. You are not in one place; everywhere Thou art.” *Śāśvatadharmagoptā*: “I am seeing all dharma, all law and regulation, all blessing, all righteousness, all justice, all goodness, everything wonderful ethically, aesthetically, philosophically and spiritually. Truth, goodness and beauty are scintillating everywhere. ‘Eternity’ is the only word I can use for you. Supreme Purusha Thou art.”

Anādimadhyāntam anantavīryam anantabāhuṁ śāśi-sūryanetram, paśyāmi tvāṁ dīptahutāśavaktraṁ svatejasā viśvam idaṁ tapantam (11.19): “You are Yourself light. It is not that some light is emanating from You. Thou art Thyself the entire mass of light, and it is that light that is radiating everything. There is no beginning, no end, for this radiance.” *Anantavīrya*: “What is Your prowess, what is Your energy, what is Your strength? They cannot be measured. Immeasurable strength, immeasurable prowess, is embedded in this vision of Virat.” *Anantabāhuṁ*: “Millions of hands are everywhere.” The Svestasvatara and Isavasya Upanishads tell us that without feet, He runs fast; without hands, He grasps everything. Even the fastest thing cannot overtake Him.

Arjuna repeats what he said. “I see You as columns of flames of light and radiance. I cannot see anything else in front of me, because Thou art Thyself. You glorify all things with Your presence, and it is Your glory that is glorying in the form of this vision. You are glorifying Yourself with Your own glory. Who can glorify You? Which thing in the world can glorify You? You are glorifying Yourself by Yourself.” We cannot glorify God. He has to glorify Himself with His own powers and grandeur. *Svatejasā viśvam idam tapantam*: “The entire space and time is filled up with You. All the stars look like twinkling essences before this radiance. They have lost their radiance; they are dark before You.”

Dyāvāpṛthivyor idam antaram hi vyāptam tvayaikena diśaś ca sarvāḥ, dṛṣṭvādbhutam rupam ugram tavedam lokatrayam pravyathitam mahātman (11.20): “The whole creation is trembling because Your form is terrific and it is striking fear in everything. Earth and heaven, the skies and whatever is between them, is filled with this radiance of Yours.”

The Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata describes how the whole creation was trembling when Sri Krishna took up his weapon against Bhishma and jumped from the chariot in the middle of the war. They say the earth shook and the oceans started throwing fierce waves, and Brahma himself could not understand why the end of the world was coming before its expected time. When Sri Krishna ran with the thud of his foot in the direction of Bhishma, Brahma felt that the Creator Himself had started destroying what He had created.

Amī hi tvām surasaṁghā viśanti kecid bhītāḥ prāñjalayo grṇanti, svastīyuktvā maharṣisiddhasaṁghāḥ stuvanti tvām stutibhiḥ puṣkalābhiḥ (11.21): In the tremendous unity that Arjuna was perceiving, he also saw the little details. All the gods, all the rishis, all the Rakshasas, Gandharvas, Kinnaras—all of them were also seen in detail at the background of this

universal unity. On this canvas, or the substratum of this unity of perception, he also saw the details of creation simultaneously. “All the gods I see. They are entering into You. Some are running away from You in fear. Some are prostrating before You. Some are crying, ‘Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! O God! O God!’ and they are running hither and thither. Maharishis, *siddhas* and all other groups are unable to visualise this vision. They are also wonderstruck. ‘Glory! Glory! Glory!’ they say, and dance in ecstasy.”

Rudrādityā vasavo ye ca sādhyā viśveśvinau marutaś coṣmapāś ca, gandharvayakṣāsurasiddhasaṁghā vīkṣante tvāṁ vīṣmitāś caiva sarve (11.22): “All the Rudras, all the Adityas, all the Vasus, all the Sadhyas, all the Visvadevas, Asvini Kumaras, Maruts, and all the other gods like the Ushmapas, Gandharvas, Yakshas, the other demi-gods and *siddhas*—all of them are looking at You, gazing at You with unwinking eyes, and are struck with the wonder of this manifestation.”

Rūpaṁ mahat te (11.23): “Great, grand, glorious is this form, O Lord, that Thou are manifesting before me. *Bahuvaktranetraṁ*: With all faces and eyes. *Mahābāha*: O all-armed one! *Bahubāhūrupāda*: With all kinds of feet everywhere, all kinds of hands are grasping varieties of weapons, and myriads of manifestations of these arms and feet. Many stomachs, many eyes, many arms, many chests—I do not know how I can manage to see them with this blessing of the third eye that you have given. Even that is very feeble in front of this Might of all mights. *Damṣṭrākārālāṁ*: You are very cruel in some forms, because You seem to be biting and crushing and chewing and swallowing—that also I am seeing in some forms. In some other forms it is all grace, blessing and beauty and majesty. The whole earth is unable to bear this any more. It is frightened and, O Lord, I am also very much frightened!”

Discourse 34

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER CONTINUES

THE VISVARUPA DARSHANA CONTINUES

The Eleventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgita—the Visvarupa Darshana—continues. Arjuna exclaimed his wonder at this great vision. *Diśo na jāne na labhe ca śarma, prasīda deveśa jagannivāsa* (11.25): “I am unable to locate even the quarters of the heavens. I have lost my wits when I behold this terrifying mysterious form of Yours. O Lord of Lords! Be gracious to bless me so that I may know who You are.”

Though the Bhagavadgita was spoken prior to the commencement of the war, in another realm of existence the Mahabharata had already taken place, the events had been recounted and the conclusion had been drawn, and victory had been won by the Pandavas. Everything had been done in another realm; we may call it the fourth dimensional realm, where events occur prior to their manifestation in the three-dimensional world. A lot of time is taken for events to manifest themselves as concrete appearances in the physical world. Even when wars take place in the world, they occur in heaven first. Ideas clash before people physically clash. An ideological war takes place first in the ethereal realm. Just as disease manifests inside first before it manifests itself outside in the body, in a similar manner, the decision as to what would be the outcome of the Mahabharata war had already been taken in higher realms, and the implementation of the decision in the form of an actual conflict, from the point of view of the

process of time, was yet to take place.

There are wonders and wonders in the world. It is said that in some of the realms of creation, the Mahabharata has not yet occurred. It is to take place. In some of the realms of creation, the Mahabharata has already happened; and in other realms it is happening just now. It is something like the procession of a king moving from one part of the country to another part of the country. Suppose a king comes in a procession from Delhi to Laxmanjhula. For the people in Delhi, the procession is about to start, and he has moved. He has reached Muzaffarnagar. The people in Delhi say the procession is over. The people in Muzaffarnagar say the procession is taking place. The people in Rishikesh say it has not yet taken place. Thus, for one it has already happened, for another it is just happening, and for a third person it has not happened at all. This applies to all the events in the world. Every event takes place simultaneously in every part of the world, but they appear to be manifest at different times due to the action of the processes into which time is cast—namely past, present and future.

Dhṛtarāṣṭrasya putrāḥ (11.26): As Arjuna beheld this wondrous form of the Lord, the Kauravas—Duryodhana and his henchmen, with all their army—were entering the mouth of this Multi-formed Being. Their destruction had already been confirmed. *Amī ca tvām dhṛtarāṣṭrasya putrāḥ sarve sahaivāvanipālasaṁghaiḥ, bhīṣmo droṇaḥ sūtaputras tathā-sau sahāsmadīyair api yodhamukhyaiḥ; vaktrāṇi te tvaramāṇā viśanti daṁṣṭrākārālāni bhayānakāni, kecid vilagnā daśanāntareṣu saṁdṛśyante cūrṇitair uttamāṅgaiḥ* (11.26-27): “What am I seeing? The Mahabharata war has not yet taken place. It is just at the beginning.” The Bhagavadgita was told before the commencement of the war, but what does Arjuna see in that form? The entire army of the Kauravas, with Duryodhana, with Bhishma and Drona, with Karna, and even all the army

of the Pandavas, which would not survive, were all rushing into this all-destroying mouth of the Cosmic Being. They were stuck, as it were, in the crevices between the terrific set of teeth of this all-destroying Time Spirit, manifest here as the Visvarupa. Some of them were caught between the teeth, and some were crushed into paste and powder, as it were, by the jaws of this mighty Yawning Face.

Yathā nadīnām bahavo'mbuvegāḥ samudram evābhimukhā dravanti, tathā tavāmī naralokavīrā viśanti vaktrāṇyabhivi-jvalanti (11.28): "As rivers rush into the ocean, I am seeing all beings rushing into You. Into this flaming series of mouths of Thy wondrous form, I am seeing the rivers of kings and armies rushing inward. They are being reduced to ashes because they are like moths rushing into the flame, not knowing what will happen to them."

Yathā pradīptam jvalanam pataṅgā viśanti nāśāya samṛd-dhavegāḥ (11.29): "As moths rush in great haste towards their destruction in the flaming fire, so do I see the entire world rushing towards its own destruction through the all-consuming mouths of this great Virat Purusha."

Lelihyase (11.30): "You are lapping Your tongue, licking." *Lelihyase grasamānaḥ samantāl:* "You, like a magnet, pull everything into Yourself." *Lokān samagrān vadanair jvalad-bhiḥ, tejobhir āpūrya jagat samagram bhāsas tavogrāḥ prapa-panti viṣṇo:* "What is it I am seeing? The Time Spirit in this tremendous form, swallowing everything through its mouths, is lapping its tongue as if it is not yet satisfied by the swallowing of all the worlds into its own mouths. O Vishnu! Hey Narayana, Who are now here in this great form of Visvarupa. Thy great radiance is burning the worlds around with its heat and light."

Ākhyāhi me ko bhavān ugrarūpo (11.31): "Who are You? I cannot understand. I thought this is Krishna, my friend, but I

am seeing something here that I cannot recognise. Would You kindly tell me who You are? O Mighty Being, are You Krishna? I cannot see Krishna here; I see something else. I would like to know who this is that is standing before me and terrifying me with this Universal Form. Please tell me who You are, manifesting Yourself before me in this fear-striking form.” *Namostu te*: “Prostrations to You. In humble submission I beseech Thee to tell me who You are.” *Devavara prasīda, vijñātum icchāmi bhavantam ādyaṁ*: “O God of gods, I would like to know Your beginning, Your middle and Your end—who You are. I cannot know what it is that is in front of me, from where it has come, how it is sustained, and what its intention is.”

Śrībhagavānuvāca: This Great Being speaks now. *Kālo'smi lokakṣayakṛt pravṛddho* (11.32): “I am the all-destroying Time.” The very Spirit of Time is speaking. “I am here in this form for the destruction of the world through this war that is going to take place, to see that everything is put an end to.” The *avatara* of Sri Krishna was for the destruction of all evil and wickedness in the world, and in that Universal Form he did it in one instant—in a timeless instantaneity, as it were. *Kālo'smi lokakṣayakṛt pravṛddho lokān samāhartum iha pravṛt-taḥ*: “I am here to withdraw everything into Myself. Even if you do not raise a finger, the Kauravas are not going to survive.” *Ṛte'pi tvāṁ na bhaviṣyanti sarve ye'vasthitāḥ pratyānīkeṣu yodhāḥ*: “None in this entire army is going to survive. You may say that you will not take up arms. You have your own flimsy arguments not to do anything and keep quiet. Okay, don't do anything. But they shall not survive whether you take up arms or not, because their destruction has been already pre-determined. They have been doomed by My will. So why do you consider yourself as a great instrument in bloodshed? You are nothing of the kind. They have already gone to the other world, and you are under the impression that you are going

to do something which is not very pleasant. Therefore, wake up! Do not be pusillanimous. Do not be weak-hearted. I have already done the work that you are expected to do. Why are you unnecessarily talking to Me?”

Tasmāt tvam uttiṣṭha (11.33): “May the glory go to you, though the work has been done by Me.” Everyone says that Arjuna won the war; nobody says that Krishna won the war. Even today, nobody speaks of Krishna’s work. After the war was over, Sri Krishna met Yudhishtira and spoke to him, “After all, victory has been won due to the power of your righteousness, the strength of Bhima, and the dexterousness of Arjuna.” He never said that he had also contributed something. Yudhishtira actually wept upon hearing these words. Naturally, he could do nothing except weep because the Lord had given credit to Yudhishtira’s righteousness, Bhima’s strength and Arjuna’s dexterity, while the work had been done by somebody else—by the one who spoke these words as if he had done nothing. Sri Krishna never asked Draupadi whether she received his long sari. When a gift is given, sometimes we want it to be acknowledged. The work of God and the work of Godmen is never visible to the eyes, and these great beings expect no thanks from us. They do not wish that we should utter even a word of recognition. They do what they have to do; and when it is done, the matter is over and there is no further talk.

“Great glory be to you, O Arjuna, as the winner of the victory in this war. Conquer the enemies, and then rule this kingdom.” *Jitvā śatrūn bhuñkṣva rājyaṁ samṛddham*: “I have already done the work for you.” *Mayaivaite nihatāḥ pūrvam eva nimittamātraṁ bhava*: “You be only an instrument. Let people know that you have won the victory, though the victory has already been won.”

*Droṇaṁ ca bhīṣmaṁ ca jayadrathaṁ ca karṇaṁ tathānyān
api yodhavīrān, mayā hatāṁs tvaṁ jahi mā vyathiṣṭhā
yudhyasva jetāsi raṇe sapatnān* (11.34): “Drona, Bhishma,
Jayadratha, Karna, and all other warriors whom I have already
destroyed, you may destroy a second time. Take up arms! Go
and thresh—the threshing of old straw, it is called—and kill
the corpses. They are already dead; their energy has gone.”

Many of the contributors to the victory in the war are not known to history. Of course, Sri Krishna’s participation in this great Armageddon is well known, and we need not say anything about it. The hypnotic effect that he cast on the entire army when he gazed at the warriors was also a great contributory factor, as it drew fifty percent of the strength of the Kauravas. Hanuman, who was invisibly present on top of Arjuna’s chariot—Arjuna is known as Kapidhvaja because of this—terrified the nerves of all the soldiers with his roar, and they were practically paralysed by the very sound of it. But something more was there.

After the war was over, Arjuna was sitting calmly at one place, and Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa came to see him. Receiving the honoured guest and seating him, Arjuna posed a question: “Great Master! I have some doubt in my mind. During the war, which is now over, I saw something in front of me every day—some human-being-like figure whose feet were not touching the ground. It was whitish and greyish, with a trident in hand. It was visible and not visible. Every day this vision was in front of me. I had no occasion to ask this question to anybody. But now thou art here, O Master, will you tell me what it is that I have seen?”

Vyasa replied, “Blessed you are, Arjuna. It was Lord Siva. He knew that you were helpless. Before Bhishma, Drona and Karna, even a hundred Arjunas could not stand. Knowing this, knowing your goodness and your physical incapacity to

meet these people, Rudra himself was standing in front of you. He did not take up arms. He did not use his trident. He only exuded a fragrance around him—*sugandhiṃ puṣṭi-vardhanam* (R.V. 7.59.12). That fragrance killed them, and they had no life afterwards. Though they appeared to be alive, they were actually corpses. Who could win this victory except Rudra, that great yogi of yogis? O Arjuna, you are really blessed because you had that *darshan*. You had *darshan* of the great Sankara.” This is mentioned in the Drona Parva.

“So whatever has to be done has already been done by Me. Take up arms only for the sake of portraying the picture of the war that is taking place, and you shall have the victory. You shall have the kingdom, and I will go to Dvaraka,” said Sri Krishna.

Etacchrutvā vacanam keśavasya kṛtāñjalir vepamānaḥ kirīṭi, namaskṛtvā bhūya evāha kṛṣṇam sagadgadam bhītahitāḥ praṇamya (11.35): Sanjaya says, “After having heard these frightening words from this mysterious Being gazing at him, Arjuna speaks once again in tremor, joy and fright combined. Frightened to the core, with choked words, prostrating himself again and again before this Mighty Being, trembling, fear-struck, Arjuna speaks these words once again.”

Sthāne hṛṣīkeśa tava prakīrtyā jagat prahr̥ṣyatyanurjyate ca, rakṣāṁsi bhītāni diśo dravanti sarve namasyanti ca siddhasaṁghāḥ (11.36): “There is no wonder that all the worlds are rushing into You, because You said You are the Time Spirit come to destroy all things. The world is happy and unhappy at the same time. It is happy because it has Your vision. It is unhappy because it is going to be destroyed by You. All the Rakshasas—some of them are running away from You in fright, some are entering into You, to their doom.”

Kasmācca te na nameran mahātman garīyase brahmaṇo'pyādikartre (11.37): “Why should they not prostrate

themselves before You, O Lord of lords? You are the Might of all mights, the Ruler of all the worlds, and the Dispenser of the justice to everybody that is created. The Creator of the world, Brahma, is nowhere near You. You are superior to Brahma, the Creator, because You are the Creator of even the Creator, Brahma himself.” *Ananta*: “O Infinite one!” *Deveśa*: “O Lord of lords, God of gods!” *Jagannivāsa*: “O Abode of the universe!” *Tvam akṣaram*: “Thou art the Imperishable Eternal.” *Sad asat*: “You are existence and non-existence.” *Tatparam yat*: “You are something more than that. I see You as the existence of all things, the non-existence of all things, and something beyond all concepts of existence and non-existence. Transcendent Eternity Thou art.”

Tvam ādidevaḥ (11.38): “The Original Ancient one, the God of gods, Thou art.” *Puruṣaḥ purāṇas*: “The ancient Purusha, Purushottama, Narayana.” *Tvam asya viśvasya param nidhānam*: “The very support and life-breath of this universe, Thou art. Who can know You except Yourself?” *Vettāsi vedyam ca param ca dhāma*: “Thou knowest everything, whatever is to be known, because in Thy knowing Thyself, everything has already been known. The Supreme Abode is already attained in the vision of Thy Great Form. Thou art all things, spreading Thyself everywhere, O Visva Anantarupa, O All-formed One!” *Tvayā tataṁ viśvam*: “Thou hast spread Thyself everywhere in all space and time.”

Vāyur yamo’gnir varuṇaḥ śaśāṅkaḥ prajāpatis tvam prapitāmahaś ca (11.39): “Thou art Vayu, Thou art Yama, Thou art Agni, Thou art Varuna, Thou art the Moon, Thou art Prajapati, Thou art the grandfather of the gods, the supreme Brahma himself. Thou art not merely *pitamaha*, grandfather; Thou art also great-grandfather.” *Namo namas te*: “What can I say except prostrations to You.” *Sahastrakṛtvah*: “A thousand prostrations to You. Myriad prostrations to You.” *Punaś ca*

bhūyo'pi: "Again and again, I prostrate myself before You." *Namo namas te*: "Again, prostrations. How many times I can say I prostrate myself before You? Prostrations! Prostrations! Prostrations!" *Sahasranama*: "One thousand times I prostrate myself before Thee. Infinite times I prostrate myself before Thee. I have nothing. I am not capable of doing anything else except to surrender myself and plead inability to understand Thee, and place myself at Thy disposal. Prostrations!"

Anantavīrya (11.40): "O infinitely powerful one! From all sides I prostrate, not only in the front." *Sarvata eva*: "From all sides." *Anantavīrya*: "O All! From all sides I offer my prostrations." *Āmitavikramas tvam*: "O all-powerful one! Thy power nobody can measure. Immeasurable power is Thine." *Sarvaṁ samāpnoṣi tato'si sarvaḥ*: "Being all things Thyself, Thou includes within Thyself all things."

Eko'thavāpyacyuta tatsamakṣaṁ tat kṣāmaye tvām aham aprameyam (11.42): "What a mistake I have committed by calling You a friend once upon a time. O Krishna! O Yadava! O dear one! Did I not refer to You with those words? I am frightened to see that You are something else altogether. I thought You were a friend of mine. In humorous moods during our times together, at all times, sometimes in joke, sometimes in sarcasm, I have disrespected You, O Lord. I thought You are a human being, and I called You friend, I called You Krishna, I called You Yadava. When we were sitting together, when we were reclining together, when we were eating together, when we were walking together, I addressed You as my friend. Please forgive me for this mistake that I have committed. I did not know who You are. Sometimes when I was alone with You, I spoke to You in a disrespectful manner. Sometimes I spoke to You in a disrespectful manner even before other people, thinking that You are my best friend and I can take liberties with You. I did that. Now I feel Thou art something else. Will

You kindly forgive me for this error that I have committed under the impression that You were a friend, a human being like me. Thou art something else, O Eternal One! Forgive me, forgive me, forgive me! Pardon me for this mistake that I have committed in imagining that You are a human form.”

Pitāsi lokasya carācarasya (11.43): “Thou art the Father of all creation. Thou art the most adorable of all beings.” *Sa eṣaḥ pūrveṣām api guruḥ kālenā anavacchedāt* (Y.S. 1.26): “Thou art the Guru of all Gurus.” *Tvam asya pūjyaś ca gurur garīyān*: “You are the Guru of all the millions of Gurus in the world.” *Na tvatsamo’styabhyadhikah*: “Nobody is equal to Thee.” *Kuto’nyaḥ*: “Nobody can be outside Thee.” *Lokatray*: “In all the three worlds, who can there be except You?” *Apratimaprabhāva*: “O Glorious One, incomparably great and puissant.”

Tasmāt praṇamya praṇidhāya kāyaṃ prasādaye tvāṃ aham īśam īḍyam, piteva putrasya sakheva sakhyuḥ priyaḥ priyāyārhasi deva soḍhum (11.44): “Therefore, I once again prostrate myself before Thee. I offer my entire being to Thee. *Sashtanga namaskara* I do, offering myself entirely at Thy disposal. In humble surrender through *sashtanga pranama*, I beseech Thee to be gracious, kind, and merciful. *Prasādaye tvāṃ aham īśam īḍyam*: As a father would forgive a son, as a friend would forgive a friend, as a dear one, a beloved one, would forgive a beloved one, so I request Thee to forgive me and bear with me. The character of forgiveness is mentioned in three degrees. A father’s forgiveness, a friend’s forgiveness and the beloved’s forgiveness are the three different categories. In all the three categories I beseech Thee.”

Adṛṣṭapūrvam hṛṣito’smi dṛṣṭvā bhayena ca pravayathitam mano me, tad eva me darśaya deva rūpaṃ prasīda deveśa jagannivāsa (11.45): “In fear, my mind is not able to even think, because this is something which I have never seen up

to this time. I am happy and elated, I am in a state of ecstasy, but fear-struck at the same time. Will You kindly come down and show Your original form as Sri Krishna, my old friend? Enough of this terrible form! I am fear-struck. Therefore, I request You to come down to the original level.”

Kirīṭinaṁ gadināṁ cakrahastaṁ (11.46): “Please bless me and be gracious. I would like to see You once again with the diadem of that beloved, beautiful, grand, majestic, attractive Sri Krishna, with four hands holding the *sankha*, *chakra*, *gadha* and *padma*. I cannot bear this vision any more. Grand and great as it may be, enough of it! I shall have my old, dear friend Sri Krishna, and not this Visvarupa any longer.”

Śrībhagavānurvāca: mayā prasannena tavārjunedaṁ rūpaṁ param darśitam ātmayogāt, tejomayaṁ viśvam anantaṁ ādyaṁ yan me tvadanyena na dṛṣṭapūrvam (11.47): Sri Bhagavan replies, “With great compassion, I have shown this form to you. With the power of My Universal Selfhood, I have manifested Myself for your welfare. Because you wanted to see Me in this form—because you are My beloved, you are dear to Me—therefore, I have shown this form to you. This great, wondrous Light, the Light of all lights, the Universal Reality, the Endless, the Origin—nobody has seen this kind of vision up to this time. This is something very strange, that in all creation nobody has seen this vision of the Virat. This is the first time that someone is beholding it, O Arjuna. You are blessed.”

Na vedayajñādhyayanair na dānair na ca kriyābhir na tapobhir ugraiḥ, evaṁrūpaḥ śakya ahaṁ nṛloke draṣṭum tvadanyena kurupravīra (11.48): “This form, this Viratsvarupa, this Vaisvanara-tattva, this Universal Spirit, in which form you have beheld Me—this cannot be beheld by any kind of ritual, by study of the Vedas, by teaching, by charity, by ritualistic performances, by *tapas* or austerity of any kind. Whatever be

the intensity and ferocity of that *tapas*, nothing of the kind can touch Me.”

Human action cannot touch Eternity, because all action is in the process of time. All action is in space and in time. This Eternal terror which was beheld by Arjuna is not in space, not in time. Therefore, our studies of the Vedas, our *tapasyas*, our charities, our philanthropies, our deeds—whatever their merit, they are, after all, like performances in the dream world. When we wake up, the merits of all our good deeds in dream disappear. Similarly, in the quality of the perception of the Supreme Being, actions of the human being in the world of space and time bear no relevance. No action which is conditioned by time can take us to the Unconditioned Reality, which is not in time. *Na hy adhruvaiḥ prāpyate hi dhruvaṁ tat* (Katha 1.2.10): The Imperishable, Eternal Reality cannot be contacted through the instrumentality of perishable deeds. Actions, deeds that we perform in this world have a beginning and an end. They are not eternal. How could we have the vision of that Eternal, contact with the Eternal or attain realisation of that Eternal, which is timeless, when the instruments that we are using for that purpose are in time?

“Nobody can behold this form. Do not be frightened. Do not be deluded. Be up and doing. Why are you afraid of seeing Me? Be happy that you have beheld Me. I look terrific because I am a terror to the egos of individuals.”

Who is saying, “I am afraid”? It is the ego of Arjuna that is saying that. The ego of Arjuna has not melted. It is frightened, as we are frightened to touch the oceanic waves. We are afraid to touch the elephant’s body because of our ego that gets humiliated immediately and feels that it is no more.

The Eternal is death to everything that is in time. Therefore, God looks like a terrific being to all who is afraid of death, because God is the death of all death—*mṛtyoḥ mṛtyuḥ*. God is

called *mṛtyoḥ mṛtyuḥ*, the death of death. Therefore, “Knowing this truth of Mine, be not bewildered. Don’t say ‘I am afraid’. There is nothing here to be afraid of.” *Vyapetabhīḥ* (11.49): “Be fearless.” *Prītamanāḥ*: “Be pleased, and be subdued in your mind.” *Punas tvaṁ tad eva me rūpam idaṁ prapaśya*: “All right, here I am as the Yadava Krishna. Do you see me?”

In one moment of that stupendous vision, the world vanished before Arjuna. The fourteen worlds of the entire creation melted down into the liquid of the flame of the Eternal Godhead. Unable to behold it for a long time, he beseeches the Lord to come down to the original human form. This request is granted, and Sri Krishna is standing there as before—with a whip in his hand, grooming the horses.

Ityarjunaṁ vāsudevas tathoktvā svakaṁ rūpam darśayāmāsa bhūyaḥ (11.50): Sanjaya speaks. “Having said this, the beautiful, charming, mighty Krishna of Dvaraka is now standing before Arjuna once again. Patting him on the back, he says, ‘How are you? All is well with you?’”

Discourse 35

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER CONCLUDES WHOLE-SOULED DEVOTION TO GOD

The Great Lord withdrew His Cosmic Form and appeared once again in that charming, beautiful, human form as Sri Krishna of Dvaraka—to the great joy of Arjuna, who wanted to see that friendly comrade because he was too frightened of that Cosmic Vision.

Sanjaya uvāca: ityarjunam vāsudevas tathoktvā svakam rūpaṁ darśayām āsa bhūyaḥ (11.50): The great Sanjaya, who knew everything that was happening inside and outside, says here, “Having told Arjuna that this is a very difficult thing to visualise for ordinary mortals, the Lord withdrew Himself into the normal form of Yadava Sri Krishna; and then He consoled him—‘Don’t be afraid, don’t be afraid’—as a parent would pat a child on the back. ‘Don’t cry, don’t cry, Arjuna. All is well. Be happy. Don’t bother.’” *Āśvāsayām āsa ca bhītam*: “He consoled the frightened Arjuna.”

Arjuna uvāca: dṛṣṭvedaṁ mānuṣaṁ rūpaṁ tava saumyaṁ janārdana, idānīm asmi saṁvṛttaḥ sacetāḥ prakṛtiṁ gataḥ (11.51): Arjuna now exclaims, “O Master, I was out of my wits! I did not know where I was, or what I was seeing. I had lost myself. Now I have come back to myself after seeing You in this kind, beautiful, friendly form. Having seen this human form which You have now assumed, which is calm, sober, friendly, beautiful, charming, I have come back to myself. I am a normal man now. At that time I was not a normal person. I

had lost myself completely. I did not know what was happening to me. Great Master, be gracious!”

*Śrībhagavān*uvāca: *sudurdarśam idaṁ rūpaṁ dṛṣṭavān asi yaṁ mama, devā apyasya rūpasya nityaṁ darśanakāṅkṣiṇaḥ* (11.52). Now, summing up this great theme of the Visvarupa Darshana, the Lord Himself speaks. *Devair atrāpi vicikitsitam purā, na hi suvijñeyam, aṇur eṣa dharmah* (Katha 1.1.21) is a parallel passage in the Kathopanishad. Nachiketas pleads that the Eternal Secret be revealed to him. “Not even all the gods know this. Subtle is this matter,” is Yama’s reply to Nachiketas.

Likewise, Bhagavan Sri Krishna now speaks to Arjuna. *Nāhaṁ vedair na tapasā na dānena na cejyayā, śakya evaṁvidho draṣṭuṁ dṛṣṭavān asi mām yathā* (11.53): “Impossible it is to behold this Form. You have seen it; but it is not easy to see it. The gods are also eager to visualise this, to have *darshan* of this Great Form. Every day they eagerly await that occasion when they can have this *darshan*. But I cannot easily be known, not even by the gods, because the means that they employ to have *darshan*, the vision of this Supreme Form, are inadequate. The means and the end should be on a common pedestal. An inadequate means cannot suffice for the achievement of an end that is supremely adequate. Study of the Vedas and scriptures, and intense physical austerity, mortification of the flesh, any kind of charity and philanthropic deed that you perform, and sacrifices of any kind—these will not suffice. No mortal deed can take you to the Immortal.”

Bhaktyā tvananyayā śakya (11.54): The word ‘*ananya*’ comes many a time in the Bhagavadgita. Sri Krishna never forgets to use this word ‘*ananya*’. Of course, everybody has devotion for God in some measure. We are all devotees of God in some way; but are we *ananya*? *Ananya* means undivided, non-separate, non-externalised, whole-souled love. Now,

many of us may not be able to entertain such a thing. We love God and pray to God, we worship God and consider Him as the Ultimate Reality and the aim and goal of our life—accepted; but yet, there is some string that pulls our devotion back in another direction altogether. We have loves of different types which are connected to this world and, therefore, these devotions are secondary in their nature and fall into the category of *gaunabhakti*. Because our devotions are more ritualistic in their nature, externalised in their nature, we express our devotion in some form outside; but the *ananya bhakti* that is spoken of here is the devotion of our soul for the Universal Soul.

It is not the mind, the intellect and the feeling that love God. Most of our affections are psychological. We use only our mind in thinking of God, and even in loving God. The soul, the spirit, does not always come up. We are not possessed by the spirit within our own selves. We are temporarily possessed by certain emotions, but these emotions are not devotion. We may be intensely stimulated for some time when we hear charming, stirring, devotional music, or when stimulating *sankirtan* is going on in a chorus or in a group. Yet the pulls of the earth, which limit this devotion that has temporarily taken possession of us through emotion, will manifest themselves after the *satsanga* is over, and we will be the same Mr. So-and-so. It would not have made much difference in our practical daily life. The practical daily conduct of business is also to be a part of devotion to God, and devotion to God is not to be confined to the chapel or the *pūja* room or the temple. We should not say, “I shall finish my *pūja* and come.” We cannot come from the *pūja*. It is a whole-souled dedication of ours.

When the soul rises into action, the mind and the body cannot stand it. Very rarely our soul acts. In deep sleep we

are possessed by our soul, and so we are immensely calm, quiet and happy. In the state of deep sleep, there is a subdual of all distraction for the time being. And in intense agony at the point of death, the soul also rises and is in complete possession of our personality. When we are sure that death is imminent and we do not have permission to live even for a second more, then the soul rises up into an action of agony. The third occasion when the soul rises is in an intense fulfilment of passionate action, whether it is political or personal. Where one loses oneself completely in a frenzy of behaviour and action, at that time the soul temporarily takes possession of us for a minute, for a second. It is only in these three conditions that the soul acts: at the greatest point or height of intensity when our longing is fulfilled, or when we are dying, or when we are sleeping. At other times the soul is sleeping, and only our mind is acting.

It is necessary for the soul to act in devotion to God—not merely because we are dying, or we are fulfilling some desire, or we are sleeping. This is a fourth kind of state altogether in which the soul acts. The thrill, the stimulation, the rejoicing, the horripilation, the sense of loss of self-consciousness, and the sense of being possessed by Universal-consciousness characterise this devotion gradually, stage by stage. This alone can permit us to have this Great Vision. No action, no *tapasya*, no study, no ritual, no charity can help us, because they are all in the world of space and time.

Bhaktyā tvananyayā śakya aham evaṁvidho'rjuna, jñātum draṣṭum ca tattvena praveṣṭum ca paramtapa: There are three processes: knowing, implementing, and materialising the love of God. First of all it is a vision and a knowledge—*jñātum draṣṭum*. To know and to visualise, to see and to understand, has been bequeathed to Arjuna. He understood because of the explanation given by the Lord Himself as to what it is. He saw

it, but he did not enter into it. He was standing outside it, as it were. He was looking at it. But it has to be borne in mind that the fulfilment of God-consciousness, or God-realisation, consists not merely in having the vision of God or knowing Him in a special characterisation as described here. We have to merge ourselves into it. The Atman becomes Brahman. The soul enters into the Maker of all things. “This devotion, which is the supreme means of knowing Me, will enable one to know Me, to visualise Me, and finally to enter into Me, which is the salvation of the soul.”

Sankaracharya tells us in his commentary that the last verse of this chapter is the quintessence of all teaching. That is his opinion. The last verse is *matkarmakṛṇ matparamo madbhaktaḥ saṅgavarjitaḥ, nirvairāḥ sarva-bhūteṣu yaḥ sa mām eti pāṇḍava* (11.55): “O Arjuna! Such a person will reach Me who performs all action and duty for My sake—*matkarmakṛṇ*; who regards Me as supreme above all things anywhere—*matparamo*; who is intensely devoted to Me throughout the day and night for all time—*madbhaktaḥ*; who is not attached to anything and is free from contamination by anything in the world—*saṅgavarjitaḥ*; who has no enmity with anybody and doesn’t hate anyone, and no one is an enemy of that person—*nirvairāḥ sarvabhūteṣu*: no living being is antagonistic to that person and he is not antagonistic to any living being. Such a person reaches Me.”

Om tatsaditi śrīmad bhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu brahma-vidyāyām yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvāde viśvarūpadarśana-yogo nāmaikādaśo ’dhyāyaḥ. In fact, the whole purport of the Bhagavadgita teaching is over with the Eleventh Chapter. Whatever follows from the Twelfth onwards is a kind of commentary, a kind of elucidation of certain minor details which have been briefly stated somewhere or the other in the earlier chapters. The ascent of the soul culminated in the

vision of the Universal Spirit.

The lowest pedestal on which the soul was standing was the condition in which Arjuna found himself in the battle-field—everywhere fear, everywhere animosity, everywhere uncertainty, everywhere suspicion and agony, and everywhere strife and conflict. Kaliyuga manifested itself in full force in that picturisation of the Mahabharata battle. No one loved another. Everyone hated the other. From that *samsaric* mire of intense antagonism, conflict and fear, the soul had to be taken gradually, stage by stage. This has been done by the instructions that Sri Krishna gave, as a very good schoolmaster would give, without telling more than what is necessary under the given condition.

Apt words were used and suitable suggestions fitting to the occasion were given—not a word more, not a word less. But gradually the tempo went on rising, and we have observed how the tempo rose. The explanations became more and more clarifying, more in depth in their nature, until they reached a kind of perfection in the Sixth Chapter, where the individual person was taught the art of self-integration and making oneself whole.

Unless we become whole, we cannot attain the Whole that is the Universal Reality. As we know very well, most of us are shreds of personality, fractions of the psyche, torn pieces of individuality, and none of us is complete in ourselves. We think different things at different times, and we do not know today what we will think tomorrow. There is a non-alignment of our psychological individuality. The understanding, the feeling, the willing and the emotion do not act harmoniously in concert. Therefore, unhappiness, suspicion and even sleeplessness are caused by this distracted action of the psychological organ *antahkarana*—*mano*, *buddhi*, *ahamkara*, *chitta*, which act as if they are independent entities, while actually

they are four facets of a single action of the total psyche.

For the integration of personality—to wean the person away from this difficulty of non-alignment—the art of meditation is prescribed in the Sixth Chapter. When a person is suitably fitted by this discipline of meditation, the student, the seeker, is introduced into his relationship with the whole creation—with the five elements, the *tanmatras*, and with God as the Supreme Maker of all things. God's interference in the world becomes manifest in the Seventh Chapter, and not much of it is mentioned in the earlier chapters. Up to the Sixth Chapter, it is all psychological discipline. Then Divinity enters in the Seventh. Mere psychological discipline, social discipline or any kind of discipline is not sufficient. It becomes sufficient only if God gives the galvanising touch to the perfection that we have otherwise attained psychologically, educationally, or socially.

Gradually, the mind of the seeker is taken up to the consciousness of the true religion of God. The true religion of humanity is impartial in its nature and considers every human being as a brother or a sister, a cooperator, a pilgrim on the path. There is a spirit of cooperation among the individuals on account of everyone wanting only one God, because it has been emphasised that outside the one God there cannot be another god.

The little gods, whom people generally worship, are the manifestations, the facets, the fingers or the more concretised forms of the Universal Being, and their worship will also bring some result. We will get some blessing even from a *patwari*, but that is not enough. It is not sufficient because full authority of administration is not invested with the *patwari*. So is the case with the little gods. They will give us some blessing, but these blessings have a beginning and an end, and we will repent afterwards that the thing that we sought was not

actually obtained. Therefore, it is necessary to seek the One God, outside Whom there cannot be any other god.

This is emphasised in the Ninth Chapter, and also it is further added that God is so kind and merciful that He shall take care of us as a kind father, as a kind mother, as a grandfather, as a great grandfather, as our very life-breath, our very sustenance—everything. In the Tenth Chapter, it is told that God is pervading in all the mighty excellences; and in the Eleventh Chapter, He stands alone, and nobody else can be there in front of Him.

For the perfection of yoga, for the removal of dirt in our mind, for removing even sins, and to do *prayaschitta* for any mistakes that we have committed, the Eleventh Chapter is generally read. The Eleventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgita is like a mantra which will purify us, cleanse our mind and burnish our soul. Students of yoga, students of true religion, lovers of God, would do well to read the Eleventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgita every day, because without some kind of prop, some assistance from outside, we will not be in a position to contemplate on God independently. So, read the Eleventh Chapter every day.

The *mahatmyas*—which means the glories and descriptions of the importance of each chapter of the Bhagavadgita—are explained in independent chapters in the Padma Purana. That is, one chapter of the Padma Purana is devoted to the description of the greatness of one chapter of the Bhagavadgita. Thus, the twenty-four chapters of the Padma Purana tell us what is the importance and the greatness of each chapter of the Bhagavadgita. However, we need not go into all those glorifying chapters. The whole of the Gita is a textbook of spiritual practice, and devotees believe that every word of it is a gem.

The form has been withdrawn. Arjuna and Sri Krishna are sitting together as chums, in the same manner as they were

sitting before. Now they can have a friendly chat or discourse. Krishna can treat Arjuna as his dear friend, comrade and equal; and Arjuna can put questions of any kind.

After having heard all this, seen all this, and understood all this, Arjuna raises a question which is very pertinent for every one of us: “You are the Mighty Lord, inclusive of all things, transcendent as well as immanent. You are inconceivable to the mind. You remain as the Supreme Absolute Brahman, but You are also manifest as a person, as I am seeing You here in front of me. You said You are manifest in various excellences, as You have mentioned to me earlier. Which way of contemplating You would You regard as better, or superior? Should I try to contemplate You as the indeterminate, infinite, transcendent, Absolute Brahman? Or, may I adore You as a manifest Bhagavan Sri Krishna or any of the forms that You have taken in these excellences? With form or without form—which way is the better one for me to contemplate You?”

That was Arjuna’s question, and this question is raised by every one of us also. Some say that *nirguna bhakti* is better than *saguna bhakti*, some say that *saguna bhakti* takes us to *nirguna*, and some, like the Vaishnavas, Saivas, Saktas, etc., cling to *saguna* only, especially in specialised forms of devotion. Which way are we to follow—the *saguna* form or the *nirguna* form, the transcendent form or the immanent form, the universal form or the personal form?”

Discourse 36

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER BEGINS

THE BEST OF YOGINS

Arjuna asks: “Are You the Supreme Person? Sometimes You refer to Yourself as Parama-purusha—Supreme Person. Sometimes You say that You are indestructible, transcendent, and impossible even to conceive. In what way are we to worship You, O Lord? There are people who adore You as the Supreme Mahapurusha, Purushottama. With immense devotion they sing of You, they dance in ecstasy by taking Your name, they adore You day in and day out, and glorify You in all ways; but there are others who are unified in their being with Your indestructible Super Being. Between these two great souls, whom do You regard as the best of *yogins*?”

The Lord gives a reply. *Śrībhagavān* *uvāca*
mayyāveśya mano ye mām nityayuktā upāsate
śraddhayā parayopetās te me yuktatamā matāḥ (12.2)
ye tvakṣaram anirdeśyaṁ avyaktaṁ paryupāsate
sarvatragam acintyaṁ ca kūṭasthaṁ acalaṁ dhruvam (12.3)
sanniyamyendriyagrāmaṁ sarvatra samabuddhayāḥ
te prāpnuvanti mām eva sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ (12.4)
kleśo’dhikataras teṣāṁ avyaktāsaktacetāsām
avyaktā hi gatir duḥkhaṁ dehavadbhir avāpyate (12.5)
ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi sannyasya matparaḥ
ananyenaiva yogena mām dhyāyanta upāsate (12.6)
teṣāṁ ahaṁ samuddhartā mṛtyusaṁsārasāgarāt
bhavāmi nacirāt pārtha mayyāveśitacetāsām (12.7)

The reply is here in six verses. “I consider those people very near to Me and really united with Me whose mind is fixed on Me, who worship Me ever considering Me as their highest beloved, who have faith in Me only, and centre their faith in nothing else. I certainly consider them as united with Me because their mind is wholly centred in Me in their utter devotion. But there are others who are united with Me in a different way.”

The distinction drawn here is between those devotees who worship the Supreme Being as the Parama Purushottama and those who are devoted to the Universal Inclusiveness, outside which even they do not exist. We may call these two ways of approach as *bhakti* and *jnana*, if we like; but the *jnana* referred to here is actually a kind of *bhakti* in the highest sense. It is called *para bhakti*, which is the same as *jnana*.

In religious parlance, the worship of the Supreme Being as a person is the normal way of adoring God. Whether it is Hinduism or any other religion in the world, we see people worshipping God as some concept cast into the mould of an enlarged personality—not simply a person, but the Supreme Person. Whether we call God the Father in heaven, or Allah-hu Akbar, or Purushottama, or Narayana or Siva or Devi or Brahma—whatever be the definition of our *ishta devata*, we will observe that we are picturing the Supreme Divinity in some form, though that form is highly enlarged and inclusive. Because the heart of the devotee requires a response from someone who knows what we are feeling, it is necessary for us to know that God is responding to our love and devotion.

The God Who cannot respond does not evoke satisfaction in the heart. The God Who includes us, outside Whom we cannot even exist, need not give any response at all. But our heart says: “I love God. Maybe I love Him as an all-pervading essence, but even then I require a response. I should

know that He knows that I love Him.” The question of expecting this kind of response from God, blessing from God, grace from God, or protection from God—anything whatsoever from God—cannot arise if the person expecting this response does not stand outside the One from whom the response has to come. This is the difficulty that perhaps was haunting the mind of Arjuna, and haunts every religious seeker, whatever be the vocation of his religion.

Sri Krishna accepts this twofold way of approach to God because He calls Himself Purushottama. *Prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ* (15.18): “I am beyond the *kshara-akshara prakriti-purusha* and, therefore, I am known as the Supreme Being.” He calls Himself the Supreme Purusha—that is, the Highest Person.

Sri Krishna’s reply is: “Those who devotedly worship Me as the Supreme Person are really united with Me because of their love. What about others? In the case of those others who try to feel the presence of this Imperishable Transcendent Essence by a total withdrawal of all the faculties of psychological perception, even devotion does not arise from the operation of their mind. Mostly, devotion is a kind of feeling that arises from part of their psyche, but in the case of those people whose mind has been restrained perfectly—*saṁniyamyendriyagrāmaṁ*—who have put an end to the activity of all the sense organs, and see one thing only everywhere—*sarvatra samabuddhayāḥ*—they also reach Me. They also reach Me who consider Me as the Supreme Person and love Me as the Supreme Person. They also reach Me who consider Me as the All-Inclusive Eternal Transcendent Universal Reality.” But the distinction is this: It is difficult to concentrate the mind on non-externalised Universality. Those who have body-consciousness and know that they also exist even when they are in the height of devotion to God are aware that they are at

the height of devotion to God. The devotee loves God, but the devotee knows that he loves God; that is what demarcates him from another who loves God but does not know that he loves God.

There is a difference between knowing that we love God and not knowing that we love God. We have united ourselves with God to such an extent that we cannot know that we are actually having affection for God. But those who know that they love God stand outside the Supreme Person; they can visualise Him, pray to Him in words of language, and they can offer themselves in surrender as if they are something to be offered. But in the case of the others, there is nothing to be offered because that which is to be offered has already become one with that to which it is to be offered. Such a kind of sacrifice is very difficult in this world. Very hard is this practice.

Kleśo'dhikataras teṣāṁ avyaktāsaktacetasām, avyaktā hi gatiḥ duḥkham dehavadbhir avāpyate. How on earth is it possible not to know that we are devotees of God? How can we forget that we are existing as worshippers and as students of yoga? Can we abolish ourselves? Those who are embodied as a person, those who have a consciousness of this body, and those who know that they exist as individuals cannot practice this yoga of utter unitedness with the Transcendent Essence. Hard is this practice. But those who are conscious that they love God, and are inundated with affection for God, do not have this difficulty because they have annihilated their ego, and the greatest pain is the annihilation of ego.

In the case of ordinarily accepted forms of devotion to God, as long as the personality of the devotee also persists together with the consciousness of the Supreme Personality of God, a little bit of *sattvic ahamkara* is present in that devotee. We have to use the word '*ahamkara*' very carefully here in the case of devotees because it does not mean pride.

Ahamkara is not to be taken here as *garva*—arrogance, self-assertion. It is a very, very *sattvic*, moderate, subdued self-consciousness, which is what distinguishes these devotees from the person whom they worship. But in the case of the others whose practice is considered to be very difficult, even this little *sattvic* mode of self-affirmation is completely overcome. They do not worship God; they are inseparable from God. They do not have to praise God, because the person who is to praise has gone into the abyss of the Absolute.

“Both are great. I love both these types of devotees equally. But I am mentioning to you that one type of devotion is very difficult and, therefore, people will certainly resort to the easier one. Whoever lovingly surrenders themselves to Me, and worships Me as the Supreme Person, and thinks of nothing except Me—*ananyenaiva yogena*—I lift them from the mire of *samsara*.” *Teṣāṁ ahaṁ samuddhartā mṛtyusaṁsārasāgarāt*: “I raise them above this turmoil of *samsara*, and I shall be ever at their beck and call for their protection.”

From this answer that Sri Krishna gives, it is not easy for us to know which type of devotee he actually prefers. There may be some subtle touch of preference for the devotee who is non-separate from him because when he referred to four kinds of devotees, he said, “All are equally great and I consider them as worthy of endearment, but yet I consider the *jnani* as supreme because he has become My very soul. The *arta*, *jijnasu* and *artharthi* are also dear to Me because they are devoted to Me—they think of Me, and worship Me, and praise Me, and want Me only—but I consider the *jnani* as superior.” So, even when he seems to be saying that both are equally good and all the attributes of goodness are to be seen in both kinds of devotees—both will reach him—we cannot deny that there is a preference for the one whose soul has been united with the Universal Soul, in comparison to the soul that continues to

maintain an independent existence in spite of its devotion.

Types of practices are described in the coming verses, almost referring to the four yogas—*jnana* yoga, *raja* yoga, *bhakti* yoga and *karma* yoga. The first makes reference to the *jnana* yoga technique. *Mayy eva mana ādhatsva* (12.8): “Let your mind be fixed on Me”; *mayi buddhiṃ niveśaya*: “Let your intellect also be rooted in Me”; *nivasiṣyasi mayyeva*: “You are already in Me”; *ata ūrdhvaṃ na saṁśayaḥ*: “There is no doubt that you are in Me only, provided that your mind and intellect shake not.”

The same point is also mentioned in the definition of yoga given in the Katha Upanishad. *Yadā pañcāvatiṣṭhante jñānāni manasā saha, buddhiś ca na viceṣṭati, tām āhuḥ paramām gatim* (Katha 2.3.10): When the mind and the intellect are unified, and they do not stand as separate faculties of observation and perception, and this united psyche gets rooted in God Himself, the abode is immediately reached. But, we may find this difficult.

Sri Krishna anticipates the difficulty of the devotee in continuously establishing the unity of the mind and intellect in God always. “If you cannot do this, I shall prescribe to you a lesser method,” says the Lord. That lesser method is almost the same as the *raja* yoga or *ashtanga* yoga technique. *Abhyāsa vairāgyābhyām tan nirodhaḥ* (Y.S. 1.12) is a sutra of Patanjali. *Atha cittarṇ samādhātum na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram, abhyāsa-yogena tato mām icchāptum dhanañjaya* (12.9): “Continued practice at concentration on Me may be attempted if whole-souled fixing of attention on Me is difficult. If you can unite yourself with Me wholly, fine; that should be considered as the *jnana* yoga technique. But if that is not possible, repeated attempts have to be made in fixing your mind on Me by techniques of daily routine—*abhyasa* yoga.”

Abhyāse'pyasamartho'si matkarmaparamo bhava, madartham api karmāṇi kurvan siddhim avāpsyasi (12.10): "If this is also not possible—neither are you able to completely unite yourself with Me, nor are you able to practise concentration with effort every day—then devote yourself to Me in your daily behaviour." Here *matkarma* means 'all actions devoted to Me'.

The great commentator Madhusudhana Saraswati says that this verse refers to the nine modes of *bhakti* that are indicated in the Bhagavatam. *Śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ smaraṇam pāda-sevanam arcanam vandanam dāsyam sakhyam ātma-nivedanam* (S.B. 7.5.23). *Śravaṇam*: always hearing the glories of God through *satsanga*; *kīrtanam*: singing the names of God; *smaraṇam*: always remembering Him; *pāda-sevanam*: adoring His feet in daily worship; *arcanam*: worshipping in temples or in our own homes in a ritualistic method by *shodashopachara puja*, sixteen modes of worship; *vandanam*: offering prayers through mantras or in our own way; *dāsyam*: considering ourselves as servants of the Lord Almighty, the Supreme Being, Who is very far away from us because we are servants; *sakhyam*: considering ourselves as equal to God, as Arjuna considered himself as a friend of Sri Krishna; *ātma-nivedanam*: the final devotion where we do not exist as devotees hearing the glories of God, worshipping God, or chanting His divine name, but we completely offer ourselves to Him.

These kinds of devotion are supposed to be indicated in this tenth verse, where the Lord says that all our offerings should be to him. *Madartham api karmāṇi kurvan siddhim avāpsyasi*: "You shall attain supreme perfection, or *siddhi*, by merely devoting yourself to Me in all your deeds or performances, if the repeated practice that is mentioned in the earlier verse is also difficult for you."

Athaitad apyaśakto'si kartum madyogam āśritaḥ, sarva-karmaphalatyāgaṁ tataḥ kuru yatātmavān (12.11): “If even that is difficult—if you cannot worship Me with devotion, you cannot follow these nine methods of worship, you cannot concentrate on Me by repeated practice every day, you cannot unite your soul with Me—if all these are difficult for you, then what do you do? If all these three methods that I have delineated are also found to be difficult for you, I shall tell you the last method. Do your work as you do. All your duties, all your performances, the daily routines of your life, let them go on. The only thing is, do not expect the fruits of these actions. Do these works that you perform every day as a duty. ‘Duty for duty’s sake; work is worship’ is the motto that you may keep before Me. Do not expect anything from the work that you perform. Let it be an unselfish service that you render to people or to anyone for whose sake you are working.” This is karma yoga: *sarvakarmaphalatyāgaṁ tataḥ kuru yatātmavān*. Thus, in these four verses we have brief indications of *jñana* yoga, *ashtanga* yoga, *bhakti* yoga and karma yoga.

Therefore, *jñana* is superior to practice, *abhyasa*. Now Sri Krishna gives a commentary on what he has said. *Śreyo hi jñānam abhyāsāj* (12.12): “*Jñana*, or knowledge of your union with Me, is superior to the practice that you attempt for concentration on Me.” That is, wisdom of God is superior to just daily practice. *Jñānād dhyānam viśiṣyate*: But *jñana* does not mean merely knowing in an academic or scriptural sense. We may know God through the study of the Bhagavadgita or the Upanishads. Here, *jñana* is used in two different senses: the higher knowledge, and the lower knowledge. The higher knowledge is that which has no object in front of it. The lower knowledge is that which is a means of knowing something else, a means to the performance of work, etc. In the case where knowledge is of a lower type which has an object in front of

it—it may be scriptural knowledge, academic knowledge, learning, whatever it is—it is inferior to meditation. Direct meditation is superior to knowledge which has an object in front of it. Hence, higher knowledge—knowledge which has no object in front of it—is superior. But if we meditate with a desire for the fruits of our actions, this meditation is inferior to our renouncing the fruits of actions because if we meditate with a love for the fruits of action, our selfishness persists.

“So I consider *karmaphalatyāga*, the abandoning of fruits, or the result of all that you do, as finally superior even to meditation that is coupled with a desire for the fruits of action. From this kind of renunciation of the fruits of action, you will attain peace.” *Tyāgāc chāntir anantaram*: “You will get peace with these methods that I mentioned.”

Hence, these verses up to the twelfth are actual practical suggestions on *sadhana*. We have a brief pithy statement here of what spiritual practice is, what *sadhana* is, what the four yogas are, and how we have to conduct ourselves with proportionate attention paid to the different yogas, according to our capacity and perhaps our stage of evolution.

Discourse 37

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER CONCLUDES

THE SUPREME DEVOTEE OF GOD

The highest devotee has certain qualities. He may be a *jnani*, he may be a *yogi*, he may be a *bhakta*, he may be a *karma-phala-tyagi*—whatever he is, finally he is devoted to God. What are the characteristics of the supreme devotee of God? The verses that follow are considered to be a scripture by themselves—eight verses that pour nectar into our ears. People have translated these eight verses into Hindi poetry, and they sing it. There was a very learned man, a great mathematician from Bihar, who sang this during Gurudev's time in beautiful Hindi poesy, calling it *Amritashataka*—the eight nectarine streams flowing from the teachings of God.

Who is this great devotee? What are his qualities and characteristics? The qualities of the devotee have also been mentioned elsewhere in the Bhagavadgita—for instance, at the end of the Second Chapter when the *sthitaprajna lakshana* was explained. A *sthitaprajna* is one who is established in superior understanding. He is also a devotee of the *jnani* type. And the qualities of a *yogi* were also mentioned towards the end of the Sixth Chapter. To some extent, we also have the description of the devotee of God towards the end of the Eleventh Chapter. And in the Thirteenth Chapter there is once again a description of a sage and saint who has transcended the *gunas* of *prakriti*, who is called *gunatita*, as we will see. So there are varieties of descriptions of the sage and the saint, according to

the way in which he approaches the Almighty. The descriptions of a devotee given herein and in different places of the Gita actually correspond to the characteristics of a *jnani*, *bhakta*, karma yogi and yogi proper in the *ashtanga* yoga sense.

Here, in these eight verses, there is a summing up of the qualities of a devotee—not in one sense only, but in every sense. Whether he is a *jnanin* or a *yogin* or a *bhakta* or a karma *yogin*, whatever be his nature, how would he behave, what are his special qualities, how would we recognise him, and what kind of behaviour would we expect from him? The details of the wondrous, beautiful, charming behaviour of a lover of God are described in the coming verses.

The nature of those who seek God, either as a Supreme Person or as an Impersonal Universal, has been described in the beginning of the Twelfth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita. These great geniuses of the spirit, whether they are devotees of the Almighty and visualise Him as a Supreme Person or as a Transcendent Eternal, have a characteristic in common. Their behaviour is of a uniform nature, though their internal methodology of attunement with the Supreme Spirit slightly varies because of the distinction that we are obliged to make between the personality of God and the universality of God. The common features among all these great saints and sages are now delineated in the coming verses, from the thirteenth onwards.

Adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānām maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca, nirmamo nirahaṁkāraḥ samaduḥkhasukhaḥ kṣamī (12.13): Eternally free from hatred towards any living being, they extend love and compassion to all creatures. Dislike and hatred, in any manner whatsoever, is unknown to them. That characteristic is here mentioned in the word '*adveṣṭā*'. *Sarvabhūtānām*: It is not absence of hatred only towards some; it is absence of dislike and hatred towards anyone. That is the universal

compassionate outlook of these great spiritual heroes.

Maitraḥ: They are very friendly with persons of any category whatsoever, whether high or low. *Karuṇa eva ca*: They are compassionate at all times. They have no sense of 'I'-ness and 'mine'-ness. They never believe that they exist independently outside the supreme beatitude of God. Neither the devotee of the Supreme Person nor the devotee of the Universal Being ever considers himself or herself as existing independent of God. In either case, it is an abolition of personality—either by self-surrender or by inner communion of spirit with Spirit. That is *nirahaṁkāraḥ*: No sense of 'I'-ness. 'I' does not exist, because there is only one 'I' that can exist—the Supreme 'I'—and, therefore, nothing belongs to me. *Nirmamaḥ*: Neither have they any sense of existing independently by themselves, nor have they a sense of possession of any article whatsoever in this world. They are free from 'I'-ness and 'mine'-ness: *nirmamo nirahaṁkāraḥ*.

Samaduḥkhasukhaḥ: Whether pleasure comes or pain comes, they accept both with equanimity. *Mātrāsparśās tu kaunteya śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkhadāḥ, āgamāpāyino'nityās tāms titikṣasva bhārata* (2.14) was said in the Second Chapter. Pleasures and pains are due to the reactions set up by the qualities of the elements in respect of the constitution of our body. Knowing that pleasures and pains are only reactions to certain prevailing conditions, one is not perturbed either when there is a pleasurable sensation or when there is a sensation which is contrary. *Samaduḥkhasukhaḥ*: Pleasure and pain are equal. *Kṣamī*: They are quick to forgive, and never get irritated or angry.

Yadṛcchālābhasaṁtuṣaḥ (4.22): They are always contented with whatever comes. If something comes, fine; if nothing comes, fine. *Samtuṣṭaḥ*: Always in a contented state, they are never greedy, and never ask for anything. 'All is well' is

their motto. *Santuṣṭaḥ satataṁ yogī yatātmā* (12.14): Always contented, they are yogis whose self is united with God. *Dr̥ḍhaniścayaḥ*: Determined to realise God in this birth, they take a vow that “In this birth itself I shall realise the Almighty.” That determination counts very much in actually attaining success. If we are diffident—“I may not even pass, so where is the question of attaining first class?”—if this kind of feeling is there in the beginning itself, nothing is going to be attained. We must have a determination: “I shall be first.” Then we will be at least second. Here is the determination of the spirit of the seeker: “Everything is well with me. I am not doing anything wrong. My technique of meditation is perfectly all right. I shall attain God in this birth itself.” This determination, or *dr̥ḍhaniścayaḥ*, is what characterises all yogis. *Mayy arpitama-nobuddhiḥ*: As already mentioned, their mind and intellect are dedicated to the Supreme Being. *Madbhaktaḥ*: They are the supreme devotees. They are dear to God.

Yasmān nodvijate loko lokān nodvijate ca yaḥ, harṣāmarṣa-bhayodvegair mukto yaḥ sa ca me priyaḥ (12.15): They do not shrink from anything, nor do they behave in such a way that the world will shrink away from them. It is possible that we may not shrink away from anything, but how can we expect the world not to shrink away from us? This is a difficult thing. We may have no dislike or disgust towards anything in the world, but the point is that the world should behave towards us in a similar manner. This is possible in heightened forms of self-expansion. When the moods of love and compassion rise to a sufficiently high pedestal, the aura of this great yogi touches everything in the atmosphere around, and the world will behave in respect of that person in a similar manner as the person behaves in respect of the world. That is to say, our behaviour towards the world largely conditions its behaviour towards us. So if we do not shy away from the world, the world

will not shy away from us. That is the meaning of *yasmān nodvijate loko lokān nodvijate ca yaḥ*.

Free from exhilaration, free from anger, free from fear, and free from agitation of any kind—such a person is *harṣāmarṣa-bhayodvegair mukto*. *Harṣāmarṣa* means getting exhilarated when something pleasant comes and becoming angry when something unpleasant comes, *bhaya* is the fear that something may come and hinder our path of pleasure, and *udvega* is agitation caused when all these are present. One who is free from *harsha*, *amarsha*, *bhaya* and *udvega* is dear to God: *sa ca me priyaḥ*.

Anapekṣaḥ (12.16): Wanting nothing at all, and expecting nothing even for tomorrow. If something comes today, okay; tomorrow will take care of itself. *Śuciḥ*: Inwardly and outwardly contented, free from any kind of expectation and desire. Therefore, he is pure, inwardly and outwardly. *Dakṣa*: Very able in the performance of his duties. Whether they are spiritual duties in the form of meditation or external duties in the form of relations with society, he is expert, adroit and very precise in his behaviour, and he will not bungle in his attitude. But he looks like an uninterested person. He does not talk much. He does not take any initiative, and keeps quiet as if he is not interested in anything in this world. Yet he is very able, a very great expert, and when he starts doing a thing, he will do it in a more expert manner than anybody else. But mostly he will not interfere with things; that is the meaning of *udāsīna*.

Gatavyathaḥ: Free from grief of every kind. He has no sorrow, no grief, no feeling that something has come which he does not want, or something that he wants has not come. This grief does not touch him because there is nothing that he wants, and there is nothing that he does not want.

Sarvārambhaparityāgī: He does not take initiative. If something happens, he acts in accordance with that happening.

If nothing happens, he keeps quiet. He does not plan what he will do tomorrow or the day after that. He remains quiet, as if nothing is happening and the world itself does not exist. But if occasions arise when he has to take a step in a given direction, he does it in a most expert manner. Otherwise, he does not take initiative in any direction. *Yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ*: Such a devotee is dear to God.

Yo na hṛṣyati na dveṣṭi na śocati na kāṅkṣati, śubhāśubha-parityāgī bhaktimān yaḥ sa me priyaḥ (12.17): “Who is dear to Me? He who is neither happy nor unhappy, neither likes nor dislikes, neither wants nor does not want, asks neither for pleasant things nor unpleasant things, and does not even make a distinction between good and bad—such a person is the true devotee of God.”

Samah śatrau ca mitre ca tathā mātāpamānayoḥ (12.18): He is equal in attitude towards friend and enemy. It does not mean that he hugs the friend and hates the enemy. His internal spirit that has communed itself with the Universal Spirit sees the same light scintillating in both of what are called friend and enemy. Whether he is praised or insulted, it makes no difference because for him, words are only vibrations in the air and they make no sense. Only if we make sense of the vibrations, they seem to affect us. But vibration is vibration—and if we let them go, they vanish into thin air. Hence, neither praise nor insults make any difference to him. He is totally unaware of anything happening at all. They are empty words, with no sense or meaning for him.

Śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkheṣu samah saṅgavivarjitaḥ: Heat and cold, hunger and thirst are the usual concomitants of a human being embodied in a physical sheath. They have to be borne somehow or the other. We cannot ask why there should be hunger, why there should be thirst, why there should be heat and cold. They are natural, and have to be borne with fortitude

as long as the physical body continues. *Sanḡavivarjitaḥ*: He does that. He is attached to nothing.

Tulyanindāstuti (2.19): The same thing is again repeated. *Ninda* and *stuti* mean the same thing to him. “You are the worst of fellows”—okay, all right. “There is nobody like you in the whole world”—that is also good, fine. He takes both of them as *prasad*. *Tulyanindāstutir maunī*: Talking not, saying nothing. *Santuṣṭo yena kenacit*: Whatever comes, he is satisfied with it. *Aniketah*: Having no abode of his own. He stays here and there; any place is equally good for him. He does not have an attachment to any particular land and property. He has no particular homestead, no location, and feels that all is well at any place. *Sthiramatiḥ*: He is not agitated, and is established in understanding. Such a devotee is the beloved of God.

Whoever listens to this advice is also dear to God. Whoever devotedly hears this glory of the devotee of God is also a devotee of God.

“I consider all of them as very, very dear to Me who devotedly, intently, with concentration, listen to these glories of the great Masters of the spirit—which are like nectar for the ears—full of faith and intent on Me only. I consider them as most dear to Me”: *tetīva me priyāḥ* (12.20). With these words, we conclude the Twelfth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita.

Discourse 38

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER BEGINS CONSCIOUSNESS AND MATTER

From the Thirteenth Chapter onwards, a new perspective is placed before us. A kind of unity of purpose was seen in the first six chapters. It is said that another kind of unity of purpose is seen from the Seventh to the Twelfth Chapters. Now the last six chapters, from the Thirteenth onwards, have a different purpose altogether.

There is an emphasis on the discipline of the individual in the first six chapters. In the next six chapters—from the Seventh to the Eleventh particularly, and even the Twelfth—there is a special emphasis on the glory of God, the nature of creation, and the majesty of the devotees of God. These are the subjects of the middle six chapters. Now we have traversed both these—the individual, and the cosmic. In the first six chapters we have the individual, and in the next six chapters we have the cosmic. Now a more detailed touching up of essentials that are already stated briefly in the earlier chapters is taken up for discussion in the coming chapters.

There is a belief among commentators of the Bhagavadgita that the great Upanishadic statement '*tat tvam asi*' has something to do with this threefold classification of the chapters of the Gita. The individual is *tvam*—'thou'. This 'thou', or individual, is taken up for an intensified form of study in the first six chapters. *Tat* means 'That'—the Supreme. The nature of 'That' is taken up for study in the next six chapters.

Asi means ‘art’; ‘thou That art’. The unification of the ‘thou’ and the ‘That’, the methodology of attaining the unity between the individual and the Universal, in all its details, is supposed to be delineated in the coming chapters, from the Thirteenth onwards.

Sri Krishna himself starts speaking, without any question from Arjuna. *Idam śarīram kaunteya kṣetram ityabhidhīyate* (13.1): “This body, this particular tabernacle, this physical embodiment of the human being, is technically called *kṣetra*, or the field where some activity takes place. A field is an area where something happens.

While this body, which is physical in nature, is a field of operation, there must be somebody who carries on this operation in the field. The field is the body; but the knower of this body is the operator behind it. This body is, no doubt, the vehicle of action, but there is somebody who is conscious that there is a body which is to be used for the purpose of some activity. This body is an instrument of action in this world, but this body cannot act by itself. It is inert, constituted of the five inert elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether. Inert instruments cannot act by themselves. Even a car cannot move unless there is a driver. So is the case with this body. Unless there is *prana* and an intelligence that drives the *prana* in respect of the bodily limbs, there will be no activity.

So while this body may be called *kṣetra*, or field, the one who knows this field is and is conscious of it, operates through it—lives in it, indwells it, and handles it in a different manner—such a principle is called *kṣetrajña*. *Jña* means knower, and *kṣetra* is, of course, field, so *kṣetrajña* means ‘the knower of the field’. Hence, this body is the *kṣetra*, the field, and the one who knows this field is the *kṣetrajña*.

Consciousness and matter constitute the subject of this chapter. The so-called field—this body or anything that is

material—is an unconscious presentation that is usually called matter. That which knows matter is consciousness. Throughout the history of philosophy, there has been a lot of controversy on the theme as to what is the relationship between consciousness and matter, and this controversy has not subsided even today. How do we connect consciousness with matter?

The knower of the field knows the field. Consciousness has no characteristic of matter, and matter does not have the characteristic of consciousness. Consciousness does not move, whereas matter is always in a state of flux and agitation. Therefore, they are dissimilar in their character. Objectivity is the character of the body and matter, whereas subjectivity is the nature of consciousness. They are totally opposed to each other. So how can that which is pure subject come in contact with that which is pure object? How would we solve this great issue of what the relationship between two terrible contraries is? They cannot have any kind of connection, yet they seem to be working together in some way for the purpose of effecting some aim, which seems to be the very process of evolution.

The Sankhya doctrine gives a very humorous analogy to explain how consciousness, which is intelligent, works together with matter, which is unintelligent. Consciousness has eyes but no legs. It cannot move. It is universal existence. Therefore, it can see because it is intelligence, but it cannot move because it has no legs. *Prakriti* has legs; it can move. But it has no eyes; it cannot see. It has no consciousness. Now, suppose there are two persons going on a journey: one who can see but cannot walk, and another who can walk but cannot see. They make an arrangement between themselves. The blind person who can walk carries on his shoulder the legless person who can see. So the carried person sees and directs the path, and the legged one moves. This is how consciousness and matter work together, says Sankhya in a humorous analogy. But that analogy does

not explain matters, because the two persons are independent of each other. The seeing person and the walking person are not one person. Therefore, consciousness and matter cannot become one unit. Unless there is a blend of the two, it will be difficult to explain perception of any kind. This subject has been taken up in the Vedānta Śāstra as an improvement on the dualistic doctrine of the Sāṅkhya, which carries on its philosophy with its eyed-one and legged-one combination.

Kṣetrajña iti tadvidāḥ: “Arjuna, I am the knower of the field.” The Lord says, “I am the Pure Consciousness that knows all things and operates these material forces; and I am not merely in one body. When I refer to the body, you may be thinking of some particular body, this body or that body, and there is a consciousness in each body. That may be so, that consciousness is inherently present in every body, within each person, but that is not the point.” *Sarvakṣetreṣu bhārata*: “I am present as the *kṣetrajña*, or the knower of the field, in all the fields. That is, all individuals whatsoever—right from Brahma, the Creator, down to the atom—are indwelt by Me, and I know all things as the Omniscient Knower.”

In a sense, it means that the *kṣetra* is the entire physical universe. The whole of creation can be considered as the *kṣetra*, or the field of action; and Omniscient Intelligence that is operating in terms of this material manifestation is the *kṣetrajña*. Therefore, the question of the relationship between God and creation, consciousness and matter, *kṣetrajña* and *kṣetra*, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*—all mean, finally, one and the same thing.

Kṣetrajñam cāpi mām viddhi sarvakṣetreṣu bhārata, kṣetra-kṣetrajñayor jñānam yat taj jñānam matam mama (13.2): “This is real knowledge. I consider this to be supreme and real knowledge.” What is that knowledge? It is the knowledge of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajña*. If we can know the actual relationship

between God and the world, soul and body, consciousness and matter, knower and the known—if this can be clear to us, we have known everything. This knowledge is the highest knowledge.

Tat kṣetram yac ca yādṛk ca yadvikāri yataś ca yat, sa ca yo yatprabhāvaś ca tat samāsenā me śṛṇu (13.3): “I shall now briefly tell you what this *kṣetra* is—this field that is being referred to. Its nature, its characteristics, its modifications, from where it originates, how it exists, and what its powers are, all these I shall tell you just now.”

Rṣibhiḥ (13.4): “This knowledge about which I am speaking has been sung in all its glory in the Upanishads, the Vedas, and the Brahma Sutras by great rishis with their logical arguments. Vasishtha gloriously describes this in all varieties of arguments in the Yoga Vasishtha. Rishis also sing of this knowledge in the Upanishads and the Vedas, and the Brahma Sutras are filled with logical pros and cons establishing the nature of this knowledge.”

mahābhūtānyahanākāro buddhir avyaktam eva ca indriyāṇi daśaikam ca pañca cendriyagocarāḥ (13.5)
icchā dveṣaḥ sukhaṁ duḥkhaṁ saṅghātaś cetanā dhṛtiḥ etat kṣetram samāsenā savikāram udāhṛtam (13.6)

It was mentioned that this body is the *kṣetra*, and the knower of this body is the *kṣetrajña*. Also, because of the fact that this *kṣetrajña* is the knower not only of any particular body but of all bodies, it is proper for us to conclude that the whole universe is the field, or the *kṣetra*, and the Supreme Purusha, God Almighty, is the *kṣetrajña*. *Kṣetrajñam cāpi mām viddhi sarvakṣetreṣu bhārata*: “I am the *kṣetrajña* in *sarvakṣetra*—in all the *kṣetras*. All living beings constitute physical embodiment; and in every such physical embodiment, I am present as the knower thereof.”

Hence, in an individual sense, we may consider the *kṣetra* as a material manifestation in the form of this body, and the *kṣetrajñā* as the inner Atman; or in a cosmical sense, we may say the entire universe is the *kṣetra*, the field of action of the one *puruṣa*, the one consciousness, which is the *kṣetrajñā* in the cosmic sense. What are the inner constituents of this cosmic *kṣetra*, and also of the individual *kṣetra*?

This field, which is basically material in nature, objective in character, is constituted of certain substances. What is this world made of in its physical form, and what is the individual made of in his individual form, the personal *kṣetra*? The cosmic *kṣetra* rises from the lowest material realm of the earth up to Ishvara. The whole thing is the realm of the *kṣetra* and the *kṣetrajñā*. *Mahabhūta* is the name given to the five gross elements—earth, water, fire, air, and sky or ether—known in Sanskrit as *prithvi*, *apa*, *tejo*, *vayu*, *ākasha*. These are the things visible to our eyes because they are physically manifest as gross objects of sense; but there are internal realities transcending the five elements, the inner *kṣetrajñā*, which cannot be seen with the eyes.

The *kṣetrajñā* cannot be known or seen, because the *kṣetrajñā* is the knower of the field. Therefore, the knower cannot be known. The various functions, in a series of ascents and descents, of this *kṣetrajñā* in a cosmical sense are mentioned here as *ahamkāra*, *buddhi* and *avyakta*. *Mahābhūtāny ahamkāro buddhir avyaktam eva ca* refers to the well-known Sankhya categories of *prakṛiti*, *maḥat*, *ahamkāra*, and the five elements. The *ahamkāra*, *buddhi* and *avyakta* mentioned here as internal to the five elements correspond exactly to the Sankhya principle of *ahamkāra*, *maḥat tattva* and *avyakta prakṛiti*; or in another style, we may say that *ahamkāra* corresponds to Virat, *buddhi* corresponds to Hiranyagarbha, and *avyakta* corresponds to Ishvara. Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha, Virat,

the five elements, and the *tanmatras*—known as *sabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa*, *gandha*—constitute the entire cosmos.

What are the constituents of the individual? That is now mentioned. *Indriyāṇi daśaikam ca pañca cendriyagocarāḥ*: There are five organs of perception, and five organs of action. *Śrotram cakṣuḥ sparśanam ca rasanam ghrāṇam eva ca* (15.9) is told to us later on. The ear and the other sense organs of knowledge, plus the organs of action—*vak*, *pani*, *pada*, *payu* and *upastha*—constitute ten: five sensations producing knowledge or perception, and five organs that perform action. These are ten in number. If we also add mind as the chief perceiving faculty, it becomes eleven. Hence, *dasa ekam*—*indriyāṇi daśaikam ca*: *dasa* and *eka* becomes *ekadasa*, eleven. Thus, there are eleven cognitive and perceptive faculties in the individual. The mind being the chief of them, it rules over all the senses, including the ten mentioned.

In addition to that, we have the five objects of perception: sound is the object of the ear, or organ of hearing, touch is the object of the tactile sense, colour is the object of the sense of seeing, taste is the object of the sense of the tongue, and smell is the object of the sense of the nose. *Pañca cendriyagocarāḥ*: Five objects of sensory cognition, together with the mind and the ten sense organs, constitute the substance of the individual microcosm. The macrocosm was mentioned earlier as consisting of the five elements, plus *ahamkara*, *buddhi* and *avyakta*. Now the microcosm is mentioned as *pindanda*, and the macrocosm is *brahmanda*. This *pindanda*, or the individual constitution, is made up of these things only: the five objects of perception, the ten sense organs, and the mind.

Discourse 39

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER CONTINUES

THE FIELD AND THE KNOWER OF THE FIELD

This classification of the *kṣetra* and the *kṣetrajñā* into two categories, the macrocosmic and the microcosmic, requires an elucidation of the means of contact of the microcosmic with the macrocosmic. How does the individual *kṣetra*, with its own individual *kṣetrajñā*, come in contact with the external macrocosmic field and the knower of the field? In other words, how do we come in contact with anything at all? How do we know any object in the world, and how are we affected by the perception of objects?

Ichā dveṣaḥ sukhaṁ duḥkhaṁ saṁghātaś cetanā dhṛtiḥ (13.6). This process of the individual contacting the external and getting affected by it takes place in the following manner: by desire, *icchā*; by hatred, *dveṣa*; by a longing for pleasure, *sukha*; by the desire to avoid pain, *duḥkha*; and by the desire to further maintain this conglomeration of the physical body, *saṁghāta*. *Saṁghāta* is a composite structure made up of various elements, which we study in anatomy and physiology, and they have to be maintained in a proper order so that they may not get dismembered. If the bone moves in one direction and the flesh moves in another direction, we will not be human beings. They have to be put together by a cement of cohesion. That cohering, compact presentation of the otherwise individual ingredients is called *saṁghāta*, this physical body. This physical body is not one indivisible unit. It is

made up of little units—which may be called cells, or whatever name we give them—and if they get dismembered, they decay. When the *prana* is withdrawn from the body, it decomposes; then the inner components of the body reduce themselves to their original form and become one with the five elements.

Consciousness is the individual capacity to know the objects of the world through the body; that is called *chetana* here. *Dhṛti* is the determination of the individual to maintain itself through the *ahamkara tattva*, or the ego.

So, how many things are mentioned in the individual's case? *Ichā dveṣaḥ sukhaṁ duḥkhaṁ saṁghātaś cetanā dhṛtiḥ*. We have a determination to maintain ourselves as a physical personality. We move earth and heaven to see that we are not destroyed or endangered in any way whatsoever. We protect ourselves, and for that purpose we decide to take certain steps, and we apply the faculty of determination: "I shall maintain myself in this physical body only"; and we do every blessed thing, whatever is possible, for that purpose. The consciousness that is at the back of even this determining faculty is the *chetana*. *Saṁghāta*, as explained, is nothing but this composite structure of different elements that make up the body, and it is simultaneously associated with longing for pleasure and hatred for pain. *Ichā, dveṣa*—love and hatred—go together with the asking for pleasure and avoidance of pain.

These are the inner components of the individual *kṣetra*, the microcosm; and the *chetana* mentioned here may be identified with the individual *kṣetrajñā*. One who knows the individual body and identifies with the individual body is *kṣetrajñā* in the individualised sense. But the other one that is mentioned corresponds to the Cosmic *kṣetrajñā*, who is represented in these different degrees of His own manifestation—known as *prakṛiti*, *maḥat* and *ahamkara*, or Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha and Virat. So, in these two verses, in two verses

only, the entire cosmic structure and the individual structure are summed up: *mahābhūtānyahanākāro buddhir avyaktam eva ca, indriyāṇi daśaikam ca pañca cendriyagocarāḥ; icchā dveṣaḥ sukhaṁ duḥkhaṁ saṁghātaś cetanā dhṛtiḥ, etat kṣetraṁ* (13.5-6): “This is the *kṣetra* in brief—*samāsena savikāram udāhṛtam*. Briefly I have mentioned what the *kṣetra* is, both from the universal point of view and from the individual point of view, with all the modifications thereof.”

This is the knowledge which is briefly mentioned in two verses, but is so hard to comprehend. Our minds cannot always remember that we are individuals coming in contact with the universal structure of the *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā* through *icchā*, *dveṣa*, *sukha*, *duḥkha*, etc. We are not aware of this in our daily life. We are so ego-ridden that we just take for granted that everything is as it appears on the surface to the sense organs. We think that we are here, totally independent, and the world is there, totally independent, and that we have practically no connection with the world. We do not know that a connection is established every minute by the consciousness of perception.

How do we maintain this awareness of our relatedness to the world through the consciousness of cognition through the sense organs and the mind? For that, a series of disciplines is stated in the coming verses. These are very famous verses, which are worth committing to memory. We have already seen *sthitaprajna lakshana* in the Second Chapter, *bhagavad bhakta lakshana* in the Twelfth Chapter, and *gunatita lakshana* in the Thirteenth Chapter; and now, here, we have the *lakshana* of a seeker. Who is a good seeker?

*amānitvam adambhitvam ahimsā kṣāntir ārjavam
 ācāryopāsanaṁ śaucaṁ sthairyam ātmavinigrahaḥ* (13.7)
*indriyārtheṣu vairāgyam anahanākāra eva ca
 janmamṛtyujarāvyādhiduḥkhadoṣānudarśanam* (13.8)
asaktir anabhiṣvaṅgaḥ putradāragrhādiṣu

nityaṁ ca samacittatvam iṣṭāniṣṭopapattiṣu (13.9)

mayi cānanyayogena bhaktir avyabhicāriṇī

viviktadeśasevitvam aratir janasaṁsadi (13.10)

adhyātmajñānanityatvaṁ tattvajñānārthadarśanam

etaj jñānam iti proktam ajñānaṁ yad ato'nyathā (13.11)

All these things mentioned here in these verses are called knowledge. *Etaj jñānam iti proktam*: “I consider these virtues I have mentioned as real knowledge.” *Ajñānaṁ yad atonyathā*: “Whatever is the opposite of what I have said here is ignorance.”

A student of yoga, a spiritual seeker, is humble. He does not expect respect from anybody, but offers respect to everyone. *Ṭṛṇād api su-nīcena taror iva sahiṣṇunā amāninā māna-dena kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ* (C.C., Adi lila, 17.31): Only he can take the name of God, Hari, who wants not respect from anybody, but respects everyone, and is humbler than a blade of grass. If grass is trampled on, it simply bends; it does not resist. We should be humbler than a blade of grass—*ṛṇād api su-nīcena*. If we chop off the branches of a tree, it does not curse us. Even if we cut off a large part of the tree, it again shoots up tendrils and leaves. It is very tolerant. Thus, the devotee should be as tolerant as a tree and as humble as a blade of grass, giving respect to everybody and wanting respect from nobody—*amānitvam*.

Adambhitvam: There is no show on the part of a spiritual seeker. He never demonstrates himself as a seeker of God, a lover of God, a spiritual seeker. He looks like anybody else in the world. There is nothing special or anything particular that we can cognise in that person. He hides his knowledge and his *sadhana*. It is said the *sadhana* that we perform, the mantra that we chant, and the Guru whom we worship should not be revealed to anyone. We should not boast about who our Guru is. It should be known only to us, and to the Guru. We should

not announce to the public who our Guru is; we should not tell people what mantra *japa* we are doing, and our *sadhana* technique also should not be revealed to other people. If we have an experience in our *sadhana*, that also should not be told to anybody except our Guru. *Adambhitvam* means there is no demonstration of *ahamkara*. “I have attained samadhi; I was there in that state for three hours.” We should not go on saying these things.

Ahimsa, non-violence, is something well known to us. All beings should feel fearlessness towards us. *Ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate* (10.8): “May all be fearless towards me” is the *pratijna*, or the vow, that we take. “Let nothing, let no one, be afraid of me.” *Kṣāntiḥ* is forgiveness. If somebody does something wrong to us, we should not do the same to them. We forgive them because, after all, everybody is susceptible to making some mistake or the other. Here is a short poem: “There is so much bad in the best of us, and so much good in the worst of us, that it ill-behoves any of us to find fault with the rest of us.” So, be forgiving. *Ārjava*: We should be honest and straightforward, and not hide anything. We should not think one thing, say another thing, and do something else. *Kāyena vācā manasa* (S.B. 11.2.36): There should be harmony; otherwise, there will be non-alignment of personality. *Ācāryopāsanaṁ*: We should always be humble and worshipful before our teacher, who imparts knowledge to us. We should not show our greatness or our ego before the teacher, or the Guru. Let him be worshipped as the veritable manifestation of God Himself. *Śaucaṁ* means physical purity, both inwardly as well as outwardly. *Sthairyam* is the decision that we have taken to achieve God-realisation in this birth, and not in a future birth. *Ātmavinigrahaḥ* is self-restraint, the control of the senses and the mind.

Indriyārtheṣu vairāgyam is distaste for the objects of sense. Neither do we want to hear anything, nor do we want to taste anything, nor do we want anything at all that the senses usually consider as very delighting. There is nothing in this world which can delight us. Therefore, we should be rid of longing for the objects of sense. *Anahamkāra*: We should not project our ego in any way whatsoever, nor go on thinking how we were born into this world, how we have grown up, how we will become old and leave this body one day. Is this world—where everything decays, decomposes, and turns to dust—a haven of pleasure and joy? How can anyone pat himself on the back and say that he is well off in this world?

Therefore, *janmamṛtyujarāvyādhiduhkhadoṣānudarśanam*. We should think of the way in which we were born into this world—a very, very unpleasant way indeed in which we were born. The process of dying, the going from this world, is also very unpleasant indeed. Old age is unpleasant, sickness is unpleasant; all kinds of sorrow which we have to encounter daily, and the defects of sense objects, these are to be contemplated upon every day. These truths of life—*janmamṛtyujarāvyādhiduhkhadoṣā*—should be brooded upon every day.

There is a defect in every sense object. It looks honey-coated and tasty, but inside there is a poison which will kill us. *Na viṣam viṣam iti āhuḥ brahmasvam viṣam ucya te*: Ordinary poison cannot be considered as dangerous as the poison of sense objects, because ordinary poison—scorpion or even snake venom—will destroy us only once, but the *vishaya chintana*, the contemplation of sense objects, will kill us in several births. Therefore, these kinds of sorrows should be borne in mind, and we should not be entangled in them.

Asaktiḥ: Therefore, we should be detached from things, and live an individual life. We should be alone to ourselves and not mix socially, as these people are not necessary for us.

Anabhiṣvaṅgaḥ: We should not seek contact with anybody. We should not look for people to chat with. There should be no contact. We do not need friends. *Putradāraḡrḥādiṣu*: Also, we should not be attached to our family members—such as son or daughter, husband or wife, property or house. If we are householders, we have some duty to perform as a trustee of an institution, not attaching ourselves to anything, but doing our duty very meticulously. We may live at home, but we should detach ourselves, knowing well that one day or the other we will leave, and also knowing that one day or the other they will leave us. Hence, attachment is unfounded and unwarranted.

Asaktir anabhiṣvaṅgaḥ putradāraḡrḥādiṣu, nityam ca samacittatvam iṣṭāniṣṭopapattiṣu: Whether pleasant things or unpleasant things come—whether good news comes that makes us feel happy, or there is something which makes us very unhappy—we should keep our mind in a state of balance, and not be tilted either to this side or that side.

Mayi cānanyayogena bhaktir avyabhicāriṇī: Finally, we should resort to God only. *Avyabhicharini bhakti* is *ekabhakti*, which means wanting only one, and not wanting anything else. If we want another thing simultaneously, it is *vyabhicharini bhakti*. Here is *avyabhicharini bhakti*, where we do not want anything else except that one thing. “May that devotion be fixed on Me.” And what kind of fixing is it? *Ananyogena*: “With an undivided assiduity of concentration, may you be devoted to Me with a devotion that has no second.”

Mayi cānanyayogena bhaktir avyabhicāriṇī, viviktadeśasevitvam: We should always try to live *ekantam*—alone—and not in a thoroughfare or a city, where there is a lot of noise and dust. As far as possible, we should try to live in *ekantavas*, have *ekantavas*, and be satisfied in ourselves and not require anybody else with us. *Viviktadeśasevitvam aratir janasaṃsadi* is dislike for crowds of people. If there is a crowd of people,

we should leave that place and go somewhere else—sit under a tree. We should not have any kind of taste for organisations, crowds, and the noise of human society. We should be alone to ourselves.

Adhyātmajñānanityatvaṃ: Our daily routine should be working for the acquisition of *adhyātmajñāna*, the knowledge of the Self. We should work for it day and night. *Tattvajñānārthadarśanam*: We should aspire for the vision of Truth, and ask for nothing else. *Etaj jñānam iti proktam*: If we have these qualities, we have knowledge. *Ajñānam yad ato'nyathā*: If we do not have these qualities, we are ignorant.

It is said that we should aspire for knowledge of Truth: *tattvajñānārthadarśanam*. What is Truth? *Jñeyam yat tat pravakṣyāmi yaj jñātvāmṛtam aśnute, anādimat paraṃ brahma na sat tan nāsad ucyate* (13.12): “I shall now tell you what Truth is. That Supreme Brahman is the Ultimate Truth, after knowing which there is attainment of immortality.” *Anādimat paraṃ brahma*: It has no beginning and no end. It cannot be designated as either existing or as not existing. It cannot be called existing because whenever we think of any existing thing, we want to see it with our eyes or consider it as some object of some sense organ. As it is not the object of any sense organ, we do not consider it to be existing; but neither is it non-existing—because, ultimately, it is the only existence. *Na sat tan nāsad ucyate*: Therefore, it cannot be regarded as *sat*, and it cannot be regarded as *asat* either.

Sarvataḥpāṇipādaṃ (13.13): It is spreading itself everywhere. Everywhere we can find the hands of that Being and feet of that Being. *Sarvato'kṣīsiromukham*: Everywhere are the eyes of that Being, everywhere are the heads of that Being, and everywhere are the faces of that Being. *Sarvataḥśrutimal loke*: Everywhere are the ears of that Being. *Sarvam āvṛtya tiṣṭhati*: It envelops all things.

Sarvendriyaguṇābhāsam sarvendriyavivarjitam (13.14): That which we cognise through the sense organs as objects of sense is also a manifestation of this Brahman, conditioned by the sense organs. But it is free from all sense organs. It can be cast into the mould of sensory perception in the form of objects, but it is not an object, because it has no relationship with any sense organ. *Asaktam*: It has no relation to anything in the world. Transcendent is the Reality. *Sarvabhṛc caiva*: Though it is transcendent, it supports everything by also being immanent at the same time. *Nirguṇam guṇabhoktr ca*: It has no quality by itself, because to say that a thing has quality would be to compare it to something else. It is blue, it is red, it is tall, it is short—we cannot say anything about it because all these definitions, all these descriptions, require a comparison of it with something else; and because something else external to it does not exist, it cannot be regarded as having any quality at all. Therefore, it is called *nirguna*. *Guṇabhoktr ca*: But all qualities reside in it. Though it has no quality by itself, whatever beauty we see, whatever colour we see, whatever sound we hear, whatever sensations we have, everything is on account of its existence. Every kind of statue can be found inside a block of stone, but actually there is no statue at all inside a block of stone.

Bahir antaś ca bhūtānām (13.15): It is everywhere—outside us, as well as inside us, like a pot that is sunk in the ocean has water outside it as well as inside it. This Brahman is flooding us: inwardly as the Atman, and outwardly as Brahman. *Bahir antaś ca bhūtānām*: Everywhere it is, outside and inside. *Acaram*: It does not shake or move; and it does not fluctuate like the world of the three *gunas*. *Caram eva ca*: It moves, and nobody can move faster than it; and yet it is totally immovable. These are the tremendous contradictory qualities of God. Nobody can be faster than He, nobody can be quicker in

action than He, and yet He does nothing; He is stable, remaining in His own abode. *Sūkṣmatvāt tad avijñeyam*: Because of its subtlety, because it is subtler than even the mind, subtler than even the intellect, it is impossible to know it through these instruments of mind and intellect. *Dūrastham*: It is very far. It looks as if it is infinitely far away from us, beyond the stars, because we cannot see it anywhere. We always imagine that the Supreme Being is very far away—many millions of light years away—yet it is very near, in our throat itself. *Dūrastham cāntike ca tat*: Nothing can be farther than That, because of its vastness and infinitude; and nothing can be nearer than That, because it is the Selfhood of all beings.

Avibhaktam ca bhūteṣu (13.16): It cannot be divided into parts—some *atman* here, some *atman* there. It is one indivisible sea of Selfhood, yet it appears to be divided into little *atmans*—my *atman*, your *atman*, this self, that self, etc. *Vibhaktam iva ca sthitam*: It looks as if it is cut into pieces of *atman* across many living beings, while actually it is indivisible—like space appearing to be cut into parts when there are vessels containing little spaces. Little spaces are not parts of the universal space. There is only one universal space, though it appears as if they are all divided into many vessels in which we cognise this vast space. *Bhūtabhartr ca*: It is the protector, the supporter, and the benefactor of all living beings. *Taj jñeyam*: Know that it is this character of the Supreme Being. *Grasishnu*: It absorbs everything into itself. *Prabhaviṣṇu*: It releases everything from itself.

Jyotiṣām api taj jyotis (13.17): It is the Light of all lights. *Na tad bhāsayate sūryo* (15.6): Thousands of suns cannot stand before it. The light of the sun is like darkness before it. *Tamasah param*: Beyond the darkness of the world shines that supreme radiance of the Absolute. *Jñānam jñeyam jñānagamyaṁ*: It is knowledge, it is the object of knowledge, and it

is also the knower. All three clubbed together is that Eternity which is Brahman, the Absolute. *Hṛdi sarvasya viṣṭhitam*: It is in our own heart. We should not be afraid that this tremendous description is of something that is very far away. It is in the heart of all.

Iti kṣetraṁ tathā jñānaṁ jñeyaṁ coktaṁ samāsataḥ (13.18): “So I have briefly told you, Arjuna, what is the field as well as what is the knower of the field, cosmically as well as individually.”

Discourse 40

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER CONCLUDES

UNDERSTANDING PURUSHA AND PRAKRITI

In the Thirteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita, we have covered the theme which touched upon the *kṣetra* and the *kṣetrajña*, individually as well as cosmically, and the relationship between the individual and the cosmic. We also went through the list of virtues, qualities that characterise a spiritual seeker—*amānitvam*, *adambhitvam*, etc. Then there was a grand description of the Supreme Brahman—*anādimat paraṁ brahma* (13.12): The Supreme Absolute pervades all things, existing everywhere, and also existing as the heart and the soul and the self of everybody.

Iti kṣetram tathā jñānam jñeyam coktam samāsataḥ (13.18): “So now I have told you everything that is required to be known: the object which is the *kṣetra*, the pure Universal Subject that is the *jneya*, *paramatman*, Brahman, and the knowledge—*amanitvam*, *adambhitvam*, etc. Briefly I have told you of *kṣetra*, *jñana*, and *jneya*. After knowing this thoroughly and establishing oneself in the practice of these great truths delineated in the verses mentioned, one gets established in Me.” *Madbhakta etad vijñāya madbhāvāyopapadyate*: “One becomes fit for entry into Me after having known this in Truth—known it not merely as scriptural knowledge, not as linguistic or verbal knowledge, but knowledge that has become part and parcel of one’s own being.”

This great knowledge, which is the subject of the first sixteen or seventeen verses, is the quintessence of every kind of wisdom; and the life of a person has to be a manifestation of this wisdom. This knowledge is not something that is understood by the intellect. It is something that has become an insight into the nature of truth, and the whole personality scintillates with the radiance of this knowledge.

Here, in the context of spiritual experience, knowing and being are one and the same, whereas in ordinary secular knowledge, in the arts and the sciences, being is different from knowing. A professor of philosophy has his knowledge in the books and in the college, but his personal life has no connection with this knowledge. His being is different from the knowledge that he has got; but here, that is not the case. The being of a person is identical with the knowledge of that person, so that one can say the person himself or herself is knowledge. After having known this in this fashion, one becomes fit for entry into God's Being: *madbhakta etad vijñāya madbhāvāyopapadyate*.

The verse that follows is controversial. *Prakṛtiṁ puruṣaṁ caiva vidhyanādī ubhāvapi, vikārāṁś ca guṇāṁś caiva viddhi prakṛtisambhavān* (13.19). The literal translation of this verse is: Know that *prakṛiti* and *puruṣa* are beginningless, and their modifications and their qualities originate, manifest, from *prakṛiti*.

The doctrine of the classical Sankhya says that *prakṛiti* and *puruṣa* are beginningless and infinite in their nature. They cannot merge into each other. The doctrine of the Bhagavadgita does not regard *prakṛiti* and *puruṣa* as totally independent contending parties; and that they are aspects of the Supreme Purusha, or Purushottama, will be told to us in the Fifteenth Chapter. While commenting on the meaning of this verse, Sankaracharya does not seem to be very eager to

say anything specific to clear our doubts. He simply says that *prakriti* and *purusha* should be there always to limit the operation of God; otherwise, there will be an infinite operation of God. He does not feel that there is any meaning in an infinite operation because creation would be perpetually going on and never come to an end, inasmuch as God is infinite; therefore, there would be only creation for ever and ever. There would be no cessation for action proceeding from that which is there always. But creation is a limited manifestation. We cannot say that the world is infinite, or even that the universe is infinite. "The limitation required for the manifestation of a universe calls for the limiting principles of *prakriti* and *purusha*." Saying this much, Sankaracharya keeps quiet.

Regarding this commentary, I feel that there is some difficulty in entirely accepting what Sankaracharya says, because it implies that God does not properly understand what creation is; therefore He requires a police guard to restrain Him so that He may not go on creating infinitely. That meaning does not seem to be applicable, and it is not satisfying. Others feel that the point made out here that *prakriti* and *purusha* are beginningless should be taken in the sense of the infinity of God's powers. In the West, there was a philosopher called Spinoza. Just as the transcending principle is referred to as Purushottama in the Fifteenth Chapter of the Gita, Spinoza uses the word 'substance' to designate the Absolute Reality; and the qualities of this substance are like the two wings of a bird. Space and time, extension and duration, are regarded as the operative media of this Supreme Substance. If we are to take the verses that come in the Fifteenth Chapter literally, it is possible to consider *purusha* as *akshara* and *prakriti* as *kshara*, and Purushottama transcends both *kshara* and *akshara*. I am not going into that subject now. It comes in the Fifteenth Chapter.

The only way we can escape unnecessary entanglement in the jumble of words explaining this verse is by understanding *prakriti* and *purusha* to be two properties, as it were, of the Supreme Being. On the one hand, the spatial extension of the Supreme Being is *prakriti*; on the other hand, it is omniscience acting, which is *purusha*. There seems to be a sound explanation because the Vedanta doctrine also holds that the process of creation begins with Ishvara and becomes more and more perspicacious from Hiranyagarbha and Virat onwards. That is, the infinite Brahman limits itself in a particular manner, not by force of the operation of something external, but by its own deliberate will. It wills, and that will is called Ishvara. This will is a delimitation imposed by itself on itself. That is, it contemplates the particular type of universe that is to be manifested.

Infinity does not contemplate infinity. It contemplates a limited manifestation, because the characteristic of limitation in creation arises on account of the fact that the universe to be created has some relevance to the *jivas* who are going to inhabit that universe—the *jivas* who lay in a sleeping condition in the previous cycle at the time of dissolution—and the universe is created merely as a field for experience by these endless number of *jivas* who were withdrawn into *prakriti* at the time of dissolution of the previous cycle. When they germinate into action at the commencement of the new creation, they have to be provided with an atmosphere commensurate with their potencies. That is to say, an individual who can have the experience of the manifestation of his or her or its potencies on earth, or in the world, cannot be taken to heaven because there the experience will not be possible; or those who are to experience their potencies in a realm like heaven should not be brought to the earth, inasmuch as the nature of the world is exactly in a state of harmony with the inhabitants thereof, and not with the inhabitants of other realms. In this light, creation

does not seem to be an unnecessary action of God. It is a very necessary manifestation of a big field of experience where it is possible for the *jivas* inhabiting that universe to fructify their karmas and enjoy or suffer as the consequences their deeds.

Hence, this delimitation of Brahman in the form of Ishvara as a Central Will is a Universal delimitation. It is not a limitation exercised by a *prakriti* outside, unless of course we call this will itself as *prakriti*. The consciousness that is of Ishvara may be regarded as the Supreme Purusha of the Sankhya, and the objective principle which is the will contemplating a possible universe may be considered as *prakriti*—in which case, *prakriti* and *purusha* are not two different wings, but are something like the soul and the body. We cannot distinguish between the soul and the body. The soul contemplates the body and manifests itself in accordance with its own potential desire, and we cannot say that the body is compelling the soul to act in a particular manner. The question of compulsion does not arise, because the body is manifest exactly according to the needs of the soul as manifest in the *sukshma sarira*.

Prakriti and *purusha* may be said to be *anadi*, or beginningless, if we are to go according to the original doctrine of the Bhagavadgita, which does not expect us to think of *purusha* and *prakriti* as two different things but as potencies, powers, or manners of working of God Himself—Ishvara, Purushottama. On the one hand, *prakriti* is extension, space-time; and on the other hand, there is *purusha*, or consciousness. Consciousness and extension constitute the principle of the immanence of God in the universe. I am going a little ahead of the ordinary commentaries on this verse, which are very brief—not to contradict them, but to elucidate them a little more. My intuitive insight, as it were, makes me feel that *prakriti* and *purusha* can be beginningless in the same sense as God is beginningless, because of the fact that they are powers

of God: *vikārāñś ca guṇāmś caiva viddhi prakṛtisambhavān*.

Kārya kāraṇa kartṛtve hetuḥ prakṛtir ucyate (13.20): *Prakṛiti* is the cause of the origin of the causal chain. The cause-and-effect relationship is operative only in the realm of *prakṛiti*, whereas pain and pleasure are experienced by *puruṣa*: *puruṣaḥ sukha-duḥkhanam bhoktrtve hetur uchyate*. The contact of *puruṣa* with *prakṛiti* is the reason behind the experience of pleasure and pain. Experience is not possible unless there is consciousness, and consciousness is available only in the *puruṣa*. *Puruṣa* is inactive consciousness, whereas *prakṛiti* is blind activity. They somehow get juxtaposed, and it appears as if there is conscious activity. When we walk, when we do anything, it appears that we are consciously acting. Actually, there is no conscious action. Action is always unconscious because it is connected with the movement of the *gunas* of *prakṛiti*, who have no self-consciousness. But the *puruṣa* does not act; it is conscious. So there is a peculiar jumble—a juxtaposition of the consciousness that does not act with the *prakṛiti*, which acts but does not know—and this results in the appearance of conscious activity. For instance, we seem to be doing something consciously. This ‘seeming to be doing consciously’ is due to a mix-up of the *puruṣa* and *prakṛiti* principles in us—our body being the *prakṛiti*, and our Atman being the *puruṣa*.

Puruṣaḥ prakṛtistho hi bhuṅkte prakṛtijān guṇān, kāraṇaṁ guṇasaṅgo’sya sadasadyonijanmasu (13.21): *Puruṣa* located, or lodged, in the *prakṛiti* appears to enjoy the qualities of *prakṛiti*. When water moves, the sun that is reflected in it also appears to move. When the water is stable, the reflection of the sun in it appears to be stable; and if the water is turbid, the reflection appears to be turbid. But really, the sun, which is the cause of this reflection in the water, is not affected in any way whatsoever. The sun does not shake, and does not get turbid.

Similarly, this contact of consciousness with matter—*purusha* with *prakriti*—makes it appear that there is enjoyment, and that there is an agency in action. *Purusha* does not enjoy, because it itself is bliss; but the sorrow that is the fate of the *purusha* seems to be the outcome of its contact with *prakriti*.

Here again, we have to bring the analogy of the Sankhya that a pure crystal appears to be coloured, or disfigured, by the colour of the object that is brought near it. Thus, one enjoys and one suffers. Really, consciousness does not enjoy and does not suffer. But the movements of *prakriti* in this manner or that manner—as *sattva* or *rajas* or *tamas*—makes the consciousness, the *purusha*, feel as if it is transparent and happy when it is in contact with the *sattva* of *prakriti*; it is disturbed, agitated, angry and passionate when it appears to be reflecting through the *rajoguna* of *prakriti*; and it is very slothful, lethargic and static when it is in contact with the *tamasic* quality of *prakriti*.

Puruṣaḥ prakṛtistho hi bhuṅkte prakṛtijān guṇān, kāraṇaṁ guṇasaṅgo'sya: The reason for this so-called enjoyment and suffering of the *purusha* is its contact with the *gunas* of *prakriti*—*sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*. And, as I mentioned, the three-fold contact brings about a threefold experience: pleasurable, unpleasurable or static. Because of repeated contact and getting habituated to this kind of contact with *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, the *purusha*—as it were, indescribably though—forgets its original universality, and develops a tendency to get involved in the fulfilment of its own limited desires, the limitation being caused by the *rajoguna prakriti* with which it also comes in contact. Just as a lion cub that is lost may end up in a flock of sheep, and may bleat like a sheep though it is actually a lion, the universal Purusha bleats like an individual on account of its contact with the distracting qualities of *rajas* and *tamas*, and it is born in various species. *Kāraṇaṁ guṇasaṅgo'sya sadasadyonijanmasu*: It can be born as celestials

in heaven, it can be born as *gandharvas*, *yakshas*, *kinnaras*, it can be born as human beings, and it can be born as animals or even as plants, trees and stone. But there is a Universal Witness behind all this drama that is taking place. What is that Witness?

Upadraṣṭānumantā ca bhartā bhoktā maheśvaraḥ, paramāmeti cāpyukto dehesmin puruṣaḥ paraḥ (13.22): In spite of all this drama of involvement—the joy and sorrow of birth in various species of *yonis*—there is hope. Just as the witness in waking consciousness is unaffected even by the suffering and enjoyment in dream, there is a Supreme Witness who remains unaffected by our experiences in waking consciousness. We have all kinds of experiences in the dream world: birth and death, joy and sorrow, and every kind of thing conceivable in this world. Notwithstanding the fact of this drama that is taking place in the dream world, the consciousness of waking seems to be there as an *upadraṣṭa*—as a witness thereof. Though it does not seem to be operative in the light of the mind's involvement in the dream world, actually the fact that there is a witnessing consciousness transcending the dream world can be known when we wake up from dream and find ourselves totally unaffected by the events of the dream world. This will happen to us when we attain liberation in Paramatma—the Supreme Purusha, the transcendent witness of all these dream-like experiences of the struggle of life through the contact of the *gunas* of *prakṛiti*.

Ya evaṁ vetti puruṣaṁ (13.23): Whoever knows this Supreme Purusha in this manner as described in this chapter, together with the dramatic performances of *prakṛiti*, *prakṛtiṁ ca guṇaiḥ saha*: let him live in any manner he likes. He is a liberated person. *Sarvathā vartamāno'pi na sa bhūyo'bhijāyate*: Because of knowing this, that person will not be reborn. Again I have to emphasise, knowing does not mean reading the Gita

and intellectually comprehending the linguistic meaning or the dictionary meaning of the word, but imbibing the spirit of the teaching, and making it part and parcel of our very blood and veins. Such a person who has this knowledge which is identical with being can behave in any way—*sarvathā vartamānopi*—but there will be no rebirth, because no karma accrues to that person.

Now there is a reference, as a kind of diversion, as it were, to the methods of practice. How are we to come in contact with this Supreme Being? Varieties of *sadhana* are mentioned in different places in the Bhagavadgita, and some of the diversities of *sadhana* are stated in the Fourth Chapter: *daivam evāpare yajñam yoginaḥ paryupāsate, brahmāgnāvapare yajñam yajñenaivopajuvhati* (4.25), etc. Here also there is a brief statement of the varieties of spiritual practice, or *sadhana*.

Some people try to behold the Supreme Being by meditation, pure and simple. *Dhyānenātmani paśyanti kecid ātmānam ātmanā* (13.24): By intense concentration on the pure Self, some people try to behold the Self in the self. That is, they behold the Universal Self in their own self, and they behold their own self in the Universal Self. Similar to that is this statement: *yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati* (6.30). *Ātmānam ātmanā janati*: By the self, the Self is known. The higher Self is known through the lower self. The lower self merges itself in the higher Self. It is in that manner that the Self is known through the self, by the self, by intense meditation on the nature of the higher Self.

Dhyānenātmani paśyanti kecid ātmānam ātmanā, anye sāṅkhyena yogena: There are others who contemplate on the categories of the manifestation of the world as delineated in the Sankhya; that is also a way of *sadhana*. The twenty-four categories of creation mentioned in the Sankhya doctrine reveal the fact that our individuality is also constituted of

the same universal categories and, therefore, we do not stand independently as persons by ourselves. Thus, our personality-consciousness and ego-consciousness automatically vanish even by contemplation on the twenty-four *tattvas* of the Sankhya. Hence, some attain the state of perfection by the Sankhya category also, and by the methods of yoga practice as described to us in the Sutras of Patanjali or any other yoga, such as mantra yoga, *dhyana* yoga, *laya* yoga, *japa* yoga, kundalini yoga. There are all kinds of yogas. As yoga is mentioned together with Sankhya, we may appreciate that the yoga referred to here is almost similar to the *ashtanga* yoga of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and to *samapatti*, or samadhi, which is based on the Sankhya categories themselves. *Karmayogena cāpare*: There are some, like Raja Janaka, who attained perfection through action, because actually they do not perform any action.

Brahmārpaṇam brahma havir brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam, brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahmakarmasamādhinā (4.24): The performer of the action, the deed that is performed, and the process of the action are all like the waters of the ocean rumbling within themselves and, therefore, nobody does any action. Even when a person is intensely active, actually no action is taking place; that is the nature of the supreme karma *yogin*. By that karma yoga, which is also a method of contemplation and *dhyana*, one can attain God.

Anye tvevam ajānantaḥ śrutvānyebhya upāsate (13.25): There are others who cannot do these things. They cannot meditate; they cannot contemplate the Self by the self; they cannot meditate on the categories of Sankhya; they cannot engage themselves in the *ashtanga* yoga of Patanjali; they cannot do karma yoga. What should they do? The compassionate Lord says: "They also reach Me, who merely listen to My glories and the glories of this knowledge in *satsanga*."

Anye tvevam ajānantaḥ śrutvānyebhya upāsate: Not knowing the difficult techniques of practice that have been mentioned, they can attain perfection by only hearing—*śrutva*. *Satsanga* is a very potent method of self-purification. If the *satsanga* is properly conducted and we are honest in our participation in that *satsanga*, that *satsanga* itself will be sufficient not only for purification of the self, but it will even act as a supreme meditation itself. We will be in ecstasy at that time. As Tulsidas says, “*Binu satsanga viveka na hoi*”: Without *satsanga*, discrimination does not dawn. *Anye tvevam ajānantaḥ śrutvānyebhya upāsate*: By merely hearing the glories through *satsanga*, people also attain perfection. *Te’pi cātitarantyeva mṛtyum śrutiparāyaṇāḥ*. Therefore, all of you will attain moksha. You will not be reborn, because at least you have heard what is being said. God is very compassionate. He will not harass you with hard disciplines. Listen, hear, and absorb this knowledge that you have heard into yourself. You will cross over the realm of death—*mṛtyum atitaranti*.

Yāvat sañjāyate kiṁcit sattvaṁ sthāvarajaṅgamam, kṣetrakṣetrajñāsaṁyogāt tad viddhi bharataṣabha (13.26): All the manifestation, living or non-living, is due to a combination of *kṣetra* and *kṣetrajñā*, a manifold type of contact of *purusha* with *prakṛiti* in various degrees of ascent and descent. In the higher realms of celestials where existence is transparent, the contact of *purusha* with *prakṛiti* is rarefied. Existence becomes more and more gross as the *rajasic* and *tamasic* qualities of *prakṛiti* become more predominant. *Sattva* is supposed to be predominant in the heavenly regions; *rajasic* qualities are predominant in the human realm, and *tamas* is predominant in the nether regions. But whatever be the contact through *sattva* or *rajas* or *tamas*—experiences either in heaven, in this mortal world or in the lower realm—every experience is a result of the contact of *purusha* with *prakṛiti* in various ways.

Kṣetrakṣetrajñasamyogāt tad viddhi bharatarṣabha: Anything that is born has significance as an individual only because both *puruṣa* and *prakṛiti* are set together in some proportion.

Samam sarveṣu bhūteṣu tiṣṭhantaṁ parameśvaram, vinaśyatsvavinaśyantaṁ yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati (13.27): Again we are brought back to the transcendent existence of an equally distributed consciousness—not a little *puruṣa* coming in contact with *prakṛiti*, but something transcending the contact of *puruṣa* with *prakṛiti*. *Upadrashta*, *anumanta* and *paramatma* were mentioned earlier, and something similar is repeated in this verse. *Samam sarveṣu bhūteṣu tiṣṭhantaṁ*: That Being is equally present in all as the Self of all. It is the Self of the ant and the elephant and the human being and the god. The distinction among them is due to the appearance of their subtle bodies and gross bodies, but the life that is behind the subtle and gross bodies is common—as sunlight is common and appears to be coloured or distorted according to the nature of the glasses that we put on. *Samam sarveṣu bhūteṣu tiṣṭhantaṁ parameśvaram*: The Supreme Lord exists in an equilibrated fashion everywhere.

Vinaśyatsvavinaśyantaṁ: Deathless in the midst of dying individuals. People die, everything perishes, and all things get destroyed. *Yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati*: But in the midst of this destruction taking place perennially, perpetually, right from creation—in the midst of this flux and destruction and movement—there is an unmoving Eternity. Whoever knows that, really knows the truth. We should not get involved in the fluxation of *prakṛiti*, but should withdraw our consciousness to that transcendent element which witnesses this drama of *prakṛiti*: *vinaśyatsvavinaśyantaṁ yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati*.

Samam paśyan hi sarvatra samavasthitam īśvaram, na hinastyātmanātmānam tato yāti parām gatim (13.28): Mostly we kill the Self with the self—*hinastyātmanātmānam*. A

kind of *atma hatya* is going on when the Self is forgotten and only objects are remembered. Only external things are in that person's memory; the Self is completely obliterated from experience. That state of affairs—where the consciousness of the Self being there is completely obscured by intense concentration on objects outside—is called spiritual suicide; it is killing the Self with the self. That is, we do not know that we are existing at all as the Self. We know that there is a world outside, we are busy with things outside, but we are not busy with our Self. But having known the equally distributed consciousness of the Paramatman, equally distributed Eternity—knowing this, seeing this, beholding it, and contemplating it, one will not be subject to this otherwise common experience of Self-destruction; and knowing this, one attains to the Supreme State, *yāti parām gatim*.

Now the Lord refers once again to the *kartrtva* and *akartrtva* aspects of the human individual in relation to *prakṛiti's* modes—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.

Prakṛtyaiva ca karmāṇi kriyamāṇāni sarvaśaḥ, yaḥ paśyati tathātmānam akartāraṁ sa paśyati (13.29): One will automatically know, without any difficulty at all in knowing this fact, that one is not the doer of any action, provided that one clearly sees that all activity is an activity of the three *gunas* of *prakṛiti*, and that the consciousness of activity is different from activity itself. We have somehow or the other mixed up consciousness and motion (movement) together. By a mixing up of these two elements by a process called *tadatmiya abhyasa*—which means the superimposition of one thing on the other in the reverse order, or vice versa—consciousness is made to appear as active, and activity is made to appear as conscious. So we 'consciously do something'.

The whole point is, 'consciously doing something' is a misnomer. Consciousness cannot do anything, and doing

cannot be conscious. So, if this knowledge arises in a person that activity is only the movement of *prakriti* with its three *gunas*, and the consciousness thereof is totally independent of the *gunas*, they will not ever feel that they are the doer of action. That is, their consciousness will always be in a state of witness, or detachment, from the process of action. But our body and our consciousness are so intimate that we cannot distinguish one from the other. That is why we feel that we are doing things, while really there is no such thing.

When a red-hot iron rod is placed before us, we do not see the iron rod; we see only fire, though the fire and the iron rod are two different things. And when we touch it, what are we touching? Are we touching the fire, or are we touching the iron rod? We may say that the iron rod burns. The iron rod does not burn; it is the fire that burns. Yet the two have been superimposed on each other in such a way that the rod looks like fire, and the fire appears to have the shape of a lengthy rod. The fire does not have the shape of the rod, and the rod has no heat; but yet, we mix up two aspects and say that the long rod is hot. In a similar manner, we make a mistake in our own selves by imagining this body is conscious.

The body cannot be conscious. Consciousness is different from the body; therefore, when there is bodily action—which is nothing but the action of *prakriti*, because the body is made up of *prakriti's* three *gunas*—we begin to imagine, “I am doing something. And because I feel that I am doing something, I also expect a result to follow from that action, and I must enjoy the result of that action. I am doing the action and, therefore, the fruit of that action should come to me.” Hence, karma *phala* comes as a recompense for the feeling that one is doing. But one who knows that *prakriti* alone does things, and activity is a part of *prakriti's* nature, and the knower of that is different from the activity—such a person remains as *akarta*,

a non-doer. *Prakṛtyaiva ca karmāṇi kriyamāṇāni sarvaśaḥ, yaḥ paśyati tathātmānam akartāraṁ sa paśyati.*

Yadā bhūtapṛthagbhāvam ekastham anupaśyati, tata eva ca vistāraṁ brahma sampadyate tadā (13.30): We have attained the Supreme Brahman the moment we are able to see with our own eyes the interconnection of the varieties of creation in front of us and their rootedness in a single sea of force which is Brahman. That is to say, we see only wood in all the trees, we see only water in all the ripples and waves, we see only gold in all the ornaments; and, in a similar manner, we see only Brahman in all the names and forms. *Yadā bhūtapṛthagbhāvam ekastham anupaśyati* means that one is able to see the variety of creation as rooted in the One. There may be millions and millions of varieties of living beings or inanimate things, but this multiform creation will not affect us in any way because they are the various limbs of the one root that is universally spread out everywhere. If we can visualise things in this manner, we have attained Brahman at once. *Yadā bhūtapṛthagbhāvam ekastham anupaśyati, tata eva ca vistāraṁ brahma sampadyate tadā*: The cosmic all-pervading Brahman is realised at once by entertaining this vision of everything diverse being in rooted in one Universal Existence.

Anāditvān nirguṇatvāt paramātmāyam avyayaḥ, śarīrast-ho'pi kaunteya na karoti na lipyate (13.31): This Brahman, the Universal Atman, has no beginning. *Anāditvān*: It has no qualities of any kind as we know qualities here. *Nirguṇatvāt paramātmāyam avyayaḥ*: It is imperishable because it is indestructible. Such Paramatman, the Supreme Self, though existing in this body as the deepest self in us, does not involve itself in any contamination of the *gunas* of *prakṛti*. *Na karoti na lipyate*: He neither does anything, nor is He contaminated by the fruits of action.

The *kutastha chaitanya*, or the witness consciousness in us, is the true self in us. That remains uncontaminated by anything that takes place, just as space inside a vessel cannot become affected by things that we pour into the vessel. If we pour something fragrant into the vessel, the space inside it does not become fragrant; or if we put something bitter into the vessel, the space inside it does not become bitter. It is the content that has the quality; space itself has no quality. In a similar manner, the content—which is the physical, the astral and the causal bodies—has the characteristics of action and the enjoyment of the fruits of action; but the witness, which is the light of the sun in the sky, as it were, is untarnished by anything that may happen to this body in all these three phases.

Though this *kutastha chaitanya*, this Atman, is responsible for all the activities through this body, it is not in any way contaminated by the activities carried on through the *sariras*—*anandamaya*, *vijnanamaya*, *manomaya*, *pranamaya* and *annamaya*. The physical sheath, the subtle astral sheath and the casual sheath are involved in movement, action and the desire for the fruit of action. Their activity is impossible unless the light of the *kutastha*, the Atman, is shed on them. In the same manner, nothing in this world can live or act unless the sun shines in the sky. We are alive today because the sun is in the sky. No plant, no living being can survive if the sun in the sky does not blaze forth heat energy. Yet the sun is not in any way responsible for what is happening in the world. Though without it nothing can happen, it is not responsible for anything that is happening. In a similar manner, just because the *kutastha*, the Self inside, is responsible for the movement of the three bodies in us, it is not connected vitally in any way. It stands above the turmoil of the action of the three bodies, just as the sun transcends all the events taking place in the world. *Anāditvān nirguṇatvāt paramātmāyam avyayaḥ, śarīrastho'pi*

kaunteya na karoti na lipyate.

Yathā sarvagataṁ sauṣṣmyād ākāśaṁ nopalipyate (13.32): Just as space is not contaminated by anything that may be inside it, the all-pervading Being, which is the Supreme Atman, is not in any way affected either by what the body does or by what happens in external society, because it is so subtle. The subtlest reality is consciousness, and all things that are external to it, of which it is conscious, are gross. Everything in the world is gross; therefore, consciousness—which is the subtlest of being—cannot actually get involved in anything in this world, the two being dissimilar in nature. The subtle cannot enter into the gross, and the gross cannot affect the subtle. Because of the subtlety of the Supreme Being and its all-pervading nature—*sarvatrāvasthita*—it is not affected by anything that takes place in creation, either by evolution or involution. *Yathā sarvagataṁ sauṣṣmyād ākāśaṁ nopalipyate, sarvatrāvasthito dehe tathātmā nopalipyate .*

Yathā prakāśayatyekaḥ kṛtsnaṁ lokam imaṁ raviḥ, kṣetraṁ kṣetrī tathā kṛtsnaṁ prakāśayati bhārata (13.33): As the sun in the sky illumines the whole world, so does this *kṣetrajña puruṣha*, this Atman pervading all things, illumine all bodies. Self-consciousness and the desire to survive are implanted in all species in creation by the operation of this all-pervading Universal Consciousness. Consciousness is eternal. That is why there is an instinct in everyone not to die. It is the consciousness inside that is actually responsible for our fear of death, and for our desire to lengthen our life as much as possible. It is an empirical, externalised, distorted form of the eternity of the Self. We do not want to perish, because the deepest Self in us cannot perish. But because we have mixed up the eternity in us with the three *koshas*, including the physical body, we make the mistake of perpetuating this body and wanting to exist as individuals for all time to come. Actually, this instinct

for survival and the longing to exist always arise not from the body, but from the Atman inside, which is invisible to us. Its very existence is obliterated from our activity and perception, which is conditioned by the sense organs which always move in an externalised direction. The mind and senses cannot know that there is an Atman at all and, therefore, we are caught up. *Yathā prakāśayaty ekaḥ kṛtsnam lokam imam raviḥ, kṣetram kṣetrī tathā kṛtsnam prakāśayati bhārata.*

The Thirteenth Chapter is very important. Just as the Third Chapter sums up the principles of karma yoga, the Sixth Chapter sums up the principles of *raja* yoga, and the Eleventh Chapter sums up the principles of *bhakti* yoga, the Thirteenth Chapter sums up the principles of *jnana* yoga. Hence, we must read at least these four chapters. To know what karma yoga is, we should read the Third Chapter; to know what *bhakti* yoga is, we should read the Eleventh Chapter; to know what *raja* yoga is, we should read the Sixth Chapter; and to know what *jnana* yoga is, we should read the Thirteenth Chapter.

Whoever understands this teaching given in the Thirteenth Chapter will not return to this world. *Kṣetrakṣetrajñāyor evam antaram jñānacakṣuṣā, bhūtaprakṛtimokṣam ca ye vidur yānti te param* (13.34): Those who are able to distinguish between *kṣetra* and *jñāna*, between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, between the Self and its object, and between consciousness and matter shall attain the Supreme Abode. If this distinction is clear before us, we will be totally unattached to everything in this world, and we will not be reborn into this world of *prakṛti*, this world of the three *gunas*. We will attain the Supreme Abode—*param*. With this we conclude the great, glorious Thirteenth Chapter.

Discourse 41

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

RISING ABOVE THE THREE GUNAS

Lord Krishna is never tired of speaking. He goes on even without being questioned by Arjuna. “Now, listen again! I shall tell you something more.” They must have had a good breakfast that morning that they could afford to go on speaking like this when there was a terrible situation in front of them! Anyway, Sri Bhagavan now speaks: “I shall now tell you something which is a great secret.” He has already told two or three secrets, and now he is telling a fourth secret. *Param bhūyaḥ pravakṣyāmi jñānānāṁ jñānam uttamam, yaj jñātvā munayaḥ sarve parāṁ siddhim ito gatāḥ* (14.1): “I shall tell you that secret of wisdom, by knowing which, ancient sages and saints have attained perfection.”

What is this great knowledge? *Idaṁ jñānam upāśritya mama sādharmaṁ āgatāḥ* (14.2): “People have become almost Me; they have attained My form; they have attained My permanent Eternal Abode; they have practically become Me. How? Because of the knowledge which I am going to describe to you now, they shall not be born at the time of creation: *sargepi nopajāyante*. People who know this secret will not be born in the beginning of creation, and they will not be dissolved into *prakṛiti* at the time of cosmic dissolution: *sargepi nopajāyante pralaye na vyathanti ca*.”

When the cosmic *pralaya*, or dissolution, takes place, all of us are helplessly driven into the bosom of *prakṛiti*’s

three *gunas*. In the process of creation and activity as we see before our eyes, the three *gunas* are in a state of disturbance. The qualities of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—the properties of *prakriti*—are not in equal proportion, and are not equally distributed. Because of the preponderance of one at the cost of another, we see varieties of things and manifold objects in front of us. At the time of dissolution, the three *gunas* lie in a state of equilibrium. There is no activity at that time, and even *sattva* does not operate. It is complete darkness, as it were. There is neither the solar system, nor is there anything else. All the galaxies get dissolved into it. The *jivas* who have not been liberated at the time of dissolution are thrown into this vast cosmic sea of *prakriti*, and they remain sleeping—like seeds which have not yet found the opportunity to germinate. They sleep there for as many years as Brahma sleeps when his day of a hundred years is over. When a hundred years of Brahma's night are over, Brahma's day dawns. Then gradually, one by one, all those sleeping *jivas* manifest themselves, as sleeping seeds inside the earth begin to germinate and become tendrils and plants when there is rainfall. But one who knows this truth, this secret wisdom, is not dissolved, and is not reborn when creation again begins.

Once again, Lord Krishna emphasises this fact. "I am the source of all things. The entire universe is originating from Me. I am the abode, the source, the very womb of all things." It is Mahat-brahma. It is called Brahma because it is all pervading—universal in its nature. It is equal to what is called Hiranyagarbha, wherein all the seeds of creation are potentially lying. In Sankhya parlance, Mahat is a condition where the potency for future creation lies in a latent form as very subtle possibilities, not actualised. "The entire Mahat-brahma—that great Universal Brahma, through which I generate the entire variety of creation—is my womb, as it were, wherein I place

the seed of manifestation in all its variety through this potential Mahat-tattava, Hiranyagarbha-tattava.” *Sambhavaḥ sarva-bhūtānām tato bhavati bhārata* (14.3): All beings originate from this seed of all creation.

Sarvayoniṣu kaunteya mūrtayaḥ sambhavanti yāḥ, tāsāṃ brahma mahad yonir ahaṁ bijapradāḥ pitā (14.4): “Mahat-brahma is the field in which I sow the seed of creation; and I am the Father who sows this seed into the Mahat-brahma.” That is to say, the field is *mulaprakṛiti* itself, which is all-pervading in its nature. Because of the disturbance of the three *gunas*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—it has the potency to manifest itself into variety. But it cannot act of its own accord. It cannot move, it cannot divide itself into three qualities, unless there is a spirit pushing it forward. That spirit is Supreme Consciousness, which is referred to here by Lord Krishna. Here God is referring to Himself when He says, “I am the Supreme Father that causes the germinating of the seeds of all the *jivas* through this Mahat-brahma.

There are three *gunas*. It has been mentioned many a time that there are three *gunas*, that *prakṛiti* has three properties—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. What are these? *Sattvaṃ rajastama iti guṇāḥ prakṛtisambhavāḥ* (14.5): These properties are the very constituent elements of *prakṛiti*. They are not qualities like the whiteness of a cloth, which is different from the cloth, and the blueness of a flower, which is different from the flower. That is not the way in which we have to understand the qualities of *prakṛiti*. The *gunas* are qualities of *prakṛiti* in the same way as the three strands of a rope are qualities of the rope. We cannot say that the strands are qualities; they are the very substance of the rope. These qualities, these properties, are the very substance, the very stuff, of *prakṛiti*; and they cause bondage to the individual—*nibadhnanti. Dehe dehinam avyayam*: They bind us.

Rajas cuts one part away from another part. It segments the one universal existence into bits of individualities, and prevents every part from knowing that it has any connection with other parts. The vehemence of *rajas* is twofold. Firstly, it divides the one universal existence into little bits of individuality, into all the species of creation. Then, secondly, it compels the individual to be conscious only of that location, that little part, and does not permit it to be aware of its having any connection with other individuals. Thus, it gives a double blow when it acts—firstly, it cosmically distinguishes one thing from the other, then it compels the individual to be conscious only of this body and this personality located in one place only. We always feel that we are only in one place, and not in two places. That is because *rajas* prevents us from knowing that we can also be in other places by our internal connection with other bodies. It binds us in this manner. *Sattvaṁ rajas-tama iti guṇāḥ prakṛtisambhavāḥ, nibadhnanti mahābāho dehe dehinam avyayam.*

Tatra sattvaṁ nirmalatvāt prakāśakam anāmayam, sukhasaṅgena badhnāti jñānasāṅgena cānagha (14.6): If, by chance, the *sattva guna* preponderates in a person and the qualities of *rajas* and *tamas* are subjugated and suppressed, then what happens? Because of the purity, the transparency and the perspicuity of the *sattva guna*, it shines like a mirror. Immediately we feel happy. Whenever we are happy, for any reason whatsoever, it is because at that moment *rajas* has been suppressed by the rise of *sattva*. But we cannot be happy always, because then *rajas* immediately rises up into action and suppresses *sattva*, and after a mood of happiness and elation, we are once again in a mood of anxiety, worry, responsibility and sleeplessness. When we are tired and fatigued of this activity, *tamas* comes in and makes us go to sleep. Where *sattva* is predominant, joy, happiness is experienced—*sukhasaṅgena*

badhnāti—and we are full of brilliance, sharpness of understanding, and clarity of perception, which are all qualities of *sattva guna*.

Rajo rāgātmaḥ vidhī tr̥ṣṇāsaṅgasamudbhavam (14.7): Illumination, knowledge, rationality, perspicuity and happiness are the characteristics of *sattva*; and desire, distraction, passion and attachment are the qualities of *rajas*. *Sattva* makes us calm and quiet, and satisfied with ourselves. *Rajas* makes us dissatisfied with ourselves, so we run about here and there, and purchase appurtenances to make us happy. *Trishna* is the word for insatiable desires, and it compels us to toil from morning to evening: *karmasaṅgena dehinam*. People say they have so much work, and they are never in peace.

What is *tamas*? *Tamas tvajñānaḥ vidhī mohanam sarva-dehinām* (14.8): *Tamas* is total ignorance, idiocy, lethargy, fatigue, and a desire to not do anything. It deludes the intellect so that we always confuse one thing with another thing. “Oh! I forgot it. Oh! I did not know it!” is the kind of attitude we develop. An illusion is spread before the mind by *tamoguna*, and it is deluding in its character as far as the individual is concerned. It causes us to blunder and make mistakes. We make mistakes everywhere, and we cannot even speak a good sentence; everywhere there is some confusion. Also, we are fatigued immediately—*pramādālasyanidrābhis*. These are some of the results that follow from the preponderance of *tamas*.

Thus, Lord Krishna describes to Arjuna the specialties of *sattvaguna*, *rajoguna* and *tamoguna*. What do these *gunas* do? What is their effect on a person? When a particular *guna* is preponderating in a person, what happens to that person? That is the description of the Fourteenth Chapter.

Sattvaṁ sukhe sañjayati (14.9): When *sattva* has the upper hand in us, we feel satisfied, contented, relieved, and happy.

Rajaḥ karmaṇi bhārata: When *rajas* is preponderating, we feel like getting up and doing this work and that work, and never want to sit quiet. This is what *rajas* does. *Jñānam āvṛtya tu tamaḥ pramāde saṁjayatyuta*: When *tamas* is predominating, we have no idea as to what to do and what not to do. There is confusion about the pros and cons of things. There is no proper judgment as to the way any step has to be taken in a given direction; and even if some step is taken, it will be a wrong step and it will end in some fumbling and catastrophic conclusion. This is what *tamas* does. *Sattva* leads to happiness and satisfaction, *rajas* to intense activity, and *tamas* to ignorance and inability to decide what is proper and what is improper.

Rajas tamaś cābhibhūya sattvaṁ bhavati bhārata, rajaḥ sattvaṁ tamaś caiva tamaḥ sattvaṁ rajas tathā (14.10): No particular *guna* can be operating always in any person. They have a cyclic movement, as it were. Partly due to their fickleness and partly due to some karmas that a person has done in a previous birth, certain *gunas* operate for a shorter period or a longer period; but no *guna* can operate continuously throughout the life of a person. There is a coming and going of the *gunas*.

When *sattva* rises up into action, it suppresses *rajas* and *tamas* for the time being. When *rajas* rises into action, it suppresses *sattva* and *tamas*. When *tamas* is predominant, it suppresses *rajas* and *sattva*. It does not mean that the suppressed qualities are destroyed. They are only made inoperative for the time being on account of the vehemence of the activity of a particular *guna*. Why they should be so very predominant at a particular time in the case of an individual is difficult to explain except in terms of the karmas of the past, because in some cases a *guna* may be there for a fraction of a moment, or it may there for days. But why this difference?

This has to be attributed only to the deserts of the individual in terms of what one has done in the previous birth. Anyway, the principle behind the operation of the three *gunas* is that when one is active, the other two are inactive.

Sarvadvāreṣu dehesmin prakāśa upajāyate, jñānaṁ yadā tadā vidyād vivṛddhaṁ sattvam ityuta (14.11): When all the sense organs release in a kind of radiance, as it were, there is brightness in the face, there is a kind of composure in the personality of an individual, and there is a kind of calm and quiet aura around that person. If this is recognised in any individual, we must conclude that *sattva* is predominant in that person. There will be sparkling of the eyes, clarity of perception, radiance of the face, and perspicuity even in speaking and expression.

Lobhaḥ pravṛttir ārambhaḥ karmaṇām aśamaḥ sprhā, rajasyetāni jāyante vivṛddhe bharataṣabha (14.12): When *rajas* becomes active, there is greed in the mind of a person. There is a sense of possessiveness—“I want this; I want that”—and the person is never satisfied with anything. The more we have, the more we want; that is called greed, and it is one of the characteristics of *rajoguna*. Always starting new projects but not being able to bring them to conclusion, never ceasing activity, and going on creating occasions for activity till the end of one’s life, with desire at the back of all these projects of action, these are supposed to be the basic qualities of *rajoguna*.

Aprakāśo’pravṛttiś ca pramādo moha eva ca, tamasyetāni jāyante vivṛddhe kurunandana (14.13): When *tamas* predominates, what happens? There is no light in front of oneself. There is no radiance or hope on the horizon at all and, therefore, there is no inclination to do anything. There is an inactive tendency in the person. As mentioned already, there is always the committing of mistakes whenever any kind of initiative is taken. There is delusion at the back of all these things. That is

the essential nature of *tamoguna*.

Yadā sattve pravṛddhe tu pralayaṁ yāti dehabhṛt, tadot-tamavidāṁ lokān amalān pratipadyate (14.14): If a person leaves this body while *sattva* is predominant, then that person reaches higher worlds such as heaven, and even regions above heaven. *Rajasi pralayaṁ gatvā karmasaṅgiṣu jāyate, tathā pralīnas tamasi mūḍhayoniṣu jāyate* (14.15): But if a person dies while *rajas* is predominant in the mind, he is then reborn into conditions of intense labour, work and attachment. *Mūḍhayoniṣu jāyate*: If one dies while *tamas* is predominant, he will be reborn in a subhuman species as some kind of animal; and even if he is born as a human being, he will be a non-utilitarian individual with no understanding and no consciousness of the purpose of life—the kind of person who is usually called idiotic.

Karmaṇaḥ sukṛtasyāhuḥ sāttvikam nirmalam phalam (14.16): The result of meritorious deeds, which are *sattvic* in nature, is purity, internal illumination, and satisfaction. If actions are *rajas*-ridden, pain is the result that follows. If actions are done under the influence of *tamas*, there is some increase in one's own ignorance. This is because every action done under the influence of *tamas*, due to its being motivated by *ajnana*, or ignorance, will be only capable of producing an effect which will be another form of *ajnana*.

Sattvāt saṁjāyate jñānam (14.17): Knowledge arises through *sattva*. Intellectuality, rationality, understanding, education, wisdom—all these are qualities of *sattva*. *Rajaso lobha eva ca*: Greed is the quality of *rajas*. *Pramādamohau tamaso bhavatojñānam eva ca*: *Ajnana* (ignorance) and the inability to do anything with a consciousness of the effect of the action are results of *tamoguna prakṛiti*.

Ūrdhvaṁ gacchanti sattvasthā (14.18): Those who live in a state of *sattva*, and depart while *sattva* is preponderating, go to

higher worlds. *Madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥ*: Those with *rajoguna pravritti*, and those who die when the *rajoguna pravritti* is predominant, will be reborn into this world. *Madhya* means middle region, which is this earth. *Jaghanyaguṇavṛttisthā adho gacchhanti tāmasāḥ*: Those who are predominantly *tamasic*, and die while *tamas* is preponderating, will be born in regions lower than the earth. The scriptures call them the nether regions.

When a person, with his eye of wisdom, sees that all the drama of life is only a performance of the three *gunas*, and only the three *gunas* do anything anywhere, and knows, at the same time, that there is something above the three *gunas*—such a person attains to unity with Brahman. *Nānyam guṇebhyaḥ kartāraṁ yadā draṣṭānupaśyati, guṇebhyaś ca param vetti madbhāvaṁ so'dhigacchhati* (14.19): “He attains union with Me in My Eternal State, provided that there is a vision perpetually maintained by that person that there is no actor in this world, no performer of deeds other than the three *gunas* of *prakriti*, and one's own real self is transcendent, above the three *gunas*. Such a person is liberated even while in this life itself.”

Guṇān etān atītya trīn dehī dehasamudbhavān, janma-mṛtyujarāduḥkhair vimukto mṛtam aśnute (14.20): He attains immortality, free from the sorrow of birth, death, old age, and the like; such a person attains the Eternal Abode. Who is that person? One who has transcended the three *gunas*, and is unaffected by *sattva*, unaffected by *rajas*, and unaffected by *tamas*.

What are the insignia of a person who has transcended the three *gunas*? Arjuna puts a question: “How can we recognise a person who has transcended the three *gunas*? What are his qualities? How does he behave?” Here is found the *gunatita lakshana*, which is almost similar to the qualities described as

sthitaprajna lakshana in the Second Chapter.

Arjuna uvāca: kair liṅgaḥ trīṇ guṇān etān atīto bhavati prabho, kim ācāraḥ katham caitāms trīṇ guṇān ativartate (14.21): “What are the marks of a person who has transcended the *gunas*? What are the ways in which he conducts himself in the world? Please tell me.”

Śrībhagavān uvāca: prakāśam ca pravṛttiṁ ca moham eva ca pāṇḍava, ta dveṣṭi saṁpravṛttāni na nivṛttāni kāṅkṣati (14.22): The Lord says, “When some effects follow due to the operation of *sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas*, the person who has transcended the qualities of *prakṛiti* neither is elated nor is disgusted, nor is there any resentment at their operation.” When *sattva* operates, he does not exult. When *rajas* and *tamas* operate, he is not in any way affected. Whether the *gunas* are actively operating or whether they withdraw themselves into a state of inactivity, it makes no difference to this person because he sees them as they are—as objects of the witness consciousness—and he does not identify his consciousness with the three *gunas*.

Udāsīnavad āsīno (14.23): He remains silent, taking no initiative in anything, appearing to be a person who has no intention of doing anything at all. He keeps quiet, knowing all things. He seems to be doing nothing, yet is internally doing many things. He is then not affected by the operation of the *gunas* even when they blow like a whirlwind on his person.

Guṇā vartanta ityeva yo’vatiṣṭhati neṅgate: Fickleness of the mind is caused by the coming and going of the three *gunas*, which sometimes makes the mind feel satisfied, sometimes makes it restless, sometimes makes it feel fatigued or slothful. These operations of the psyche will be witnessed by his consciousness, and he will not identify himself with the properties of the psyche, which are usually affected by the *gunas*.

Samaduḥkhasukhaḥ svasthaḥ (14.24): Pleasure or pain, let it be. It matters little. *Svasthaḥ* means always calm and quiet, reposed in himself. *Samaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ*: Whether he sees a nugget of gold or a big boulder of granite, it makes no difference to him. A clod of earth and a wall of gold have the same value to the eye of this great soul who has transcended the operation of the three *gunas*. *Mānāpamānayos tulyas* (14.25): Praise and censure mean the same thing. It makes no difference to such a person whether he is glorified or condemned. *Tulyo mitrārīpakṣayoḥ*: Let a friend come or let an enemy come; there is no difference. *Sarvārambhaparityāgī*: He will still do nothing. He will be like a *kutastha*. He will be seated calm and quiet in himself, as if the world does not exist at all for him. Such a person is a *gunatita*, one who has transcended the operation of the three *gunas*.

Mām ca yo'vyabhicāreṇa bhaktiyogena sevate, sa guṇān samatītyaitān brahmabhūyāya kalpate (14.26). After having given us so many instructions regarding the details of the working of the three *gunas*, finally Sri Bhagavan says, "I shall give you a final recipe how you can get over the three *gunas*. Undividedly love Me; then you will find that the *gunas* have no effect upon you. You need not have to struggle to observe the operation of the *gunas* with your witness consciousness, and put forth great effort in your mind. Effortlessly they will vanish; they will leave you of their own accord, provided you genuinely love Me." *Yo'vyabhicāreṇa bhaktiyogena sevate*: Such a person, the greatest devotee of God who wants only God and has no other thought in his mind, automatically rises above the three *gunas*. *Brahmabhūyāya kalpate*: He becomes fit for absorption into Brahman.

Brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham amṛtasyāvyayasya ca, śāśvatasya ca dharmasya sukhasyaikāntikasya ca (14.27): "I am the very source of the bliss of Brahman." Or it may mean:

“Brahman is the origin, the source, of every kind of incarnation or manifestation.” The literal meaning of the verse is: “My abode, My highest realm which is the Eternal Realm, is Brahman. It is the Absolute Being; it is the source of all things; it is the source of immortality, of imperishability, of perpetual existence, of all goodness and righteousness, of happiness of every kind, of infinite bliss—*ekantika sukha*.”

While the Fourteenth Chapter has been very busy with a psychological analysis of the properties of *prakriti*, it has finally clinched the whole matter by saying that love of God is supreme and every other effort on the part of a human being comes afterwards.

We will find that from here on, every chapter has a peculiarity of its own; every chapter has its own characteristic as distinguished from other chapters. From the First to the Eleventh Chapter there is a kind of sequential ascent of thought, but from the Thirteenth Chapter onwards the chapters maintain a kind of individuality of their own; they take up one specific subject, and go into detail on that subject.

Discourse 42

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER BEGINS

THE WORLD AS AN INVERTED TREE

We are now face to face with a very important section of the Bhagavadgita, known as the Purana Purushottama Yoga Chapter, the Fifteenth Chapter. It is considered very sacred, and people chant it every day before they take their lunch because it glorifies God. It describes what God is in respect of this world and individuals, how we are related to the world, and related to God, finally. This subject is briefly touched upon in a very short chapter of only twenty verses, but these twenty verses are very, very important.

This world, this creation is, to put it in modern language, something like the a force running away from its centre to its circumference, or periphery, and becoming less and less connected to the centre. It loses its soul, as it were, more and more as it runs away from the centre, until it reaches the very edge of the periphery and remains like a rock, without any sensation whatsoever. Inanimate life is the lowest category of existence that we can conceive. But as the movement is in the other direction, from the periphery to the centre, there is greater and greater consciousness of one's Selfhood. As one realises one's greater and greater nearness to the centre, there is also a larger comprehension of the dimension of one's being.

This world is a topsy-turvy presentation, as it were, like an inverted tree. The manner in which souls descend from the highest region of Godhood is compared to an inverted tree;

the sap of the inverted tree moves downward from its root through the trunk, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, etc., and the lower the sap goes, the greater is the ramification of its movement. That is to say, this sap, the vitality of the tree, is highly concentrated in the root, slightly diffused in the trunk, diversified in the branches, and becomes more adulterated as it gets subdivided further into the minor branches, reaching the little tendrils and leaves, where only a modicum of the vital essence of the tree remains.

Ūrdhvamūlam adhaḥśākham aśvatthaṁ prāhur avyayam (15.1): This vast creation, this whole world, is like a peepul tree which has its roots above and branches below. The downward gravitational pull of space and time is the reason for the externalisation and the ramification of the original power, original vitality, which is the root of creation. The root contains everything that the tree has, but the tree's branches do not have everything that the root contains. A little bit of the essence of the original root is distributed in different proportions among the branches, which are thick or thin, as the case may be.

This world is like an inverted *asvattha* tree, or any kind of tree, as the word '*asvattha*' may be construed to mean 'not lasting for long'. *Na svattham—asvattham*: It will not endure even until tomorrow. *Svastha* means 'that which can continue and last until tomorrow'—that is, it will live in the future. But this will not live in the future; its nature is perishable. It is not permanent and, therefore, it is *asvattha*. That is one etymological meaning of the word *asvattha*: it does not last long. The world will not be there for all times; therefore, it is *asvattha*. Or we may say that the world is like an *asvattha* tree—that is, a peepul tree.

Its root is an imperishable, inconceivable essence; and it is above. The aboveness is to be understood very carefully because we may be under the impression that for a thing to

be above, it has to be distant in space in terms of so many kilometres or light years because we can conceive of above and below only in terms of spatial expanse. But that is not actually the meaning of the aboveness of God. As the root of this tree is God Himself, it cannot be regarded as being above in a spatial sense. He is above in the quality of manifestation, above in a logical sense, above in the comprehensiveness and inclusiveness of spirit. It is more a conceptual transcendence, and not a physical aboveness like the stars in the sky.

The distance between the world and God is not actually measurable as we can measure the distance between the root of a real tree and its branches. Here is a tree whose length cannot be measured by any yardstick of the world, in the same way as we cannot measure the distance between childhood and old age. There is a distance, of course, between the time when a person is a little baby and the time when he becomes old, but we cannot take a ruler and measure the length of the period that has been covered, because it is a time process that is responsible for the concept of distance between childhood and old age. There is a distance between the knowledge of a little child in kindergarten and a person studying in higher classes, but it is not measurable by a ruler or a yardstick. It is a conceptual distance, a logical distance, a very important distance indeed—more important than a measurable distance. We may say that such distance is the distance between us and God. He is very far, and yet that far distance which appears to be there between us and God is not in any way comparable to spatial measurement or even to temporal measurement of duration.

Otherwise, it is very frightening to conclude that millions of light years may be the distance between us and God and we do not have the appurtenances to reach Him at all, while the fact is that God is so close to us that there is absolutely no

spatial distance at all. It is an immediate experience. Hence, some distinction must be made in understanding the analogy of the inverted tree in this *sloka*. It is an analogy, and we should not stretch any analogy to the breaking point. It should be taken in its spirit.

Chandāmsi yasya parṇāni: All the values of life, including the Vedas and all knowledge, are hanging, as it were, like the leaves and the flowers of this tree. The Veda is considered to be the highest knowledge, and it is given a place among the leaves—not the trunk or the root. *Yas taṁ veda sa vedavit*: Whoever has an insight into the mystery or meaning behind this analogy knows what the Veda really is. *Ūrdhvamūlam adhaḥśākhāṁ aśvatthaṁ prāhur avyam, chandāmsi yasya parṇāni yastaṁ veda sa vedavit*.

The tree of life has its root upwards in the unmanifest, which is rooted in the Divine Being, with its branches spread below as the manifested universe. This tree is inclusive of great misery like birth, old age, grief, and death. It appears to be of a different nature every moment. It is now seen, and now not seen—like the illusion of water in a mirage or a city in the clouds.

It can be felled like a tree, and it has a beginning and an end like a tree. It is essenceless, like the sapless plantain tree. It is the cause of great doubts and confusion in the minds of the non-discriminating. Its true nature is not ascertained even by aspirants of knowledge. Its true meaning is found in the original essence of Brahman, which is ascertained in the Vedānta Śāstra. This tree is born out of the potency of ignorance, desire and action. It is born out of the sprout of Hiranyagarbha, who combines in Himself cosmic knowledge and action. The branches of this tree consist of the various subtle bodies of individuals. It has become proud due to being watered by the desires and cravings of individuals. Its buds

consist of the objects of the mind and the senses. Its leaves consist of knowledge from the scriptures, tradition, logic, and learning. Its flowers are the impulses for sacrifice, charity, austerity, etc. Its essence is the experience of pleasure and pain. Its root is fastened tightly because of the constant watering through the intense longing for the different objects on which all individuals depend. It is inhabited by several birds, called individuals—from Brahma, the Creator, down to inanimate matter. It is full of tumultuous noises like those of weeping, shouting, playing, joking, singing, dancing, running, and such other sounds created by the experiences of exhilaration and grief, giving rise to pleasure and pain.

This tree can be cut down with the strong weapon of detachment, consequent upon the realisation of the identity of the self with Brahman, through hearing the Vedanta texts, contemplating upon their meaning, and profound meditation thereon. This tree shakes, being blown by the wind of various desires and actions of the individual. Its various parts are the different worlds inhabited by celestial beings, human beings, beasts, demons, etc.

The beginning of this tree is not known. It extends everywhere, and its form is incomprehensible. This tree is ultimately based on the pure essence of self-luminous consciousness. The enigmatic character of this tree is accounted for by the incomprehensible nature of Brahman itself, in which it is rooted. This tree is essentially unreal, because it is experienced as a modification. The Sruti says that all modification is only a play of speech—a mere name—and, therefore, false. This Brahman, which is the reality behind this universal tree, is transcended by nothing; and other than it, there is no reality.

This whole universe works systematically, being controlled by the supreme life-principle—Brahman. *Mahad bhayaṁ vajram udyatam* (Katha 2.3.2): This Brahman is like a great

terror, like an uplifted thunderbolt. Acharya Sankara has given an elaborate commentary on this verse of the Kathopanishad.

Adhaś cordhvaṁ prasṛtās tasya śākhā guṇappravṛddhā viṣayappravālāḥ, adhaś ca mūlānyanusamātātāni karmānubandhīni manuṣyaloke (15.2): The branches of this tree are spread out in all directions, both above and below, and these branches have become very stout, being fed with the food of the three *gunas* of *prakṛiti*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, which are the diet for this tree; and all the fine leaves which are shining at the end of these branches, which are attractive to the senses, are the objects of perception: *viṣayappravālāḥ*.

Adhaś ca mūlānyanusamātātāni karmānubandhīni manuṣyaloke: At the base of this manifested form, as the branches spread out everywhere originating from the root, which is above, there are the individuals on this earth plane of human beings, *manuṣyaloke*, who are bound by the cord of karma. The farther one moves from the root, the more is one bound. The *gunas* of *prakṛiti* bind more and more tightly as consciousness moves further and further from the root.

Na rūpam asyeha tathopalabhyate (15.3): We cannot have a clear concept of the form of this tree. It is so widespread and so large in its dimension that our two eyes cannot actually see its extent. We see only a little bit of this vast universal tree, the whole of which nobody can see because of our limited perceptive faculties.

It has no beginning, and no end. We cannot know from where this tree has started, and we cannot know where it ends, because it spreads itself in all directions throughout space. Its origin, its sustenance, is also something very indescribable. *Nānto na cādir na ca sampratiṣṭhā*: Nothing about it can be known. It exists like a chronic disease whose origin is not easy to detect but is known to exist on account of the trouble it creates.

Aśvattham enaṁ suvirūḍhamūlaṁ asaṅgaśastreṇa dr̥ḍhena chittvā (15.3); *tataḥ padaṁ tatparimārgitavyaṁ* (15.4): This kind of tree, terrible as it looks, though imperceptible to the eyes, beginningless and endless though it may seem, has to be felled with the axe of detachment. If we are not attached to the manifestations of this tree, then the qualities, or the *gunas* of *prakṛiti*, that are feeding this tree through its branches will not affect us.

This point is similar to the other well-known analogy of two birds perched on a single tree. This analogy is in the Veda and also in the Upanishad. *Dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā samānaṁ vṛkṣaṁ pariśasvajāte, tayor anyañ pippalaṁ svādv attyanaśnann anyo'bhicakaśīti* (M.U. 3.1.1): On this large tree, two birds are perched. One of the birds is busy eating the sweet berries, the fruits that are yielded by this wonderful tree, but, unfortunately, these are forbidden fruit. So delicious is this fruit, so rapidly is the bird gulping the fruit, so insatiable is the desire to eat it, and so endlessly is this activity of eating going on, that it has lost consciousness that there is another bird sitting by its side. If we are at a large luncheon and are given delicious dishes, we may not notice the person sitting next to us because of our enchantment by the food. The bird that is by the side of this indulging bird is not eating anything. It is just sitting there and gazing at all the wonders of this manifestation of the tree, knowing everything about it, root and branch, but not concerned with either the majesty of the tree, the size of the tree, or the beauty of its product, the fruit. The bird that is eating the fruit of this tree is attached. The bird that is unconcerned and is just looking at the tree is detached. The tree cannot affect the bird that is detached, but the bird that is attached is bound hand and foot. When the eating is over and it is satiated, and cannot eat any more, the bird looks around and sees another bird sitting by its side. The moment it looks

at that other bird sitting there, this bird attains liberation. By the mere consciousness of the existence of that bird, without having to do anything at all with it other than the mere awareness of it being there, liberation is attained.

There is no necessity to deal with God. The only thing that is required is to be aware that such a thing called God exists. The mere awareness of the existence of such a thing called God is sufficient for the liberation of the soul, and no activity is called for here. The unconsciousness of there being such a thing called God is the reason why we are indulging in all the wondrous binding activities of the world and are busy eating the delicacies which this world is yielding for us.

This tree, which is otherwise very deeply rooted, is of course perishable in its nature. One of the meanings of the word *asvattha* is that it will not last even till tomorrow. It is a very perishable, transient thing. Though it is *svirūḍhamūlaṁ*—it looks unshakeable in its root—yet it has aspects which are perishable and, therefore, it can be shaken completely from its very root by only one weapon: *asaṅgaśastreṇa*, the weapon of detachment. We should have no emotional concern with anything that we see with our eyes; we should be detached. The bird that is not interested in the glory of the tree's manifestation also sees this wondrous tree—this world, this creation. We also can see this wonderful world; there is no objection to mere seeing. We can see the mystery, the majesty and the enigmatic character of the working of the whole universe. There is no harm in seeing it like the movement of film in a cinema, but we should not say "It is mine; I want it" with *ahamta*, or self-consciousness, causing thereby a desire to possess certain attractive things like the fruit of the tree.

With a powerful cut at the tree with the axe of detachment, felling it down in this manner and throwing it on the ground, root and branch, what then happens? We have to aspire for

that great Abode, reaching which people do not come back. *Tataḥ padam tatparimārgitavyam yasmin gatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ* (15.4): After having achieved this almost impossible feat of non-attachment to things in this world, one should cast one's gaze above this world and seek that transcendent Eternal Bliss, having attained and enjoyed which, no one will come back.

The prayer is: I aspire to attain that glorious Purusha. Let there be this prayer in our hearts every day: *tameva cādyam puruṣam prapadye yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purāṇī*. The prayer of the seeker is: I humbly seek to reach and attain that Purusha, from whom emanates the large tree of *samsara*. Go on repeating this mantra: *tameva cādyam puruṣam prapadye yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purāṇī*. This is actually a mantra, an inward prayer of a spiritual seeker, making out that one wants nothing but that which is above the three *gunas* of *prakṛiti*, which causes the tree to manifest.

Nirmānamohā jitaśaṅgadoṣā adhyātmanityā vinivṛttakāmāḥ, dvandvair vimuktāḥ sukhaduḥkhasamjñair gacchantyamūḍhāḥ padam avyayam tat (15.5). There are certain conditions that we have to fulfil so that our aspiration for the attainment of this great goal may be fulfilled. What are these qualities? *Nirmāna*: Not respecting oneself as an independently existing and very important individual. Recognising in oneself nothing so valuable as to distinguish oneself from other people, because self-respect has many ramifications. It leads to pride, arrogance, conflict, domination, tyranny and despotism. All kinds of things arise from the seed of self-respect. *Nirmānamohā*: Without this egoism called self-respect, and without any kind of attachment, which is *moha*. *Jitaśaṅgadoṣā*: Free from the evil of longing for contact with things. *Adhyātmanityā*: Continuously resorting to the knowledge of the Atman. *Vinivṛttakāmāḥ*: Free from all longing for

attractive things in the world, from objects of sense. *Dvandvair vimuktāḥ*: Free from the pairs of opposites such as *raga* and *dvesha*, like and dislike, and pleasure and pain. *Dvandvair vimuktāḥ sukhaduḥkhasamjñaiḥ*: Pairs of opposites known as pleasure and pain, leading to *raga-dvesha*, or like and dislike. *Amūḍhāḥ*: Free from these pairs of opposites, great purified souls, undeluded in their nature; *gacchantyamūḍhāḥ padam avyayam tat*: Reach that Imperishable Abode.

Na tad bhāsayate sūryaḥ (15.6): This glorious sun, with so much brilliance, does not shine there. *Na tatra sūryo bhāti, na candra-tāraḥ* (Katha 2.2.15): There is no sun, no moon, no stars; what to talk of the fire of this world—*kuto'yaṁ agniḥ*. *Tam eva bhāntam anubhāti sarvaṁ*: The sun shines, the moon shines, stars shine, fire blazes forth due to borrowing the radiance of another thing altogether, which is not of this world. *Na tad bhāsayate sūryaḥ*: The sun does not shine there, because the light of the sun is like darkness before that radiance. *Na śaśāṅkaḥ*: Not even the moon is there. *Na pāvakaḥ*: The radiance of the earth, which is born of the fire and heat, that too is not there to illumine.

The same point is again emphasised. *Yad gatvā na nivartante*: Having reached which, we will not come back. How many of us are prepared not to come back? Because it is a frightening thing, we have to think thrice before saying yes or no to it. *Yad gatvā na nivartante tad dhāma paramaṁ mama*. Because of the impurities in the mind, we cannot understand the meaning of 'not coming back'. So the great Vedānta Śāstras—the Upanishads, Bhagavadgītā, etc., are not supposed to be studied by impure minds who are attached to family, things, and the value of the earth—minds who consider this earth as very solid and who think that there are values here which are permanent in their nature.

Na tad bhāsayate sūryo na śaśāṅko na pāvakaḥ, yad gatvā na nivartante tad dhāma paramaṁ mama: “My abode is that, after having attained which, you will not return to this world of sorrow.”

We may put a question: “After reaching that state, what will I do there?” Many people ask this question: “What shall I do there, after reaching that place? You don’t want me to come back, so will I sit there gazing at the face of God? But how long I will gaze? I will be tired.”

To remove this fear, the Vaishnava theology tells us that we will have a glorious feast, with rice made of gold. And the *kshira-sagara*, whose waves are dashing hither and thither, throwing little sprinkles of milk on the body of Narayana, shining thereby tenfold, a hundredfold, will attract our attention, and we will be very happy even to behold Him. There will be singing and dancing by the Parsadas, and we will also be one of the Parsadas. We will have no limitation of time or of space. There will be rejoicing, endless rejoicing. These kinds of illustrations are found in certain writings of *acharyas* like Ramanuja, who wrote one particular essay called *Vaikuntha Gadyam*—a prose essay on Vaikuntha, where gold paddy can be seen growing on all sides. But we are happy to hear that rice made of gold, emerald or diamond will be cooked and eaten.

There is no necessity to have fear of this kind, and it is impossible to describe in words why it is not good to come back, and why it is good to be there. By any kind of logic or scriptural quotation, one cannot be convinced as to why that attainment, from where there is no return, is necessary.

Some people try to give examples to convince us in some way, in a feeble manner. It is like going to the waking condition from the dream world. Would we like to go back to the dream world once again? Yesterday we had a good dream or a bad dream, and then we woke up. Now we have a very clear

waking consciousness. Do we grieve that we have woken up from that dream, that we have lost our dream kingdom? We were Akbar Badshah or Caesar in the dream world, and now we have woken up as ordinary mortals. Which is better—being Caesar in the dream world or this perspicacious consciousness of waking?

This waking consciousness includes everything that we saw in dream. Not only the dream perceiver, not only the seer or the observer of the dream, but the entire space, time and objects—the whole universe of dream—are contained in the waking mind. That is to say, this wondrous universe to which we are so attached, from which we are afraid of leaving, is contained in that thing which we are attaining and from which there is no point in returning—as there is no point in returning from waking to dream once again.

We may say, “There are so many people in this world. Am I to leave them here and go alone, as a selfish man, to the abode of that from where I will not come back? What about other people in the world? Millions of mortals are suffering. Do you want me to go alone to the Eternal Abode? Is it not an act of selfishness?” The same analogy applies here. Did we not see many people in dream? We were fathers, we were mothers, we had children and family, and there was a big society of people. Why did we wake up, leaving them all in the dream world? We could have waited until all of them had woken up. We suddenly woke up, leaving all the family, etc., in the dream world. What happened to those many individuals whom we saw in dream? And the whole dream world with which we were concerned so much—what happened to it now that we have left it and, like a selfish person, have woken up into waking consciousness? These are some illustrations that will clear the cobweb of our mind and make us feel inwardly convinced that it is good to reach God, and it is not good to come back from That.

Yad gatvā na nivartante: “After having reached That, you will not come back.” *Tad dhāma paramaṁ mama*: “That is My Abode.”

Mamaivāṁśo jīvaloke jīvabhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ (15.7): “This *jiva*, this ‘me’ or ‘you’ etc., these individuals, these eighty-four lakhs (8,400,000) of species of manifestation throughout the fourteen realms of creation—all these are My aspects, My parts, as it were, a little fraction.” *Viṣṭabhyāham idaṁ kṛtsnam ekāṁśena sthito jagat* (10.42); *pādo’sya viśvā bhūtāni tripādasyā’mṛtaṁ div* (P.S. 2): “In this world of manifestations of individuals, I support these individuals by a little fraction of Myself. They are only part of Me. I support this world of creation by pervading the whole of creation as the vitality thereof, and I do not exhaust Myself entirely.”

There is a kind of theory called pantheism, which says that God is totally exhausted in this world—as milk is exhausted when it becomes curd and it cannot become milk once again. The point here is quite different. God does not convert Himself into the world by a modification of Himself as milk modifies itself into curd, and God is not exhausted entirely in this world as milk is exhausted in curd. There is no exhaustion at all. The transcendent Being remains unaffected, even as our waking mind is not at all affected by what we saw in the dream world. Again, the same analogy is very apt here.

“This *jīvaloka*, this world of individuals, is sustained by Me, by a little fraction of Myself as the vitality of creation. What happens to these individuals that are so created with a part of Me? They are pulled by the sense organs, which are five in number.” *Śrotraṁ cakṣuḥ sparśanaṁ ca rasanāṁ ghrāṇam eva ca* (15.9): These are the sense organs, including the mind, which is also considered as an organ of perception. The mind is the internal sense, and the other five—hearing, sight, touch, taste and smell—are external senses; so the five plus the mind

totals six. *Manaḥṣaṣṭhānī*: The six senses, including the mind, are rooted in the powers of nature, which are the three *gunas*, due to which they are helplessly dragged hither and thither on account of the mutation of the *gunas* of *prakṛiti*—*prakṛtisthāni karṣati*.

Śarīraṁ yad avāpnoti yac cāpyutkrāmatīśvaraḥ, gṛhitvaitāni saṁyāti vāyur gandhān ivāśayāt (15.8): If there is a fragrance somewhere, when the wind blows the fragrance also is wafted up and the fragrance is carried by the wind in whatever direction it blows. In a similar manner, when an individual—a *jīva*, or a soul—leaves this particular body and endeavours to enter another body, the mind and the senses are taken together with it: *gṛhitvaitāni saṁyāti*. The body is left here, but our main treasure trove—the mind with which we think, and the sense organs, which are the causes of our attachment—they, in a subtle potential form, get attached to the subtle body which is actually reincarnating. The *jīva* does not die while the body is apparently dead.

Śrotraṁ cakṣuḥ sparśanaṁ ca rasanāṁ ghrāṇam eva ca (15.9): Basing themselves on the mind which cognises, these five senses of hearing, seeing, touching, tasting and smelling enjoy the objects outside—*viśayān upasevate*.

Discourse 43

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER CONCLUDES

THE GREATEST SECRET REVEALED

Śrotram cakṣuḥ sparśanam ca rasanam ghrāṇam eva ca, adhiṣṭhāya manaś cāyam viṣayān upasevate (15.9): “With the help of the mind and the five senses—hearing, seeing, touching, tasting and smelling—the individual *jīva* enjoys by indulging in the objects of sense.”

Utkrāmantam sthitam vāpi bhuñjānam vā guṇānvitam, vimūḍhā nānupaśyanti paśyanti jñānacakṣuṣaḥ (15.10): “Foolish people don’t know that I am at the back of all things. Whether they are standing, moving, getting up, taking their meals—whatever be their occupation, that occupation becomes possible because of My being there as an active impelling power; but fools think that they themselves are doing everything.”

When we walk, we feel that we ourselves are walking; when we eat, we feel that we ourselves are eating; when we see a thing, we feel that we ourselves are seeing it—whereas somebody else walks for us, somebody else sees for us, somebody else tastes for us. “Fools do not understand this, but those who have the eye of wisdom know that I am doing all these things—even the perception of things, even the digestion of food, and even the locomotion or the movement through the feet.”

Yatanto yoginaś cainam paśyantyātmanyavasthitam (15.11): This great Being, responsible for every kind of activity in the world, is visualised by the great *yogins* as located, lodged, in

their own heart. There is no great difficulty in having a vision of this great Reality, because it is the Self of all; and as the Self is the nearest and the dearest, it should be very easy to come in contact with That. Actually, there is no such thing as contact with the Self, because the Self does not come in contact with anything. It is just what it is, and this mystery of the Self not coming in contact with anything and being all things at the same time is seen only by *yogins*, and not by those who are spiritually illiterate.

Yatanto'pyakṛtātmāno nainam paśyantyacetasaḥ: “Yogins have a vision of this inner Reality masquerading through all the forms of the world; but those who are indulgent through their sense organs, even if they put forth immense effort, will not be able to see Me or visualise Me.” Here is a clue as to why it is not so easy to have a vision of God though it is well known that God is nearest—nearer than our very neck, as is well told in all the scriptures and by saints and sages. The reason is *akritatma*.

When Dhritarashtra heard that Sri Krishna was coming as an ambassador and wanted to see him, Sanjaya said, “What can you see? You cannot see him because Sri Krishna is *kritatma* and you are *akritatma*. *Akritatma* cannot have a vision of *kritatma*. So why are you saying that you want to see him?”

What is the meaning of *kritatma* and *akritatma*? A person who has subdued his sense organs perfectly is *kritatma*. Such a person is Lord Krishna; and we are the opposite of it. *Kritatmata* means subjugating the sense organs and integrating the personality into a single power, rather than a diffused power manifesting itself through five channels of expression. In the personality of integrated beings like Sri Krishna, the energy does not flow in different directions. Their energy acts as a total impact, not as a diffused impact through the channels of sense perception. Therefore, those who are not

kritatma—who are *akritatma*, who have not controlled their sense organs and are very much indulgent in respect of objects outside—even if they struggle hard, they will not see It. What is the use of struggle when it is based on ignorance and a desire for that which is quite different from what one is asking for?

Yad ādityagataṁ tejo jagad bhāsayate'khilam, yac candra-masi yac cāgnau tat tejo viddhi māmakam (15.12): “Know that the light and the radiance that you are seeing in the sun above, the luminosity that you see in the moon, the brightness that you see in glowing fire—all this is an emanation from My great radiance. Whatever be the glorious brilliance of these mighty luminaries here in this world—sun, moon, stars, and fire—they appear bright due to the brightness that is reflected through them, and that brightness is Mine.”

As a mirror appears to be bright on account of the light that is cast on it, the mind appears to be intelligent on account of the reflection of the Atman consciousness through it. A mirror cannot shine of its own accord. It cannot shine in darkness; it shines only in light. Actually, it is the light that shines, and not the mirror. In the same way, the mind does not understand anything. It is the Atman that causes the apparent behaviour of the mind as if it is intelligent. All light comes from the Supreme Being.

Gām āviśya ca bhūtāni dhārayāmy aham ojasā, puṣṇāmi cauṣadhīḥ sarvāḥ somo bhūtvā rasātmakah (15.13): “Entering this entire earth, I support all beings. There is a vitality in the earth, energy in this very planet, and whoever is inhabiting this world is made to be self-sufficient and happy, and made to feel that they are guarded, protected and provided for, because of My entry into the very substance of the earth.”

The earth is not a dead entity; it is full of life. We call this earth Bhudevi—a divinity which is the earth. *Viṣṇu-patni namastubhyaṁ, pāda-sparshaṁ kśamasva me*: “Please,

Divine Mother Earth, excuse my placing my foot on you.” People sometimes utter this mantra when they wake up in the morning and put their foot down on the ground.

“Having entered all the plants and trees, I become the essence of medicines.” It is said that on *amavasya*, the day of the new moon, the entire energy of the moon is poured into the vegetable kingdom. According to Indian tradition, we should not pluck a leaf or cut a plant or fell a tree on *amavasya* day, because the full strength of the moon, which is the source of medicinal plants, is supposed to be pervading the entire plant kingdom in the world. Even a leaf of *tulasi* is not plucked on *amavasya* day, because it is all light. If the essence of the bark of a particular tree—or any tree, for that matter—is boiled and drunk on that day, it is considered to be a medicine for illnesses of various types.

Somo bhūtvā: God becomes the moon, which is responsible for the medicinal influence in all plants and trees. It is believed that there is a direct connection between the moon and the plant kingdom. The rays of the moon influence the plant kingdom in a particular way, so that the plants become medicines. Every plant can be considered to be a medicine for some purpose or other, and has a curative effect of some kind.

Puṣṇāmi cauṣadhīḥ sarvāḥ somo bhūtvā rasātmakaḥ: “I enter into these plants by becoming the very energy of the *soma*, or the moon, and sustain these plants with the vigour, the *rasam*.” This *rasam* may be called the protoplasm. The protoplasm in the plant is nothing but God Himself acting through the power of the moon presiding over the plant and all the trees.

Ahaṁ vaiśvānaro bhūtvā prāṇināṁ deham āśritaḥ, prāṇāpānasamāyuktaḥ pacāmyannaṁ caturvidham (15.14): When the *prana* and the *apana* conjointly act at the root of the naval within the stomach, they operate in a different manner

altogether, and go by the name of *samana*; and that creates a kind of heat in the stomach, which is necessary for the digestion of food. This heat is known as Vaisvanara-agni, the Universal Fire. It is the energy of God that operates through the metabolic process of individuals and causes the digestion of the four kinds of food—*pachamyannam chaturvidham*.

There are six kinds of taste, and four kinds of food. If I describe all these, your tongue will water. That which is swallowed, that which is chewed, that which is licked, and that which is drunk—these are the four varieties. “I actually digest these four varieties of food in your stomach by bringing the *prana* and the *apana* together for action, and generating the heat inside as Vaisvanara-agni—the Universal Vaisvanara operating through all individual stomachs as the energy of metabolism.”

Sarvasya cāham hṛdi saṁniviṣṭaḥ (15.15): “I am in the hearts of all.” *Mattaḥ smṛtir jñānam apohanam ca*: “Memory and loss of memory are also due to My presence or withdrawal.” *Vedaīs ca sarvair aham eva vedyāḥ*: “After all, I am the only Being that is to be known through all the Veda Samhitas.” *Vedāntakṛd vedavid eva cāham*: “That which is glorified in the Vedānta Shāstra also is Me and, finally, I am the one who really knows the meaning of the Vedas.”

This is a summing up of the essence of the earlier teaching that God pervades all things. *Sarvasya cāham hṛdi saṁniviṣṭaḥ*: “In the deepest recesses of the heart of all beings, I am present. Both knowledge and ignorance are there on account of My manifestation or absence of manifestation.” The Vedas are supposed to be the glorification of the magnificence of God; and that God who is glorified in the Vedas is this One God who is speaking the Bhagavadgita. And that Supreme Brahman who is glorified in the Upanishads is this great God who speaks this Gita. And, finally, the meaning of the Veda

and the Vedanta can be known in its entirety only by God. Nobody can fully know it: *vedavid eva cāham*.

A student studied all the Vedas from Brihaspati, and he was very confident that he knew their meaning. He went to Indra and asked, “How much do I know, O Master?” Indra pointed to the sand dunes on the shore of the ocean and said, “You have learnt so much, and what is yet to be known is as large as this big stretch of sand dunes on the shore of the sea.” Disciples went to Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa and said, “Please teach us the Vedas.” He said, it seems, *anantā vai vedāḥ*: “The knowledge of the Veda is infinite, so I will take infinite time to explain to you what the meaning of the Veda is.” The idea is, only God knows God.

That there is a conjoint action between *purusha*, which is imperishable, and *prakriti*, which is perishable, has been mentioned again and again in several contexts. This is also a valid position cosmically because *prakriti* is perpetually in a state of mutation on account of the instability of its three *gunas*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Hence, the characteristic of *prakriti*—which is constituted of the three *gunas*—is perishability, fluxation, instability and, finally, unreality. *Purusha* is infinite consciousness and, therefore, it is imperishable in its nature. Individually speaking, the *kutastha chaitanya*—the witnessing consciousness in us—is imperishable, but the body is perishable.

Dvāvimau puruṣau loke kṣaraś cākṣara eva ca, kṣaraḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni kūṭastho'kṣara ucyate (15.16): There are two realities in this world, one being imperishable, the other being perishable. Which one is perishable, and which one is imperishable? All visible objects, including all *jīvas*, are perishable. *Yaddrsyam tannasyam* is a brief sutra of Acharya Sankara: Whatever is visible is perishable. This entire world is visible and, therefore, it has to be considered as *kshara*, or perishable.

This is cosmically true as well as individually true. But there is a *kutastha* Atman inside us which transcends the five *koshas*, which is beyond the *annamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijnanamaya* and *anandamaya koshas*. Beyond the physical, subtle and causal bodies there is a transcendental light shining within us; that is our real Self, that is the Atman, that is the *kutastha chaitanya*. It is the imperishable in us.

Thus, we have an imperishable essence as well as a perishable embodiment. As physical bodies—or, rather, any kind of body—we are perishable in nature; but as the *kutastha* Atman inside, we are imperishable. Hence, we seem to be living in two worlds at the same time. We live in the phenomenal world of cause and effect, bondage, suffering, destruction and, in the end, death. The subjection to the time process is one kind of experience that we have to pass through. But there is something else in us which is immortal, and it eagerly asks for perpetual existence. While the body perishes, the person inhabiting this body does not want to perish. That is why even while knowing that this body will go one day or the other, there is a longing for eternity and immortality. From where does this desire arise if we are just the body, which is certainly going to perish after it is cast away? How could it aspire for immortality? The very nature of the body is contrary to the immortal. We should say, therefore, that the desire to be immortal, the aspiration for infinitude, arises not from the body that we appear to be, but from the real Atman that we actually are.

The two realities are the empirical reality and the eternal reality, the visible reality and the invisible reality, the external reality and the universal reality, the material reality and the spiritual reality. These are the contrasts that are made here by the words '*kshara*' and '*akshara*': All that is perishable is *kshara*, and all that is imperishable is *akshara*. And, as I mentioned, this analogy can be extended to any realm of being—to

externality, materiality and sensibility on the one hand, and internality, universality, consciousness, etc., on the other hand. Thus, there appears to be a twofold reality in this world, almost amounting to the peculiar relationship between the *purusha* and the *prakriti* of the Sankhya.

Here the Bhagavadgita scores a point above the Sankhya when it says there is something above both *purusha* and *prakriti*. For the Sankhya, there is nothing above *purusha* and *prakriti*. According to the Sankhya, there are only two realities—consciousness on the one side and matter on the other side—and everything can be explained by the juxtaposition and the interaction of *purusha* and *prakriti*. So why should we want a third thing? Actually, we cannot conceive of anything in the world except consciousness and matter, the perceiver and the perceived. Is there anything else in this world? What else can be found, other than the seer and the seen? But, interestingly and very specially, the statement is made here that there is a Being transcending this so-called *prakriti*, and it is above even the *purusha*.

The perceiving consciousness and the perceived object are transcended in a universal consciousness that absorbs both into its original essence. The *purusha* and the *prakriti* of the Sankhya can be said to be like a universal subject and a universal object; but we cannot regard a subject as being conscious of an object unless there is a mechanism which makes it possible for *purusha* to be aware of *prakriti*. As *prakriti* is totally *jada* and inert, it cannot act on *purusha*; and as *purusha* is wholly consciousness, it cannot act on *prakriti*. Therefore, there is no question of there being any kind of connection between *purusha* and *prakriti*; they are total dissimilarities. If that is the case, creation cannot be explained. With all kinds of manipulated analogies, the Sankhya tries to explain how they act, though they cannot act, because of the original

assumption of the Sankhya that the two have different qualities. But they appear to be acting, like the right and left hands acting in harmony. The two hands have no connection other than through the body, of which both are parts. It is here alone, in the Bhagavadgita, that a transcendent opinion is held that there is an Absolute beyond the seeing or witnessing consciousness and the witnessed world. God is not simply consciousness; He is not simply an object of perception in the form of the whole universe. “Unthinkable Reality, Supreme Transcendence, Purushottama am I.”

Uttamaḥ puruṣas tvanyaḥ (15.17): There is a third something. The Supreme Puruṣa is different from both the *puruṣa* and *prakṛiti* mentioned. He is called Paramatma, the Supreme Self. We may call the *puruṣa* of the Sankhya as a kind of self, but this is a Supreme Self which includes every other kind of self, and all selves are subsumed under this universal inclusiveness. *Yo lokatrayam āviśya bibhartyavyaya īśvaraḥ*: That Supreme Paramatman, the all-pervading Self enveloping the three worlds, supports the three worlds as the Lord of all.

In the state of Ishvara or Hiranyagarbha, there are no subjects and objects, and there is no seeing and seen. The seer-seen context arises only after the Virat appears as a threefold reality: as *adhibhūta*, which is the visible universe, as *adhyatma*, which is the perceiving consciousness, and as an invisible transcendent connecting link, which is *adhidaiva*. Until this takes place, there is a total, integrated, direct consciousness which is omniscient. That omniscience which is transcendent to both the seer and the seen aspect of reality is Ishvara, though we may use any other name.

Yasmāt kṣaram atito'ham akṣarād api cottamaḥ, ato'smi loke vede ca prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ (15.18): “Because I am above the *kṣara* and the *akṣara*, the perishable as well as the imperishable, I am glorified in the Vedas as well as in this

world. All people cry for joy, freedom, and perfection in this world, but actually they are crying for union with Me. All the longing of this world is actually a longing for Me, finally, in a distorted form; and all the glories that you read in the Vedas are the glory of My super nature.”

Yo mām evaṁ asaṁmūḍho jānāti puruṣottamam, sa sarva-vid bhajati mām sarvabhāvena bhārata (15.19): “Arjuna, whoever is undeluded in his mind knows Me as the supreme transcendent Purushottama above both *purusha* and *prakṛiti*, the seer and the seen. Such a person is an all-knowing being, and he adores Me in a total fashion. He does not adore Me only from one angle of vision or from one point of view.” From every angle of vision and every point of view, from what is called a total perspective of the Supreme Absolute, this great knower of Reality worships the Supreme Being.

This is a secret. This Fifteenth Chapter is a great secret—the most secret, not an ordinary secret. *Iti guhyatamaṁ śāstram idam uktaṁ mayānagha, etad buddhvā buddhimān syāt kṛtakṛtyaś ca bhārata* (15.20): “It is not an ordinary secret, it is not a great secret, but it is the greatest secret that I have told you. Really you will be wise after having known the import of this teaching; and you have done what you wanted to do, you have known what is to be known, and you have obtained what is to be obtained. You become what is called *kratakritya*, *jnata-jneya* and *praptaprapya*, which are the signs of perfection. You know whatever is to be known, you have done what is to be done, and you have obtained what is to be obtained. That state of affairs is called *kratakritya*. O Arjuna! You will attain to that state and you will know all things, if you have grasped the essential import of this teaching that I have given to you here in this Fifteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita, which is known as Purushottama Yoga.”

Sometimes this Fifteenth Chapter is called Purana Purushottama Yoga. It is a very, very important chapter, which people chant every day before lunch, perhaps because of its reference to digestion—*vaiśvānaro bhūtvā*. Because they want to have good digestion, the whole chapter is recited.

Discourse 44

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER BEGINS

DIVINE AND UNDIVINE QUALITIES

We are now in the Sixteenth Chapter, which is called the chapter that distinguishes between qualities that are divine and qualities that are not divine. The description is mostly from the point of view of an ethical distinction in order to determine what is divine and what is undivine, but it is based on the final goal of life that is described in the earlier chapters.

The goodness or the badness of a particular quality or action, the divinity or the demoniacal nature of any behaviour, cannot be asserted entirely by social standards. They become acceptable or not acceptable on account of their relevance to the ultimate goal of life. If there is total harmony and relevance with the final attainment, that attitude, that conduct, that behaviour, that thought and feeling will be considered as holy, divine, ethical and moral. But if there is behaviour which is opposed to the consciousness of the ultimate goal of life by encouraging attachment, egoism, possessiveness, cruelty and associated qualities, then it becomes unethical, immoral, bad, ugly, undivine.

Śrībhagavānuvāca. Here in these few chapters, the Lord speaks without being questioned. The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, Fifteenth and Sixteenth Chapters all consist of direct speaking without any interruption or query from Arjuna.

The divine qualities are actually the qualities of what we call goodness—appreciable, noteworthy, and polished,

gentlemanly qualities. They are listed here in a few verses:

abhayaṁ sattvaśuddhir jñānayogavyavasthitiḥ
dānaṁ damaś ca yajñaś ca svādhyāyas tapa ārvavam (16.1)

ahiṁsā satyam akrodhas tyāgaḥ śāntir apaśūnam
dayā bhūteṣualoluptvaṁ mārdaṁ hrīr acāpalam (16.2)

tejaḥ kṣamā dhṛtiḥ śaucam adroho nātimānitā
bhavanti saṁpadaṁ daivīm abhijāstasya bhārata (16.3)

Abhayaṁ is an inward feeling of fearlessness born of inner contentment. People with wants of every kind are afraid of so many things. Fearlessness is a quality of desirelessness.

Sattvaśuddhiḥ is the manifestation of the *sattva guṇa*, resulting in clarity of perception, radiance in the face, and inward satiety.

Jñānayogavyavasthitiḥ is an intense aspiration to get established in the yoga of the wisdom of God.

Dānaṁ is a charitable nature, a giving nature, large-heartedness, not a selfish nature.

Damaḥ is the restraint of the organs of knowledge as well as the organs of action.

Yajñaḥ ca is a daily consciousness of it being necessary for us to adore gods, the divinities superintending over the cosmos, by external ritualistic sacrifice as well as internal sacrifice that is described in the Fourth Chapter, to which you may revert for brushing up your memory.

Svādhyāyaḥ is daily sacred study of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita or any holy scripture in order to enable lofty thoughts in the mind—without which, the mind will think of dirt and stink and very low things of the world on account of the strength of the activity of the sense organs. To prevent one's subjection to sensory demands and the evaluation of things in terms of the sense organs, the study of sacred scriptures—which are the words of the saints, sages, prophets and incarnations—will be of great assistance.

Tapah means austerity. It also means mental and sensory control—the ability not to allow the energy of the system to leak out through the apertures of the sense organs, and conservation of energy in oneself. This, essentially, is *tapah*.

Ārjavam is straightforwardness. We should not say something, do another thing, and think a third thing altogether; that is crookedness. Actually, we should speak what we think, and behave in that manner. That is what is called straightforwardness—*ārjava*.

Ahimsa is the extending of harmlessness and fearlessness to all living beings. No injury can come from us, and no living being need fear us. We are a source of fearlessness, harmlessness; this is *ahimsa*. It is also truthfulness, because untruth is resorted to only when we want to exploit people. As exploitation is not an acceptable or a good quality, it is very clear that untruth—that which is contrary to truth—is not a divine or a virtuous quality.

Akrodhaḥ is freedom from anger. We should not become enraged over small things.

Tyāgaḥ is living a simple, frugal life; as it is generally said, simple living and high thinking. That may be said to be *tyāgaḥ*. We do not accumulate property, treasure, wealth etc., more than what is essential for our minimal comfortable existence, and we renounce all other things.

Śāntiḥ is being always inwardly calm, composed, serene.

Apaiśunam is the absence of crookedness and cunningness in speech or expression, in respect of other people. We should be before people exactly what we are in ourselves, and we should not have three personalities—one for ourselves, one for our family members, and one for the office. Three personalities are not good. They are like three sets of accounts: one for us, one for our partner, and one for the income tax officer. One should be free from crookedness, cunningness, etc., because if

we behave like that we will be treated in the same way by the world outside. What we give to others will be given back to us.

Dayā means to be compassionate. When we see suffering, we feel within ourselves “What will happen if we are in that condition?” When we identify ourselves with that miserable state in which living beings exist, we will feel a tenderness of approach and we will cast an eye of compassion, and to the extent of our capacity we will do something to redress that sorrow. *Dayā bhūteṣu* is mercy in respect of all living beings.

Aloluptvaṁ is absence of greed. We should never say that we want this or we want that. Whatever comes is okay. *Yadṛcchālābhasaṁtuṣaḥ* (4.22): Be contented, satisfied with whatever comes of its own accord or without too much of strenuous effort. If for the sake of ten percent of happiness we have to put forth ninety percent effort, then that happiness is not worth anything because the sorrow of struggle is much more than the little jot of joy that ensues.

Mārdavaṁ is softness—soft speech, soft behaviour, soft conduct, soft movements. Everything is very soft, mild and subdued, not irritable. *Mṛdutvaṁ*, the opposite of *mārdavaṁ*, is suddenly rising into action or jumping into expression of words that are not pleasing. Very soft, calm, quiet, and pleasing—that is *mṛdu*. *Mārdavaṁ* is a quality of that kind.

Hrīḥ is shame in the presence of things which are forbidden. It is an automatic repulsion from actions and even thoughts that are contrary to an elevated form of spiritual life.

Acāpalam is steadfastness, freedom from fickleness. Thinking something now, thinking another thing after some time and a third thing tomorrow, and with no concept of the final aim of life, no clarity of perception in regard to what is to be done now and what is the actual program of one’s life, having everything in chaos—that would be *chapalata*. The absence of it is *acāpalam*—steadfastness and a clear perception

of the values of life, right from now till the end of our life.

Tejah is vigour, energy, strength, and not a drooping spirit. This is the quality of *tejas*, or energy, vigour, capacity to work. An indefatigable frame of the body and mind will automatically come to us as a consequence of following the other qualities mentioned earlier.

Kṣama is fortitude. We do not try to wreak vengeance on someone who has committed some mistake, and do not go on thinking of one mistake that a person has committed even though that person may have hundreds of good qualities. Generally, the evil that men do lives after them; the good is often buried with their bones. This is not to be our attitude. A hundred sacrifices a person has made, and for twenty years that person has served us, but one day he does something which is very displeasing and we remember only that, and not the twenty years of service. We must have a forgiving attitude, because who has absolutely no fault? “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us” is a very touching line in the Lord’s Prayer. “Let me forgive everyone in the same way as I would wish to be forgiven for all my trespasses”—because every minute we commit some mistake, and if we are going to be punished for every little mistake, then we cannot exist in this world. In turn, this should be our attitude towards other people. Be kindhearted.

Dhṛtiḥ is determination to achieve our goal, and never slacken our effort, and be decided in our mind that, “Perhaps this is the last birth of mine. Why should it not be the last birth, when I have put forth all my energy and I honestly strive for the attainment of God Almighty? I have no defect in my mind. I have no greed. I don’t harm anybody. To my mind, there is nothing wrong. Therefore, God should be kind to me. I shall realise God in this birth.” If this kind of determination is there, something really worthwhile may take place one day,

perhaps in this life itself.

Śaucam is purity. We know much about it—external purity and internal purity. I need not go on harping on this subject.

Adrohaḥ is never committing blunders in respect of ourselves or of others. This blundering and floundering habit is due to the preponderance of *rajoguna*, which keeps us restless always and never allows us to concentrate on anything. If we touch something, it falls down; if we take a cup of tea, it spills on our clothes; when we speak, we fumble; when we utter a sentence, there is no verb. These are distractions which cause a habit of blundering—*adrohaḥ*.

Nātimānitā is never expecting too much regard and respect from people. Do not say, “Oh! He came, but he didn’t greet me.” It is said that Rama respected other people first; and if other people did not speak, he would speak first. He would not have the attitude: “Why should I speak first? Let the other person speak first.” Rama would speak first. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was like that. If a person did not touch his feet, he would touch that man’s feet. People would be horrified. “Maharaj! You are touching the feet of that person?” *Sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ* (P.S. 1). He would speak first. “How are you? *Acche hain maharaj? Theek hai?*” Even if that person did not speak a word, he would immediately start a conversation: “How are you?” That man would be very highly pleased, and start speaking to him. So do not ask for respect. Give respect to others. *Amāninā mānadena kīrtaniyaḥ sadā harīḥ* (Śikṣa 3): We are fit to take the name of God only if we give respect to everybody and do not expect any respect for our own self.

“These are the great qualities, O Arjuna, that may be called divine, gracious, noble, superb.”

But what are the qualities which are not divine? They are practically the opposite of these noble characteristics that are delineated as adorning a spiritual seeker, saint and sage.

Dambhaḥ (16.4) is vaingloriously putting on a show—making a show of that which is really not there. *Dambhaḥ* is a show of something which is not there. *Darpaḥ* is pride over something which is already there. So, either way there is some show. The only difference is that in one case there is nothing and in the other case there is something, but it is a big demonstration, adumbration and vainglorious advertisement of one's great importance. *Darpaḥ* is *garva*, pride; *dambhaḥ* is vainglorious behaviour—*dambhaḥ darpaḥ*.

Abhimāna is being intensely self-conscious, always thinking of oneself, always looking in the mirror, being fond of oneself, and imagining that all people are thinking of us only, while nobody is thinking of us. This is *abhimāna*, too much egoism, self-consciousness.

Krodhaḥ is anger, as I mentioned. Lord Krishna refers to it once again.

Pāruṣyam is cruelty, a cruel nature. We feel very happy at the suffering of other people. Even if we do not actually commit an act of cruelty, we would like it to be committed by somebody else. Or if we ourselves do it, it is still better. This is called a sadistic attitude. Masochism is feeling pleasure in our own suffering, and sadism is feeling pleasure by causing suffering to others. So we should be neither a sadist nor a masochist. *Pāruṣyam* is cruelty. Let this quality not be in us.

Ajñānam means ignorance, which is the basis of all topsy-turvy perception of things and wrong evaluation of the world—a lack of spiritual knowledge.

One who is born with these qualities may be said to be characterised as having *asuric* qualities. These *asuric* qualities and demoniacal natures that are described in this chapter are not actually characterisations of demons themselves. They are characterisations of human beings who behave like demons, and have all the qualities of a *rakshasa*, or a pain-giver, killer,

exploiter and destroyer. The good qualities and the undivine qualities are, therefore, characterisations of human beings. They apply to everybody—to me, to you, and to everyone.

Daivī saṁpad vimokṣāya (16.5): “If these divine qualities are adopted in your daily life, they will lead you to final liberation gradually, stage by stage.” *Nibandhāyāsuri matā*: “But if you resort to the undivine qualities, you shall be bound hand and foot more and more every day, until it will be difficult for you to extricate yourself from this bondage. Arjuna! Don’t be afraid. You are born of divine qualities.” Arjuna may have been wondering in which category he belonged. *Mā śucaḥ*: “Don’t be afraid. Don’t grieve.” *Saṁpadam daivīm abhijāto’si*: “You are born with qualities that are divine. You are really good and gentlemanly in your nature. You are a divine person.”

Dvau bhūtasargau lokesmin (16.6): There are two characteristics present in this world. Living beings are classifiable into the good and the bad, the noble and the ignoble, the divine and the undivine, the saintly and the demoniacal—*daiva āsura eva ca*.

Daivo vistaraśaḥ prokta: “Now, I have mentioned to you something about the good qualities, saintly qualities, divine qualities, in the earlier verses.” Lord Krishna has not actually gone into detail, but yet he says, “I have gone into detail in regard to the good qualities.” But actually he goes into greater detail in the description of the demoniacal qualities. *Daivo vistaraśaḥ prokta āsuram pārtha me śṛṇu*: “Now I shall tell you how demoniacal people behave.”

Actually, there is no need for reading about these demoniacal qualities because every day we are seeing them and reading about them in newspapers, etc. When we go to the marketplace, the bus stand, the railway station or other places, we find some qualities of this kind; we can see them. But we can read about them as anticipated thousands of years ago in

the Bhagavadgita.

Pravṛttiṁ ca nivṛttiṁ ca janā na vidur āsurāḥ (16.7): Neither do these people with *asuric* qualities know what is to be done, nor do they know what is not to be done. With their whim and fancy, with the pressure of the moment, they suddenly engage themselves in doing something, and come to grief. They do not know the pros and cons of an occupation or a project or an undertaking. Knowing not what is the method to be adopted for a successful way of living, they blunder in the choice of the means and ways of doing things in the world, and come to grief later on. *Ca janā na vidur āsurāḥ*: What is *pravṛtti*, what is *nivṛtti*, what is to be done and what is not to be done is not known to them.

Na śaucaṁ: Very unclean are their habits, dirty is their behaviour—inwardly as well as outwardly. We would not like to go near them due to their unclean behaviour. *Na śaucaṁ nāpi cācāraḥ*: They have no good conduct, no special routine of the day, and they are not aware of such a thing as tidiness, cleanliness—to be spic-and-span, as we say. All these are unknown to them. They just act according to their whim.

Na satyaṁ teṣu vidyate means no truthfulness. They say anything they like, provided they are able to get something out of it, even if it means exploiting or even destroying other people. Exploitation is psychological killing; and apart from that, they may actually deal a blow to the very existence of people due to the wrong notion that untruth and exploitation succeed in this world.

Asatyam apratiṣṭham te jagad āhur anīśvaram (16.8): They do not believe in God. The world is complete in itself. Why should there be a Creator for the world? The five elements constitute this body. God has not made this body. The body is made up of only this material stuff, and it has no transcendent support as others may say. *Apratiṣṭham*: It has

no transcendental support, and there is no God behind it. Therefore, it is transitory in its nature. It is unreal finally and, therefore, there is no necessity to be too scrupulous in dealing with anything in this world, on account of the simple fact that there is no ruling principle in this world. There is nobody to punish us. There is no God, no ruler, no administration, and the world itself is an unreal phantom, so we do what we like.

Asatyam apratiṣṭhaṁ te jagad āhur anīśvaram, aparasparasambhūtaṁ kim anyat kāmahaitukam: They think that the birth of beings—the coming into being of all existents in this world—is not due to the will of God, because God does not exist. It is only a chemical combination, the coming together of the properties, positive and negative, due to the desires and passions of people. The concourse of men and women, and qualities which are positive and negative, and such other combinations, biological as well as chemical, are the causes of the coming into being of anything in this world. There is no Supernal Creator, and there is no Transcendent Being.

Etāṁ drṣṭim avaṣṭabhya naṣṭātmāno'lpabuddhayaḥ, prabhavanty ugrakarmāṇaḥ kṣayāya jagato'hitāḥ (16.9): They become terrorists—*ugrakarmāṇaḥ*. They are a terror for everybody because they have a vision of life which is bent on self-satisfaction and the destruction of everybody except themselves. *Naṣṭātmānaḥ*: They have lost their own souls, and they cannot see that there is a soul in anybody else. Inasmuch as there is no soul—they have lost it, and they cannot visualise souls in anybody other than themselves—they see no value in human life. There is no human feeling, there is no respect for humanity, and there is no necessity to work for the welfare of other people, because the vision of other people requires the perception of humanity in them also, whereas the vision of these people who are terror incarnate is a consuming attitude

and not a creative attitude; therefore, they veritably appear to be incarnations of vehement violence and destruction. *Naṣṭa-ātmānaḥ alpabuddhayaḥ* means one who has no brains to think. *Ugrakarmāṇaḥ*: They become very dangerous, and capable of violent action. They are apparently intent on the abolition of all life in this world. These are the despots and the tyrants which history has sometimes seen. They would not like anybody else to live except themselves. *Jagataḥ ahitāḥ*: They are the people who do great injustice to the world.

Kāmam āśritya duṣpūraṁ (16.10): Their desires are endless. Insatiable longing and passion is their quality. *Dambhamānamadānvitāḥ*: I have already mentioned that *dambhaḥ* is vanity; egoism, pretentiousness and pride are their qualities. *Mohād gr̥hītvāsadgrāhān*: They have ideologies which are entirely materialistic, sensory, outward, and hedonistic in the worst way. *Dambhamānamadānvitāḥ mohād gr̥hītvāsadgrāhān*: Their ideology—the philosophy of life that they entertain—is something which is pleasing to their egos and totally destructive of the higher, real values of life which are spiritually awakening, to which they are totally opposed. *Mohād gr̥hītvāsadgrāhān pravartante'sucivratāḥ*: Their resolutions are impure. How could there be any kind of pure resolve in the minds of such people?

Cintām aparimeyāṁ ca pralayāntām upāśritāḥ (16.11): They are worried, vexed and always in a state of anxiety, which is going to pursue them even till the end of their lives. There is not even a moment of rest and peace in their minds. *Kāmopabhogaparamā etāvad iti niścītāḥ*: While there is life, drink ghee and purchase delicacies by borrowing money from other people—because nothing happens when the body dies. This is the Charvaka doctrine, a materialistic attitude of enjoyment. “I must enjoy all things; all the goods should belong to me, and there is no other value in this world. The joy of the

senses and the satisfaction of the mind and the ego—these are the highest values of life.” And to fulfil these morbid intentions they keep themselves in a state of restlessness and agony, which will end only with their death. *Kāmopabhogaparamā etāvad iti niścītāḥ*: These qualities, to some extent, apply to pure hedonistic materialism and what is sometimes known as the Charvaka doctrine.

Āśāpāśaśatair baddhāḥ (16.12) means full of desires. They are bound by the cord of endless longing for things which they cannot obtain even if they live for thousands of years. *Kāmakrodhaparāyaṇāḥ*: They are intent on anger, passion, and desire. *Īhante kāmabhogārtham anyāyenārthasañcayān*: For the sake of the fulfilment of their own desires and crude longings, they do not mind accumulating wealth by any means whatsoever. The end justifies the means, so they may employ any means, provided they get the treasure of wealth. *Anyāyena*: They try to accumulate wealth by unjust means—*ārthasañcayān*.

Idam adya mayā labdham (16.13): “See how rich I am. So much I have got, and I shall have more afterwards. So many millions are there, but some more millions must be added.” *Idam adya mayā labdham*: “I have got this now.” *Imaṃ prāpsyē manoratham*: “I shall have more afterwards. What are the ways of getting more?” This is the business mentality. They have so much, more than what they need, but that is not enough. They want more. “I must extend my business more and more, more and more, more and more.” And he breathes his last with this desire of obtaining more and more. *Idam asti*: “This is mine.” *Idam api me*: “All this belongs to me.” *Bhaviṣyati punar dhanam*: “I will accumulate more wealth.”

Asau mayā hataḥ śatruḥ (16.14): “I have destroyed this enemy, and I shall destroy the other enemy also in a few days. I shall have no opponent in front of me.” *Haniṣyē cāparān*

api: “This opponent has gone to the land of eternity, and I have cut short the lives of all my opponents.” *Īśvaro’aham*: “I am the lord. Who can stand before me? Let them come and show their might. I shall see to them.” *Aham bhogī*: “I shall have all the appurtenances of a pleasurable life.” *Siddhoham*: “All perfection I have attained.” Ravana was like that to some extent. Charvaka and Ravana both had these qualities. Ravana thought that he was the lord of the three worlds, and had all the enjoyments of the celestials. He thought he was a perfect person, that nobody could be equal to him, what to talk of being superior to him. *Balavān*: “Very strong am I, and I am blessed, most blessed indeed.”

Ādhyo’bhijanavān asmi (16.15): “I am born to a noble family.” All rich people seem to come from noble families. *Ādhyah*: “I am very wealthy. There is nothing lacking in me.” *Ko’nyo’sti sadṛśo mayā*: “Who is equal to me in this world?” I think perhaps people like Hiranyakasipu, Ravana and others may be the ones Lord Krishna had in mind when he described qualities of this terrible nature. *Yakṣye*: Even demons such as Ravana, Hiranyakasipu, Bali Chakravarti and others gave charity, but it was all demoniacal charity. All these come under this category of “I shall do sacrifice. I shall give. I shall enjoy”.

Mohajālasamāvṛtāḥ (16.16): Thus, completely deluded in their minds, they get caught up in the net of the illusion of this world.

Discourse 45

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER CONCLUDES

WHAT IS PROPER AND WHAT IS IMPROPER IN OUR LIFE

*anekacittavibhrāntā mohajālasamāvṛtāḥ
prasaktāḥ kāmabhogeṣu patanti narake'sucau (16.16)
ātmasambhāvitāḥ stabdhā dhanamānamadānvitāḥ
yajante nāmayaājñais te dambhenāvidhipūrvakam (16.17)
ahaṅkāraṁ balaṁ darpaṁ kāmaṁ krodhaṁ ca saṁśritāḥ
mām ātmaparadeheṣu pradviṣanto'bhyasūyakāḥ (16.18)
tān ahaṁ dviṣataḥ krurān saṁsāreṣu narādhamān
kṣipāmyajasram aśubhān āsurīṣveva yoniṣu (16.19)
āsurīm yonim āpannā mūḍhā janmani janmani
mām aprāpyaiva kaunteya tato yāntyadhamām gatim (16.20)
trividhaṁ narakasyedaṁ dvāraṁ nāśanam ātmanaḥ
kāmaḥ krodhas tathā lobhas tasmād tat trayam tyajet (16.21)*

In the context of the description of the divine and undivine qualities characterising human beings, a lot has been said by the Lord about these tendencies in people which, on the one hand, enable them to gravitate towards the centre of the universe and, on the other hand, deflect their attention in the direction of the periphery of the universe. The undivine elements are those forces in nature, as well as in individuals, which tend towards externals, and go to the extreme of involvement in space, time and objects. The other category of persons differ entirely from the first mentioned, in the sense that they tend inward into the very centre or the Selfhood of

the universe, which is the opposite of the objects which attract demoniacal natures.

While there is joy in entering into one's own Self in the case of those who are qualified with divine characters, there is sorrow in an inward contemplation in the case of people who wish to run about in an external direction towards more and more contact with sense objects. On account of intense egoism, *ahamkaram*, *balam*, *darpam*, etc.—with egoism, with pride, with vanity, with anger, with insatiable desire for indulgence of senses—they consider themselves as all-in-all in the power that they appear to be wielding, and are despotic in their conduct and cruel in their attitude towards other people. Such ones are endangering not only the lives of other people, but the lives of themselves also.

Those who are trying to harm others are inadvertently trying to harm themselves also—a harm that may come upon them today or tomorrow. This is because as we mete out to others, we will be meted out in the same way. The world is an organic involvement of perfection and a balance of forces, so that any kind of interference of one part with another part, or rather, the interference of one part with the whole to which it belongs, would set up such a reaction that the interference will be paid in its own coin.

Many a time, evil appears to survive and thrive more gloriously than goodness in this world, but when the mills of God begin to grind powerfully, the evil forces will receive their due—though slowly, but very finely. So the indication as to the consequences that follow from utter egoism and evil-doing is here in these verses.

Such persons who are dangerous to themselves as well as to others, and are injurious in their attitude towards things, go to lower regions. They take birth in inferior species of living entities, which, on the one hand, obliterates the consciousness

which human beings are supposed to be endowed with and, on the other hand, they suffer like insects, like reptiles, like animals who have only body consciousness, and there is no consciousness of Self. Subhuman creatures do not have the prerogative of inferring the existence of that which is above humanity, above themselves. The animal can think only its own region, its own realm, its own body, its own instincts. It does not have the capacity to infer, to consider the pros and cons and draw conclusions. It is human reason that has the capacity not only to understand what is happening now, but also to draw conclusions by inference from the occurrences and the experiences at present. These prerogatives of humanity will be wiped out due to the preponderance of *rajasic* and *tamasic* qualities, which people sometimes adopt due to intense egoism in their nature—behaving arrogantly, tyrannically, selfishly, which will lead them to lower *yonis*, or species of births. They may even go to hell, which is the lowest of regions.

Āsurīm yonim āpannā (16.20): These unfortunate souls that enter into the wombs of *asuras*—that is to say, totally undivine characters—may run into cycles of transmigratory life again and again, endlessly, as it were, and may lose hope of redemption for an endless period of time.

As we know very well, the way to hell, the gate to hell, is mentioned here as threefold, as reference to it was made in the Third Chapter. *Kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajoguṇa samudbhavaḥ, mahāśano mahāpāpmā viddhyenam iha vairiṇam* (3.37): If you have any enemy in this world, your enemy is your instinct to like and dislike, passion and anger. *Trividhaṁ narakasyedaṁ dvāraṁ nāśanam ātmanaḥ* (16.21): The self-destructive ways to hell, the gates to hell, are *kama*, *krodha* and *lobha*: greed, insatiable desire, and anger. The one automatically leads to the other. When there is desire, the other two automatically follow.

The tendency to grab appurtenances from the world as much as possible, and never being satisfied with any kind of possession or any amount of possession, is greed. Anger, of course, is retaliation in respect of any hindrance to the fulfilment of desires. And desire is well known to us. *Etat trayam tyajet*: Therefore, we must very meticulously avoid these three traits—*kama*, *krodha* and *lobha*—in human nature, because these are the gateways to hell. *Dvāraṁ nāśanam ātmanaḥ*: They destroy the self, as it were, and hurl the individual into subhuman realms.

Etair vimuktaḥ kaunteya tamodvārais tribhir naraḥ, ācaraty-ātmanaḥ śreyas tato yāti parāṁ gatim (16.22): Freed from these three kinds of traits—*kama*, *krodha* and *lobha*—one works for one's own welfare with proper understanding of the way of conducting oneself in life for attaining the spiritual goal. One begins to realise and keep in mind what is actually one's welfare. Most people do not know what is good for them. They have a blindfolded vision of things, a distorted vision of things, which makes them believe in things which are really not enduring, and doubt the existence of things which are really there. But here a person who is free from these qualities of *kama*, *krodha* and *lobha* will be automatically purified in nature, and this purified mind will reflect within itself the aspiration necessary for the attainment of the great goal of life. *Tato yati param gatim*: Automatically one reaches the Supreme State.

Vartate kāmakārataḥ (16.23): One should not act according to one's own whim and fancy. We should not do things merely because they occur to us. There are certain norms that have been set forth by ancient Masters, who recorded their experiences and their impressions in texts called Shastras—such as the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita, the Smrtis. These Shastras give us a norm of conduct and behaviour prescribed

in the light of the ultimate aim of life. Shastras, or scriptures, lay down the necessity to place oneself in a harmonious state of affairs in the context of dharma, *artha*, *kama* and moksha.

Very few people have even heard of these names: dharma, *artha*, *kama*, moksha. These are the four feet, as it were, of the structure of human life. Ordinarily, from one's own reasoning, these ideas will not normally arise. The normal way of looking at things, the vision of things based on our independent thinking, is materially construed, sensorially oriented, and desire-filled. Thus, the necessity to consult and work according to the injunctions of the Shastras is considered here as imperative.

The necessity for material amenities is something well known to people. We require certain physical comforts, but we cannot have so much of it as would deprive others of an equal share of it in this world. If there is a specific quantum of physical facility in this world, we may proportionately divide it among people according to their needs, according to their status, and according to the relation that obtains between them and other people. But being contrary to the acceptance that others also have a need for similar appurtenances, disregarding the existence of other people and their welfare, would also be detrimental to one's own welfare. This is because a person who asks for too much may lose everything—like the person who wanted a golden axe and lost the iron axe also.

Therefore, dharma is supposed to be a restraining order, a principle of limitations set on the desires even for material need, and *kama* is the need for fulfilment of emotional requirements. Dharma puts a limit on our asking for things in this world, whether material or emotional, in the light of the ultimate aim of all beings, the liberation of the spirit, which is moksha. Hence, there is an internal organic connection among this four-faceted aspiration called *purusharthas*—dharma, *artha*, *kama*, moksha. This is something that can

only be known from scriptures. We cannot think these things independently.

Yaḥ śāstravidhim utsrjya vartate kāmakārataḥ, na sa siddhim avāpnoti na sukhaṁ na parāṁ gatim: We will not attain perfection if we reject the scriptures completely, and try to work according to our own whim and fancy and predilections that change from moment to moment, according to the weakness of our rationality. *Na sukhaṁ na parāṁ gatim:* Such a person cannot be happy. A person who is totally independent in his behaviour, who cares not for the welfare of others, and who has no consideration for the injunctions of the great scriptures that are intended for the welfare of everybody, such a person will not reap success in this world, nor will it be possible for him to be happy in this world—*na sa siddhim avāpnoti na sukhaṁ na parāṁ gatim.*

“Therefore, O Arjuna, scripture is your final authority in matters of doubt.” The Manusmṛti says that the Veda is the ultimate authority whenever we have any kind of *dharma-sankata*, or doubt in regard to a decision of what is proper and improper in our life. But if it is difficult to find an answer in the Vedas for the little difficulties that we have got in our life, what should we do? We must go to the Smritis, such as the Manu Smṛiti, Yajñavalkya Smṛiti, Parasara Smṛiti, etc., which go into greater details about the difficulties of human nature in a larger dimension than the Veda Samhitas. If we do not find a solution even there because these days there are some peculiar difficulties which Manu, Yajñavalkya and Parasara may not have thought of, what should we do? We should consider how great people, saints and sages, lived in this world. Like us, they must have also passed through tribulations and turmoils. We should look at the experiences of great saints and sages—Vaishnavas, Saivas, Saktas, or whoever they be—and see how they conducted themselves when they were confronted with

problems of various kinds. That will be a solution for us. “What did that great saint do when he had this kind of difficulty? Oh! I see. I should behave like this.”

But suppose we have such a peculiar, fantastic difficulty whose solution cannot be found in the Vedas or in the Smritis, and even saints had not passed through that experience, then we should go to our Guru. If we do not have a Guru, we should close our eyes and ask the Atman, “What is good for me?” If we are honest and sincere and repentant, the light within will tell us what is good for us. However, mainly a Shastra is considered as a guide. See how illuminating the Bhagavadgita is! We like to read it again and again. We do not throw it away and say that we know everything. Nobody says that. What do we know? We cannot know anything which is not before our eyes. But realities are those which are invisible to the eyes. The real is invisible; and the visible cannot be regarded as real.

Hence, a Shastra is considered as a great *pramana*, an authority for us in matters of doubt concerning what is proper and improper. *Kāryākāryavyavasthitau jñātvā śāstravidhānokatam* (16.24): The authority is Shastra. *Karma kartum ihārhasi*: “Knowing that there is a great guide for you in the form of a scripture, a Shastra, do what is proper, and engage yourself in right action.” This is the conclusion of the Sixteenth Chapter, called the Daiva Asura Sampad Vibhaga Yoga.

Discourse 46

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER BEGINS

THE THREEFOLD CHARACTER OF FAITH

This word ‘*shastra*’ went into the mind of Arjuna so strongly that it raised a doubt in his mind, which led to his question in the beginning of the Seventeenth Chapter. *Ye śāstravidhim utsṛjya yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ, teṣāṃ niṣṭhā tu kā kṛṣṇa sattvamāho rajastamaḥ* (17.1): Arjuna asks, “O Lord! Those who do not follow the injunctions of the scriptures but work with faith, what do You say about them? Are they *sattvic* or *rajasic* or *tamasic*? Under what category do they come? Those who have intense faith and honestly do something without consulting scriptures—do You consider them as *sattvic* people? Are they good people or bad people? What is Your opinion?”

This is a very moot question that is raised by Arjuna, to which Sri Krishna gives a very devious answer. We have to read the meaning between the lines to make out what exactly is intended in this answer because a direct answer to the question is not given. The consequence of a direct answer seems to be there in the verses that follow, and we have to draw our own conclusions as to what would be the direct answer by reading the verses which Sri Bhagavan speaks—*śrībhagavānuvāca*—that follow in answer to Arjuna’s question.

Trividhā bhavati śraddhā (17.2): “You said ‘faith.’ You asked about people who have faith but do not consult scriptures. Well, I shall tell you something. You said there are people with

faith, but what kind of faith? There is *sattvic* faith, *rajasic* faith and *tamasic* faith. Therefore, we cannot unilaterally make a statement about those people who have faith. We have also to consider what kind of faith it is that they have.” *Sāttvikī rājasī caiva tāmasī ceti tām śṛṇu*: “Now listen to me. I shall tell you what is *sattvic* faith, what is *rajasic* faith, and what is *tamasic* faith. According to one’s own nature, so does the faith arise in that person.”

Here a very direct answer is, to some extent, indicated. There is no use of saying, “I have a faith in this thing and, therefore, everything must be all right.” It need not be all right even if we have faith in it, because our faith may be *tamasic* faith or *rajasic* faith. It may not necessarily be the voice of what is sometimes called the inner conscience, which many people resort to and say, “My conscience says that and, therefore, I shall do it.” The tiger also has a conscience, the snake has a conscience, the scorpion has a conscience, the cannibal has a conscience, and a saint has a conscience. Do we think all these consciences are the same? Hence, there is no use merely saying, “I have a conscience, and I shall act according to it.” Our conscience will work according to the characteristic of our nature. According to what kind of person we are, from that we can know what kind of faith we may develop and how our conscience works. Therefore, we should not simply say, “My conscience says.” One may have a demoniacal conscience and, therefore, merely saying “my conscience works” is not enough. Thus, to say that faith is predominant and, therefore, scripture is not necessary is also not a proper way of looking at things, because it all depends upon what kind of faith we are referring to—whether it is *sattvic*, *rajasic* or *tamasic*. Depending on the character, the behaviour, the substance, and the very essence of a person, accordingly the *śraddha*, or the faith, is to be judged.

Sattvānurūpā sarvasya śraddhā bhavati bhārata, śraddhā-mayo'yaṁ puruṣaḥ (17.3): A human being is nothing but a bundle of faiths. Reason does not operate always. Though we think we are reasoning people and highly intellectual, we are not actually working according to intellectuality and rationality in our daily life. If we carefully observe our behaviour, we will find that we act according to instinct only. We have certain instincts, predilections, whims and fancies, emotions, desires, and we try to justify all these instincts inside by a kind of round-about intellectual argument. Therefore, there is no point in saying that one is an intellectual philosopher, one is rational, etc. No one can be wholly rational, unconditioned by an instinct characteristic of the weakness of the human mind.

Śraddhāmayoyaṁ puruṣaḥ: So faith, of course, is embodied in a person. Whatever we do is according to our faith, not necessarily according to our considered reason. *Yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ*: As our faith is, so is our person. Whatever we do, whatever we speak, whatever we think, the manner in which we behave, and the ideology that we hold aloft before us are some indications as to what kind of person we are, and are indications as to what kind of faith a person is entertaining—*yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ*.

Briefly, in only two verses, the answer to Arjuna comes like a bombshell. This set of two verses is very concentrated, on which one could write a monograph explaining the implications of every word that is used. Though the answer seems to be only in two verses, it is a complete answer, I should say, in the pregnant expression of these two verses.

Now the Lord goes into details of the manner in which *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic* faiths operate. *Sattvic* people adore the gods in heaven. Ganesha, Devi, Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Lord Siva, Vishnu, Narayana, Siva, Skanda are the gods whom they worship if their mind is *sattvic*. Nara-Narayana, Vyasa,

Vasishtha—these are their adored beings. *Yajante sātṭvikā devān* (17.4): Lofty transcendent realities are the objects of people who are *sattvic* in their nature.

Yakṣarakṣāṁsi rājasāḥ: *Rajasic* people worship demoniacal, lower spirits which are likely to bless them with immediate results and then possess them and keep them under subjection. *Yakshas*, *rakshasas* and demigods are the objects of worship of people who are entirely *rajasic*, because they cannot wait for the blessings of a god in heaven. They want immediate results to follow, so they go to lesser divinities. But people with *tamasic* qualities worship actual demons—*bhutas*, *pretas* and spirits who hang in the air, working through Ouija boards and planchets, summoning dead people who speak through those who make this their profession. *Pretān bhūtagaṇāṁś cānye yajante tāmasā janāḥ*: This is the *tamasic* way of living, where the lower spirits are considered as objects of adoration. *Bhutas* and *pretas* are their objects of worship.

*aśāstravihitaṁ ghoram tapyante ye tapo janāḥ
dambhāhaṁkārasamyuktāḥ kāmāragabalānvitāḥ* (17.5)
*karṣayantaḥ śārīrasthaṁ bhūtagrāmam acetasaḥ
mām caivāntaḥśārīrasthaṁ tām viddhyāsuraṁ nischayāt* (17.6)

There are people who appear to be very religious, and practice austerities of an intensely painful nature for the purpose of showing to people that they are highly evolved individuals. These tortures in the name of religious austerities are not prescribed by the Shastras, or scriptures. They are terrific in their nature. Those people who adopt this kind of behaviour in the name of religion but are motivated by their inner vanity, egoism, desire for approbation from people, with an eye to the fruit or result that may follow from this kind of *tapasya*, torturing the inner soul, are completely deluded. Such people are to be considered as *asura nischayat*. They behave like *rakshasas* on account of the preponderance of an

intensely *rajasic* nature with a touch of *tamas*.

Even the food that we eat is of three kinds. It can be classified into *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. *Āhāras tvapi sarvasya trividho bhavati priyaḥ, yajñas tapas tathā dānam teṣāṁ bhedaṁ imaṁ śṛṇu* (17.7): “There are three kinds of food—*sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*. There are three kinds of sacrifice—*sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*. There are three kinds of *tapas*, or austerity—*sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*. There are three kinds of charity, or philanthropy, which are also classifiable into *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*. I shall tell you what these classified forms are.”

That kind of food which energises the system, which contributes to the enhancement of life, which increases strength in the body, which ensures health, which is delighting to the taste and enjoyable at all times, which is full of delicacy and the heart opens up, as it were, when we eat such food—that food is *sattvic*. *Āyuh sattva balārogya sukha prīti vivardhanāḥ, rasyāḥ snigdhaḥ sthirā hrdyā āhārāḥ sāttvikapriyāḥ* (17.8): A *sattvic* diet is that which delights us by even thinking of it, delights us when we actually take it, and delights us even after we have taken it. An alcoholic drink may delight us in the beginning, but it will lead us to sorrow afterwards. But a *sattvic* diet will be delightful in the beginning, in the middle, as well as in the end.

A *rajasic* diet is irritating, biting, burning, and very harsh in its action on the system. It causes a burning sensation at the time of eating it, and it affects the stomach, and it may even create a stomach ulcer. These diets are very much desired by people who are *rajasic* in their nature. But *tamasic* people want another kind of food. They do not want freshly cooked food; they only want yesterday’s food. “You have brought food that was cooked today. No, I can’t take it. I want food that was cooked yesterday.” They would rather have leftovers from yesterday than freshly cooked food. *Yātayāmaṁ* (17.10) refers

not to food cooked yesterday but to food that has been cooked some three or four hours earlier. That also is considered as a *tamasic* diet. *Gatarasam* is food whose taste has gone because it has been kept too long. *Pūti* is food that is not pleasant to the taste and is almost stinking. *Paryuṣitam* is food which was cooked yesterday. *Ucchiṣṭam* is the leftovers from somebody's meal. That should not be eaten. *Amedhyam* is very impure food, kept in a dirty place, cooked by a dirty man in a dirty manner, with an impure mind, with emotions of unhappiness, tension, anger, and dislike. Food cooked by such persons should not be eaten. This is *tamasic* food.

Now the Lord goes into details of *sattvic* sacrifices, *rajasic* sacrifices, *tamasic* sacrifices, and the threefold classification of every blessed item in this world.

Faith is of the nature of the quality that is predominant in a person—namely, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. While going to greater detail on this subject, various other things were mentioned about the three kinds of food, the three kinds of *tapas*, the three kinds of worship, etc.

Aphalāṅkṣibhir yajño vidhidṛṣṭo ya ijjate, yaṣṭavyameveti manah samādhāya sa sātत्वikaḥ (17.11): That sacrifice can be called *sattvic* sacrifice which is performed by those who expect no particular fruit to follow from that performance. They do this sacrifice according to rules laid down in the Vedas and the Brahmana scriptures, and perform these sacrifices merely because it is obligatory on their part to do these sacrifices. These obligatory sacrifices have been described in the Fourth Chapter—*daivam evāpare yajñam yoginaḥ paryupāsate* (4.25), etc., which we have already studied. Because it is obligatory, it must be done. It is a duty to do this kind of sacrifice.

There are varieties of sacrifice. We may bring back to our memory the details given in the Fourth Chapter. In this chapter, and also in the following chapter, a brief statement

is made as to what actually is obligatory sacrifice. Obligatory sacrifice is mentioned as threefold: *yajna*, *dana* and *tapas*.

“It has to be done, and therefore, I shall do it.” Mostly, we do sacrifice because we are forced to do it due to certain circumstantial pressure. Voluntary sacrifice is what is intended here; we do not do it reluctantly or avoid it if we can.

The sacrifices mentioned here are external as well as internal. External sacrifices are those which are enjoined upon a good householder, which he continues to perform right from the time of his marriage until his death. He maintains three fires, called *dakshinagni*, *ahavaniya* and *garhapatya*. *Garhapatya*, *dakshinagni*, *ahavaniya* are the three forms of holy fire which are lit at the time of marriage, and they are always kept burning. It is with that fire that the person’s cremation is supposed to be performed because the belief, as ordained in the scriptures, is that fire will take him up to the higher realms. So we have to do it.

Another obligatory sacrifice is *sandhya vandana*, early morning prayers—Gayatri *japa* and prayer to the sun—which have to be done three times, or two times, or at least once. *Sandhya vandana* is an obligatory sacrifice, we may say, because it is a spiritual dedication before the great Lord of the universe, Suryanarayana Bhagavan, who is indwelt by Narayana, the spiritual Supreme Reality itself. Examples of obligatory sacrifices for householders are *sandhya vandana* or *pancha devata puja*.

The *pancha devatas* are Adhithyam, Ambikam, Vishnum, Gananatham, and Maheswaram. Aditya is Surya, Ambika is Devi, Vishnu is Narayana, Gananatham is Ganesh, and Maheswaram is Siva. These five are supposed to be the great gods whom every householder worships as the *pancha devata puja*. It is from among these great gods that the person chooses one as his *ishta devata*; and the image or the idol of

that particular *devata* is kept in the centre, surrounded by the other gods. If he is a devotee of Vishnu, he places the idol of Vishnu in the centre with the other idols surrounding it. If he is a devotee of Lord Siva, a *lingam* is placed in the middle with the other images around it. If he is a devotee of Suryanarayana, he has a *sphatika lingam* as the central object of worship. If he is a Devi *bhakta*, he has a *yantra* which will be worshipped in the middle, and the other the gods will be outside, etc. Hence, there are performances which are obligatory and have to be done every day—such as *sandhya vandana*, *Gayatri japa*, *pancha devata puja*, and worship of the three fires. They are imperative, they have to be done, and one does them because they must be done.

Yaṣṭavyameveti manañ samādhāya sa sātṭvikaḥ: We do it because it has to be done; it is our obligatory duty to do it, and we cannot desist from doing it. But if that *yajna*, that sacrifice, is voluntarily—not compulsorily—done for our own benefit and for everybody's benefit, then it becomes *sattvic*. But it should be done without expecting any result. We should not ask God to give us a long life, and so on. We should ask God to grace us and bless us. When the great Narasimha manifested himself and told the devotee Prahlada to ask for a boon, the little boy said, "Bless me with that which is best for me." Then, naturally, the ball is in the court of God Himself. He cannot give us anything but the best. The Lord said, "I give you devotion to Me. I consider that as the best."

Aphalānḁṣibhir yajño vidhidṛṣṭaḥ. Here, so many conditions are given for the performance of obligatory duty. One thing is that we should not expect any ulterior fruit to follow from the performance of our duty. Then it ceases to be a duty. It becomes a mercenary action, a job for salary. That cannot be regarded as *sattvic yajna*. It should be performed for the pleasure of God, the satisfaction of the deity which

we are worshipping. Also, it should be done according to the rules and regulations laid down in the scriptures. It should not be done in a slipshod manner or in any manner we like, without any system and without knowing what mantra is to be chanted, at what time, for which deity. If the performance is done properly, it is wonderful, highly beneficial, and it is considered as *sattvic*.

Abhisamdhāya tu phalaṁ dambhārtham api caiva yat, ijjate bharataśreṣṭha taṁ yajñam viddhi rājasam (17.12): That performance is called *rajasic* which is undertaken merely for the fruit that follows, the result that comes out of it. “Something very advantageous will accrue if I do this.” The eye is only on the advantage that will accrue and not on the means, which is the worship or the sacrifice. The *puja* is done by hurriedly mumbling something, because some great blessing will come from that deity. The blessing is the important thing, and the manner of worship is not important. The mind is concentrated only on the result that follows, and is filled with vanity—that kind of sacrifice is *rajasic*. *Puja* that is selfishness oriented, fruit oriented, and not done according to the ordinance of scriptures is *rajasic* because it is motivated by a distraction of the mind. It is especially defective on account of there being no devotion to the means of worship; the devotion is only to that which will follow from the worship.

Vidhihīnam asṛṣṭānnaṁ mantrahīnam adakṣiṇam, śraddhā-virahitaṁ yajñam tāmasaṁ paricaḥṣate (17.13): *Tamasic* sacrifice, *tamasic* worship, *tamasic yajna* is that which is done contrary to prescribed rules and is totally oblivious to the regulations laid down in the Vedas, the Brahmanas and the Smritis, or even by tradition, and is bereft of charity. No offering is made to the deity, and no proper mantra is chanted, and no fee is given to the performer of the sacrifice. It is an unthinkable defective way of approaching things. The desired

result will not follow. An example is a person who employs a pandit—a *yajamana* who engages a saint or a *purohita* for the performance of a worship—and does not properly respect him, does not give him his due, and he concentrates only on what he will get out of it, and not on the pleasure of the gods or the satisfaction of the deity whom he is invoking through the sacrifice. And he is faithless; inwardly, he has no faith in the very performance itself. “If something comes, well and good; and if nothing comes, that is also all right. I will pray to God, if God is there. If He doesn’t exist, that’s not a loss to me. O God, if there is a God, come and help me.” O God, *if* there is a God. If God is not there, we do not lose anything by the utterance of a few words.

Faithless performance is *tamasic* performance. When our heart is not in a thing, we are also not in that thing. Where our heart is, there we are; and if we ourselves are not there, what is the good of doing anything? We have to be present in the deed that we perform, we have to ‘be’ in the worship that we offer, and we have to ‘be’ in the meditation that we undertake every day. Whatever is manifesting itself from us is ensouled by us. That is, if we stand outside the performance, the performance becomes a corpse, a skeleton. It is without life because we have stood outside it. But if we have entered into it, the action itself is enlivened by our soul. We are entirely in it; then it is that the action becomes a real sacrifice. Where we are not in the work, it ceases to be a sacrifice. To the extent we are involved in the work, to that extent it is a sacrifice. If we are wholly involved in it, and we are not separable from the work that we are doing—we ourselves are the work, as it were—then it is the highest sacrifice, and it will bring us the best of benefits. Else, it is *tamasic*.

Devadvija guru prājña pūjanam śaucamārjavam, brahmacaryam ahimsā ca śārīram tapa ucyate (17.14). *Yajna* is of

three kinds, which have been mentioned. Now we are being told that *tapas* is also of three kinds. Physical *tapas*, verbal *tapas*, and mental *tapas* are distinguished here by their own peculiar qualities. Worship of gods, worship of learned Brahmins, worship of the Guru, worship of wise persons, knowers of Brahman, purity inside and outside, straightforwardness of behaviour, self-restraint, *ahimsa* or non-injury to living beings—these are austerities of the body. We physically prostrate ourselves before the divinity whom we are adoring every day in worship, we prostrate ourselves before great men, divine people, preceptors, together with an internal self-restraint that we exercise on our own self, maintaining a purity of conduct and motive inwardly and outwardly—if this could be done, the body is performing a *tapas*. Physical discipline is described here as adoration of divinities, adoration of gods, adoration of learned, wise, spiritual preceptors, self-restraint, control of the ten sense organs, purity, and straightforwardness. If this can be maintained, we are physically restraining ourselves entirely.

Our speech also has to be restrained. In the same way as there is a restraint of the body by discipline of this kind, there has to be a discipline of the speech. *Anudvegakaram vākyam satyam priyahitam ca yat, svādhyāyābhyasanam caiva vāñmayam tapa ucyate* (17.15): The discipline of the speech is considered to be that which is pleasing, which does not agitate the mind of the person who hears it, which is very beneficial, kind and sweet, and is also truthful and not camouflaged with any kind of untruth—purely factual, verbal expression, which is very dear and happy to hear, and good for the people who hear it. There is also daily study of the holy scriptures, *svādhyāya*. As we have discipline of the body, there is discipline of speech. What are these? They are sweet speech—not speaking like a thorn pricking people—truthful speech, kind

speech, beneficial speech, and daily study of holy scriptures for our own inner illumination. The *svādhyāya* of the Veda Samhitas, *patha* of Ramayana, Bhagavata, Bhagavadgita, etc., all come under *svādhyāya yajña*, by which we purify and discipline our speech.

Manaḥprasādaḥ saumyatvaṁ maunam ātmavinigrahaḥ, bhāvaśāntiḥ ityetaś tapo mānasam ucyate (17.16): There is also mental *tapas*. The discipline of the mind is mental *tapas*—calmness, composure, satisfaction, happiness, contentment inside. Such a person is always happy, contented, and asks for nothing. “Everything is well with me. I want nothing. I am always very happy. I need nothing.” This kind of inner satisfaction is called *manaḥprasādaḥ*.

Saumyatvaṁ—we must be very composed in our behaviour, delightful for people to see, not putting on an agitated look. If we are very graceful in our behaviour, it is *saumyatvaṁ*.

We should not speak unless it is necessary to speak. Where it is necessary to speak, we speak. Where it is not called for on our behalf to speak, we do not speak. There are people who butt in. If two people are speaking, a third man comes and butts in, and says something else and spoils the entire talk. We should not interfere. We should not speak at all unless it is obligatory on our part to speak at a given moment. It is necessary for us to speak at this moment; therefore, we speak. When speaking is unwarranted and we can keep quiet, we should hold our tongue, and maintain peace in our mind. That is *maunam*.

Ātmavinigrahaḥ is self-control—the restraint of the lower self by the higher self. Concentrating on the Universality of our selfhood puts a restraint or check on our lower, instinctive self. That is *ātmavinigrahaḥ*.

Bhāvaśāntiḥ: Our motive should always be pure. When we do an action, we must have a pure motive for the

benefit of somebody. It does good to some person; it is doing good to at least one person, if not more. And if it does good to the whole of humanity, to the entire mankind, very good. It does good to the family, to the community, to the nation, or at least it does good to one person—that much is indicative of a pure motive. But if it is a concentration of the mind on our own personal, selfish welfare—let anything happen to others, we are not at all concerned with what is happening in the atmosphere around, but we very much are concerned with our own personal, physical welfare—if we are so selfish, then there is impurity in the mind. The unselfishness that characterises our motive is *bhāvasaṁśuddhiḥ*. This is mental *tapas*. Thus, we have here a description of three kinds of austerities—physical, verbal and mental.

Śraddhayā parayā taptam tapas tat trividham naraiḥ, aphalākāṅkṣibhir yuktaiḥ sāttvikam paricakṣate (17.17): *Sattvic tapas* is attended with intense faith that it will bring the noble fruit of inner spiritual illumination, and not because it will bring some material benefit. Spiritual aspiration is always a movement of our consciousness towards the higher values of life which are God-oriented in every way and, therefore, the question of expecting some material benefit out of our performance is totally out of point. If this *tapas* or worship is done with no such eye on fruit that is material in its nature, and is undertaken for the salvation of our soul finally, then the worship or *tapas* is considered to be *sattvic*.

Satkāramānapūjārtham tapo dambhena caiva yat, kriyate tadiha proktaṁ rājasam calam adhruvam (17.18): Fickle-minded people with no concentration whatsoever, with no understanding, with no knowledge of what they are doing at all, who are idiotic in their attitude and cause suffering to themselves as well as to others, and perhaps even harm other people—if that kind of undertaking is our desire, we should be

considered as *tamasic*. *Satkāramānapūjārtham tapo dambhena caiva yat, kriyate tadiha proktaṁ rājasam calam adhruvam*: If we do sacrifice for respect, for gaining recognition from people, and for ostentation, it is *rajasic*; but if we do it for harming people, if our sacrifice is not motivated by pious intentions, then it is *tamasic*.

Dātavyam—now comes charity. There are three kinds of charity—*sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*. *Dātavyam iti yad dānam dīyate'nupakāriṇe, deśe kāle ca pātre ca tad dānam sātत्वikaṁ smṛtam* (17.20): When we do charity, we should give to that person from whom we expect nothing, or rather, from whom we cannot expect anything. If we help a person from whom we cannot expect any kind of recompense—we may not get even a word of thanks from that person, yet we help that person—that is *pratyupakārārtham*, expecting no recompense to follow from the good deed that we perform. We should not expect our charity to bring us something visible. We will be blessed by the divinities that rule the world. That will be enough for us. Unless we do that, it will not be real charity.

We must give in charity because it is necessary under that condition. We feel for the suffering of another because that person is deprived of physical, mental or social needs. If a person does have access to even the minimum needs of life, and we are in a position to help that person merely because it is good to be of assistance to people of that kind, that would be *sattvic* charity; and again, *anupakāriṇe*—we should not expect anything from that person.

Sattvic charity has to be given in the proper place, at the proper time, and to the proper person. Three conditions are there in order that charity may be *sattvic*. We should not give charity at a wrong place where it will be disturbing either to ourselves or to others; it has to be given at the proper time, and not when the person is not in the proper mood to receive

it; and he must be a really deserving person, and not a person who does not need our gesture of goodwill. *Deśe kāle ca pātre ca*: If all these conditions are fulfilled, we give charity or express a gesture of goodwill because it is to be done in the case of a person who needs it, in the proper place, at the proper time, and to the proper person—that charity, that gesture of goodwill of ours, that kindness, the mercy that we show, is *sattvic* in its nature.

Yat tu prattyupakārārthaṁ (17.21): If we give in charity because something will come out of it, because if we give something a double benefit will follow—that cannot be regarded as real charity, because we expect something from the good that we do. It cannot be called a really good deed. *Phalam uddīśya vā punaḥ*: Because we always concentrate on what follows from this little sacrifice that we have performed, it is not real sacrifice.

Dīyate ca parikliṣṭam: If we give charity with great difficulty, reluctantly, niggardly, throw it at the face of a man and say, “Go! Don’t come again!” it is not charity. *Dīyate ca parikliṣṭam* is when we give charity with great reluctance and sorrow inside. “Hey, the wretchedest thing has come. Here. Go!” We must offer help with delight in our heart, with satisfaction in our mind, seeing divinity in things, as God manifests in that person who is requiring assistance from us. The kind of charity that is done with an eye on fruit, or what we expect from somebody else, and is done with reluctance, is *rajasic* charity.

Adeśakāle yad dānam apātrebhyaś ca dīyate, asatkṛtam avajñātaṁ tat tāmasam udāhṛtam (17.22): If we offer something in a wrong place, at a wrong time and to a wrong person, without understanding the pros and cons of it, if it is totally out of place and unwarranted—that kind of gesture on our part, the work that we do, the charity, whatever we

do which is blunderous in its effect, should be considered as *tamasic*. That is the worst kind of charity.

In the verses that follow, we shall be taken to a very lofty thought of the highest kind of contemplation on the Supreme Being. *Om Tat Sat* will be described—what it means, and how we have to meditate upon it. We shall discuss its meaning, etc., next time.

Discourse 47

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER CONCLUDES

THE MEANING OF OM TAT SAT

We are now on the concluding portion of the Seventeenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita.

*om tat sad iti nirdeśo brahmaṇas trividhaḥ smṛtaḥ
brāhmaṇās tena vedāś ca yajñāś ca vihitāḥ purā* (17.23)

*tasmād om ity udāhṛtya yajñadānatapaḥkriyāḥ
pravartante vidhānuktāḥ satataṁ brahmavādinām* (17.24)

*tad ityanabhisamdhāya phalaṁ yajñatapaḥkriyāḥ
dānakriyāś ca vividhāḥ kriyante mokṣakāṅkṣibhiḥ* (17.25)

*sadbhāve sādhubhāve ca sad ityetat prayujyate
praśaste karmaṇi tathā sacchabdaḥ pārtha yujyate* (17.26)

*yajñe tapasi dāne ca sthitiḥ sad iti cocyate
karma caiva tadarthīyaṁ sad ityevābhidhīyate* (17.27)

*aśraddhayā hutaṁ dattaṁ tapas taptaṁ kṛtaṁ ca yat
asad ity ucyate pārtha na ca tat prepya no iha* (17.28)

The Supreme Being—Brahman, the Absolute—is designated as Om Tat Sat in a threefold definition or description. Knowers of the Vedas, known as Brahmanas, and the Veda mantras, and the *yajnas* or sacrifices, are all purified and consecrated by the recitation of this mystic symbol Om Tat Sat. The threefold description of Brahman as Om, Tat and Sat is always recited in all religious performances—during the study of the Vedas, at the conclusion of sacrifices or *yajnas*, and whatever rituals that Brahmanas, that is, the knowers of the Vedas, may undertake. Sacrifices (*yajna*), charities (*dana*),

austerities (*tapas*), are undertaken by people according to the rules and regulations of the scriptures and as laid down by knowers of Brahman, beginning with the chanting of Om: *om ity udāhṛtya yajñadānatapaḥkriyāḥ*. Whenever we commence any holy act, we say Om. We never see people commencing a worship without chanting Om first. Whether it is a prayer, a meditational session, a worship or a *svadhyaya*, all this commences with an inward recitation of Om.

Tad ityanabhisamdhāya phalaṁ yajñatapaḥkriyāḥ, dānakriyāś ca vividhāḥ kriyante mokṣakāṅkṣibhiḥ: Similarly, *yajna*, *dana* and *tapas* are associated with the other letter, Tat, in the same way as Om is associated with *yajna*, *dana* and *tapas*, and with all religious performances. Sat is the third symbol, which signifies goodness. We say *satsanga*, *sant*, saint, mahatma, which all come from the word ‘Sat’. *Sacchabdaḥ pārtha yujyate*: Whenever there is something good or saintly, we call that Sat. Whenever there is something auspicious, then also we use the word Sat in regard to that auspicious beginning. The words *yajna*, *dana* and *tapas*—sacrifice, austerity and charity—are repeated again and again, but they become stable and meaningful, and bear the requisite fruit, only when they are associated with Sat, or Pure Existence. All the activities that we perform for the sake of fulfilling *yajna*, *dana* and *tapas*—*karma caiva tadarthīyaṁ*—anything that we do for the welfare of our own self as well as that of others, for the fulfilment of our spiritual aspirations, all come under Sat, or immense goodness.

Actually, the terms ‘Tat’ and ‘Sat’ signify the transcendent aspect of Brahman and the immanent aspect of Brahman, both of which are blended together in a universalised connotation, or denotation, as we may call it, which is Om. The Supreme Being is called Om because of the inclusiveness of the Supreme Being. Though the Supreme Being is inclusive, it

manifests itself as transcendent and immanent when creation takes place. We are in this world of creation, and we know very well that every nook and corner and particle of every atom is pervaded and indwelt by the Supreme Brahman, yet this Brahman is not exhausted in this world. The whole of Brahman is present in this world, and yet the whole of Brahman is above this world. *Pūrṇam adaḥ, pūrṇam idam, pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate* (Isa). The whole Brahman manifests the whole universe, and the whole Brahman enters wholly into this whole universe. Though the whole Brahman enters wholly into this universe, the transcendent aspect of Brahman is not in any way affected by this entry of Brahman into the cosmos.

The usual idea of location that we have in our minds is that if we are in one place, we cannot be in another place; and if Brahman is inside this world, Brahman cannot be outside the world. That is to say, if God is involved in this world as the immanent principle enveloping the whole world completely, there would be no God left beyond the world. There would be no transcendence. But it is not so. The entire Brahman remains there, uninvolved in the creational process in spite of the entire Brahman controlling the whole universe and entering into it, even to the smallest particle.

Thus, the Tat is the transcendent, the otherworldly, impossible to grasp, beyond the reaches of space and time; and the Sat is that very same thing involved in this creation. It is here, and also there. Our minds have a peculiar difficulty in imagining the connection between transcendence and immanence because we always think that transcendence means something getting beyond our control and remaining far above, so distant from us that we cannot even imagine where it is. Far, far, infinitely far, is that unreachable Supreme Brahman. But Brahman which is so far, apparently unreachable even by the mind with its speed of thought, is also here, immanently

involved as the soul of all beings. Therefore, it is necessary to visualise a total picture of this transcendent existence as well as the immanent existence of God, and to overcome the limitations of the mind which compel us to make a distinction between that which is far and that which is near. We cannot, even for a moment, imagine how something that is very far away can also be something that is very near. It is impossible to imagine such a thing. The near thing cannot be the distant thing. But here is a peculiar situation where the most distant thing is also the nearest. That is the reason why we say that spatial definitions are not to be introduced into the characterisation of Brahman, the Absolute.

Our difficulty in blending together the notions of distance and nearness arise on account of our thinking in terms of space. When we say God is far away, we think in terms of spatial distance. When we say that God is very near us, then also we think in terms of some location in space juxtaposed to our body, as it were. But, try to think a thing minus the measurable characteristic of space. The mind cannot perform this feat. Minus space, nothing can be thought and, therefore, an immeasurable thing, or non-measurable thing, cannot be conceived in the mind. This is why God cannot become an object of thought. Nobody can think God because thinking is a process involved in space and time, and that which is called God is not in space and time.

Hence, that which is not involved in the distance of space and the duration of time cannot be thought by the human mind, which always thinks in terms of distance and duration. Yet, in spiritual meditations we are expected to wean the mind from this involvement of thinking in terms of distance and duration, and bring together the concepts of transcendence and immanence, Tat and Sat, together in an Om that is all-inclusive.

This inclusiveness is signified by Om, or *pranava*, which is partly a vibration that creates all substances constituting the universe, and is partly scriptural because it is a name or nomenclature for God. *Tasya vācakaḥ praṇavaḥ* (Y.S. 1.27), says Patanjali in one of the sutras. If we want to designate God, we have to designate Him only by the term Om, *pranava*. We cannot call Him by any other name, because all names arising from language denote some object which is in some place. When we say tree, the name 'tree' denotes some object which is in some place. Everything else is also of the same nature. When we utter any word that designates some object—it could be any word in the dictionary—that word connotes or denotes something that is in some place or at some time, but it cannot denote something that is everywhere and for all time. So, no word in any language can designate That which is everywhere and at all times.

Hence, Om is specially regarded as a symbolic expression which embodies in itself the total process of sound production. All the letters of the alphabet, when they are uttered, create a vibration in the vocal cords. The sound box operates in some way when one letter is uttered, and in another way when another letter is uttered; and there are varieties of operations of the vocal system when different letters are uttered. But when Om is chanted, the entire sound box vibrates—Aaaaauuuummm. This process originates from the deepest beginning of the process of sound and ends with just a rarefied form of the sound 'm', which merges into a soundless, ethereal, pervading something. This total sound vibration goes beyond the process of sound production and becomes an intangible super-sensory force. In this kind of Omkara, the transcendent aspect and the Sat aspect are clubbed together.

Thus, the threefold definition of Brahman—Om Tat Sat—means God here, God above and God below, and God

everywhere. The everywhere-ness of God includes the above-ness and the here-ness of God. The above-ness is Tat, the here-ness is Sat, and the everywhere-ness is Om. Therefore, Om Tat Sat is a complete mystical symbol which was evolved by ancient Masters. This is why in all auspicious beginnings, Om is chanted; and when we conclude anything, we say Om Tat Sat, dedicating the performance to the Almighty.

Aśraddhayā hutam dattam tapas taptam kṛtam ca yat, asat ityucyate pārtha na ca tat prepya no iha: Faithless performance is *asat*, whether it is a performance in the form of *yajna* or sacrifice, charity, a philanthropic deed, or an austerity or *tapas*. Anything that is done without faith is *asat*. This chapter is devoted entirely to the question of what faith is in its *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic* aspects. Performance without faith is devoid of the immanent force of divinity because it is not conducted with the operation of the soul, which is called the faith of the person. Faith is nothing but the action of the soul and, therefore, it is more powerful than any other faculty working in a person. If this faith is not there, the performance brings no result either in this world or in the other world: *na ca tat prepya*, not after death; *na iha*, not even here. Faith is supreme, and its threefold character has been beautifully explained in the Seventeenth Chapter. With this, we conclude the Seventeenth Chapter.

Discourse 48

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER BEGINS

RENUNCIATION, AND TYPES OF ACTION

We now come to the final chapter of the Bhagavadgita, the Eighteenth Chapter. It is the longest chapter in the Gita, in which we have practically a summing up of all the principles that were discussed in the earlier chapters. All things—whatever has been touched upon in the earlier chapters, from the First onwards to the Seventeenth—are brought together by the Teacher into a brief focusing of attention. Very interesting and very comprehensive is this teaching in the Eighteenth Chapter.

Here, Arjuna raises a question. The whole of the Bhagavadgita seems to be somehow or other centred round the principle of renunciation, abandonment of the fruit of action, for the purpose of attaining perfection. The terms '*sannyasa*' and '*tyaga*', meaning thereby abandonment or relinquishing, are used frequently in the Gita. *Tyaga* is abandoning; *sannyasa* is relinquishing.

Now, what is it that we abandon, and what is it that we relinquish? The word '*sannyasa*' suggests renunciation, but it does not suggest what should be renounced. Here is the difficulty before all Sannyasins. They know very well that when they take to Sannyasa, something has to be renounced, because the very word '*sannyasa*' means renunciation; but what are they to renounce? Generally they renounce their old clothes and put on new clothes, or they renounce their land

and property, their family, etc., if that could be possible.

Actually, according to the Bhagavadgita at least, such a kind of relinquishment cannot be regarded as *Sannyasa*. This is because a person may be physically away from the object of attraction and attachment, but physical distance from the object of attachment does not necessarily mean absence of attachment. *Sannyasins* may, even after entering into the holy order, keep in their minds the memory of large estates of land that they had, etc. Renunciation is a difficult thing to understand; and so is the case with *tyaga*, or abandonment.

Because of this difficulty, Arjuna puts a question. *Sannyāsasya mahābāho tattvam icchāmi veditum, tyāgasya ca hr̥ṣikeśa pr̥thak keśiniṣūdana* (18.1): “O Lord! I want to know the real meaning of *sannyasa*, and I also want to know the real meaning of *tyaga*. Clearly explain to me what is *sannyasa*, what is *tyaga*.”

Na hyasannyastasaṁkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana (6.2) is mentioned in the Sixth Chapter. Nobody can be a *sannyasin* who has not renounced thoughts, determinations, in respect of anything that is to take place in the future. The contemplation of the achievement of something that is to take place in the future is called volition, and anyone who has not renounced volition, or will, cannot be a *sannyasin*.

Śrībhagavānuvāca: kāmānāṁ karmaṇāṁ nyāsaṁ sannyāsaṁ kavayo viduḥ, sarvakarmaphalatyāgaṁ prāhus tyāgaṁ vicakṣaṇāḥ (18.2). Here the Lord says *sannyasa* is that kind of behaviour by which the actions that are connected with desire of some kind or the other are abandoned. A person may be said to be in a state of *sannyasa* the moment that actions which are motivated by desire are abandoned. That is to say, *sannyasa* does not mean abandonment of action as such. It means *kāmānāṁ karmaṇāṁ nyāsaṁ*: abandonment of actions which are connected with a desire of some kind. If we can think of

an action without any desire attached to it, that is a different matter. It is up to us to imagine if such an action is possible at all: an action with which no desire is associated, and from which we expect nothing.

Here, the reference is to another kind of action. Action which is charged with a motive, any kind of motivated action, is *kamya* karma; and the abandoning of *kamya* karma, or motivated action, is *sannyasa*. This is the definition of *sannyasa* given by great ancient learned ones, called *kavis*—*saṁnyāsaṁ kavayo viduḥ*.

Sarvakarmaphalatyāgaṁ prāhus tyāgaṁ vicakṣaṇāḥ. Definitions are very shrewdly given, which confuse the mind of the reader because we do not know exactly what is the distinction drawn between *tyaga* and *sannyasa*. Their definitions seem to be practically the same, only worded differently. It is now clear to us that *sannyasa* is defined as the renunciation of desire-filled action. *Tyaga* is defined here as *sarvakarmaphalatyāga*: the abandoning of the fruit of every kind of action. Abandoning the fruit of every kind of action is *tyaga*.

What is the difference between *sannyasa* and *tyaga*? Abandoning actions which are filled with desire is *sannyasa*. Abandoning the fruit of any action is *tyaga*. A peculiar mathematical distinction is drawn here, which will make us think deeply as to what this actually means. Now comes more detail as a light thrown on this intricate verse.

Tyājyaṁ doṣavad ityeke karma prāhur manīṣiṇaḥ (18.3): Some wise ones say that every action is defective—*karma doṣavat*. *Sarvārambhā hi doṣeṇa dhūmenāgnir ivāvṛtāḥ* (18.48): Sri Krishna himself says that any undertaking is defective because we will come a cropper one day or the other, whatever be the project that we undertake or the work that we do. Because of the fact that there is a defect in every kind of undertaking, in any kind of action, action should be

abandoned. This is the opinion of certain ancient Masters. *Yajñadānatapaḥkarma na tyājyaṃ iti cāpare*: But other great ones tell us that not all actions should be abandoned under the impression that they are all defective, because there are certain actions which are purifying in their nature, and they are obligatory on the part of every person. These actions—namely, *yajna*, *dana* and *tapas*—are very necessary for all people.

“What is My opinion?” *Niścayaṃ śṛṇu me tatra* (18.4): “What is My conviction about these matters? Please listen.” *Tyāgo hi puruṣavyāghra trividhaḥ samprakīrtitaḥ*: “Renunciation is of three kinds.” *Yajñadānatapaḥkarma na tyājyaṃ kāryaṃ eva tat* (18.5): “I shall clinch the matter by firmly telling you that *yajna*, *dana* and *tapas* should not be abandoned under the impression that they are actions that have some defect.”

What is *yajna*, what is *dana*, what is *tapas*? *Tapas* pertains to us, *dana* pertains to others, and sacrifice, or *yajna*, pertains to the gods. We have a duty towards ourselves, a duty towards others, and a duty towards the Supreme Divinity manifesting itself as the controlling power of the cosmos. Therefore, we cannot say that we shall not do anything. We have to do something for our welfare, for others’ welfare, and for the satisfaction of God Himself. The sacrifice that we perform for the satisfaction of the Supreme Divinity, which is the ultimate sacrifice, is called *yajna*. The charity that we do for the pleasure of people and the welfare of people is called *dana*, or philanthropic deeds. *Tapas*—inward austerity, self-control, self-discipline, restraint of the mind and the sense organs—is a duty of every person seeking God.

Therefore, we cannot say, “It is an action; therefore, I will not do it.” We have to do it because *tapas* is conducive to our welfare, charity or *dana* is conducive to the welfare of others, and *yajna* or sacrifice is conducive to the satisfaction of God

Himself. *Yajñadānatapaḥkarma na tyājyaṁ kāryam eva tat*: “Therefore, I tell you, *yajna*, *dana* and *tapas* should not be abandoned. They must be done; they are imperative duties.

Yajño dānaṁ tapaś caiva pāvanāni manīṣiṇām: All these three mentioned actions—*yajna*, *dana* and *tapas*—are highly purifying to everybody and, therefore, every day it is necessary for us to engage ourselves in *yajna*, *dana* and *tapas* simultaneously, for our own welfare and for the great blessing of God Almighty Himself.

In this chapter, brief statements are made on a variety of subjects. A predominant subject is the principle of right action, which has been more elaborately touched upon in the Second and the Third Chapters. *Niyatasya tu sannyaśaḥ karmaṇo nopapadyate, mohāt tasya parityāgas tāmasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ* (18.7): An obligatory duty can never be abandoned. One cannot relinquish that which is imperative—that which is a must under the circumstance in which a person is placed in this universe. We observed more details in this regard when we studied the Third Chapter.

An obligatory duty is that kind of work or performance which is organically related to our very survival and existence in this world, and is interrelated to other beings in the world. Our existence is conditioned by certain obligations to the atmosphere or the environment of the society in which we are living, and if this point is missed due to any intense form of selfishness on one’s part—one works for one’s own welfare very ignorantly, not considering the internal relationship that one bears consciously or unconsciously with the outer atmosphere—if this ignorance is going to be the motive behind one’s action, deluded is that person. *Mohāt tasya parityāgas tāmasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ*: Such abandonment of work which is obligatory is called *tamasic* renunciation. That is, that which is imperative cannot be relinquished. More details can be found in the

Third Chapter.

Duḥkham ityeva yat karma kāyakleśabhayāt tyajet, sa kṛtvā rājasam tyāgam naiva tyāgaphalam labhet (18.8): *Tamasic* relinquishment is mentioned as that form of abandonment of action which is tantamount to abandonment of duty itself; that is called *tamasic* relinquishment. There is another relinquishment, called *rajasic tyaga*: “Because it is difficult—it is very painful, it involves a lot of hardship, I have to work day and night—therefore, I will not do that work.” This argument for not doing a work is not actually feasible or tenable. The reason for not doing a work should not be merely the fact that it is a strain upon oneself to do hard work. We have to sweat, and “I do not want to sweat; therefore, I will not do this work. Physically it is painful, torturous and, therefore, I am afraid of doing this kind of work or undertaking this project.” When a person abandons doing a work because it is painful and requires hard labour on their part, that kind of abandonment of work is called *rajasic tyaga*. It is not *sattvic*.

Kāryam ityeva yat karma niyatam kriyate'rajuna, saṅgam tyaktvā phalam caiva sa tyāgaḥ sātत्वiko mataḥ (18.9): *Sattvic* renunciation does not mean renunciation of action. Then, what does it mean? It is the doing of one's work because it is something that must be done under the circumstances in which one is placed. *Kāryam ityeva yat karma niyatam*: “Definitely it has to be done, because it is binding upon me. Yet, I shall do that work but be free from attachment to the work.” It does not mean that we should be attached to duty. The performance of duty is an impersonal involvement of ourselves in a call that is super-individual, and it does not call for attachment. Attachment is an emotional clinging to a particular form, event or anything whatsoever; and duty, being a superior call from a law that is above human nature, cannot be an object of attachment. Therefore, when a person

performs a work as a duty incumbent upon that person and yet never feels that it is ‘my’ work, and he knows that it is not anyone’s work but it is a work done for the work’s sake, and he does not expect any recompense or fruit thereof—such an impersonally construed unselfish action done for the sake of work alone can be regarded as *sattvic* action. All other kinds of work are *rajasic* or *tamasic*.

Na dveṣṭyakuśalaṁ karma kuśale nānuṣajjate, tyāgī sattvasamāviṣṭo medhāvī chinnaśaṁsayah (18.10): The person who renounces attachment due the preponderance of the *sattva* *guna* in him, who is very intelligent in perceiving the pros and cons of things, and has no doubt whatsoever about the way in which work is to be done, hating not painful work, clinging not to pleasurable work, such a person is really an example before us. It does not mean that we should cling to something because it is pleasant, nor does it mean that we should hate something because it is not pleasant. *Na dveṣṭyakuśalaṁ karma kuśale nānuṣajjate*: The pleasant form of work does not call for attraction, nor should it evoke hatred when it is painful work calling for hard labour on our part.

Na hi dehabhṛtā śakyam tyaktuṁ karmānyaśeṣataḥ (18.11): No embodied person can totally be free from work. The very fact of our being in a body calls for some kind of engagement because this body is made up of physical matter and, therefore, it is a form of *prakṛiti* constituted of the three *gunas*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Inasmuch as *prakṛiti* is always in a state of disturbance—it is not in a state of equilibrium—and its properties of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are constantly moving in a cyclic fashion, they compel the body to also be subject to that kind of cyclic action because the physical body of a human being, or of anything whatsoever, is not free from the contingency arising from the operation of the three *gunas*. Therefore, anyone who has a body has to work. If one has

no body, that is a different matter. *Na hi dehabhṛtā śakyaṃ tyaktuṃ karmāṇyaśeṣataḥ*: The very fact that we are embodied in a physical tabernacle means that we are part of physical nature, and the process of physical evolution will also have an impact upon our body; it will compel us to do something. Therefore, freedom from work for an individual with a body is unthinkable.

Yas tu karmaphalatyāgī sa tyāgī'tyabhidhiyate: Abandoning work is, therefore, not possible as long as we have a body. But we shall be free from the binding effect of karma, or action, provided we do not look to the effect, or the fruit, that accrues from the work. We should do our work because it is necessary to work for the welfare of everybody, not because we get some recompense out of it. If we have an eye only on the salary that we get, and not on the duty that is expected of us, then that duty, that work that we perform, will be tarnished with a little bit of selfishness because even while we are working, our mind is thinking of the salary or of 'that something' that comes out of the work. We are not interested in the work itself and, therefore, it is not *sattvic*.

Sattvic work is work done for work's sake only, whether or not it brings any fruit. Actually, every duty performed well—in a most unselfish manner—will, of its own accord, bring a result which is most pleasant, and we need not ask for it. Every duty is connected with a privilege; and we should not cry for the privilege. If we ask for it, it will not come. If we do our duty well, the privilege automatically follows without asking for it.

Aniṣṭam iṣṭam miśraṃ ca trividhaṃ karmaṇaḥ phalam, bhavaty atyāginām pretya na tu saṁnyāsīnām kvacit (18.12): People who are attached to work due to selfishness on their part reap fruits which are of three kinds—*aniṣṭam*, *iṣṭam*, *mishram*. Sometimes an action that is done brings unpleasant results; sometimes an action brings pleasant results; sometimes

an action brings mixed results: a little bit of joy, a little bit of pain. This is the case with those people who perform work with selfishness, who cannot renounce the fruit of action. But this threefold mixing up of karma's fruits will not have an effect upon *sannyasins* who have renounced the fruit of action.

Pañcaitāni mahābāho kāraṇāni nibodha me, sām̐khye kṛtānte proktāni siddhaye sarvakarmaṇām (18.13): All action is bound by a fivefold factor. Therefore, knowing that there are five facets to every action that one performs, let there be no wrong notion on the part of any person that they are doing it. There are five conditioning factors behind any kind of movement, action, work, or whatever it be. Sankhya, which is the highest knowledge, and which details the varieties of results that follow from different kinds of karmas, tells us that there are five phases of an action. Therefore, the doership of an action is only one phase. To lay excessive emphasis only on doership, and be totally oblivious of the other four factors, would be utter ignorance on the part of the doer of action. Maybe we are doing the work, but we are not the only one involved in that work.

What are the other four factors? *Adhiṣṭhānam tathā kartā karaṇam ca pṛthagvidham, vividhāś ca pṛthakceṣṭā daivam caivātra pañcamam* (18.14): The physical body has something to say about the quantum of work that we can execute, and also the quality of work that can be expected from us. Whether our body is strong and healthy, or whether it is weak and sick, is a factor that also is to be taken into consideration when we do any work. Hence, according to the nature of the physical condition, there will also be the conditioning of the result that follows from the action. That is one aspect among the five.

Tathā kartā : The ego principle that is actually motivating the action is also one factor. Why are we doing an action? The ego has a motive behind it. The physical body is one aspect, no

doubt, but the ego is another aspect, and it is more important. The ego decides the methodology of work. That is the second factor.

Karaṇam ca prthagvidham: The instruments that we use in the performance of action also condition the work. Suppose we dig a pit. If we dig with our hands, we will get one type of result; but if we use a pickaxe or a shovel, or a bulldozer, then different kinds of results will follow. The kind of instrument that we use in the performance of action will also decide what kind of result will follow.

Vividhāś ca prthakceṣṭā refers to the varieties of distracting factors conditioning the mind during the performance of any work. Even when we are doing one work, twenty ideas may be in our mind at the same time, pulling us in different directions, and it does not mean that a person thinks only one thought at a time. Even when we are doing one work, if we are able to think only that and nothing else, we are really a great person. But, generally that is not possible. There is a memory of something that happened in the past, and an apprehension of something that could take place in the future, and a fear of something that is in the present. These will distract the mind. These operations of the mind which distract are also conditioning factors in the performance of the work.

Therefore, the strength or weakness of the physical body, the motive of the ego, the instrument that is used, and the distractions characteristic of the mind are the four factors that are mentioned as conditioning every work. There is a fifth factor, which we always forget: the will of God—*daivam chaivatra panchamam*. A thing that is not sanctioned by the Ultimate Will of the universe will not take place, however much we may sweat. That which is to happen will happen, whatever be our effort to prevent it; and that which is not to happen will not happen, even if we call for it. This is the

inscrutable factor operating behind all things. Our very mind, our very body, our egoism, our mental faculty, our very existence, is conditioned by the central Cosmic Will; and if it does not permit any event to take place, that event will never take place even if millions of people work hard to make it happen. Empires will crash in one moment if it is the will of the universal historical principle; we may call it the time process or the time spirit. Whatever be our effort in the direction of guarding our person, our society, or our country, it has to be sanctioned by the Supreme Will. As Sri Krishna told Arjuna, “Go ahead. You will succeed.” But that sanction was not there for the Kauravas, and the opposite result followed.

Thus, the final operative factor is the central Universal Will, with which we have to always stand in a state of union and communion. We should not egoistically assert too much of our own individual agency in action. We are not the only agents. There are five agents in the performance of an action, and among those five there is one supreme principle which we cannot afford to forget: the existence of God in the world. The principle of divinity permeating all things—the immanence of God—ultimately decides all factors, though others also act as instruments.

Śarīravānmanobhir yat karma prārabhate naraḥ, nyāyyaṁ vā viparītaṁ vā pañcaite tasya hetavaḥ (18.15): Whatever be the work we do—whether good action or bad action, whether through the physical body or through the mind or through speech, whatever it be that we are doing, it is conditioned in this fivefold manner. Therefore, we should not be too egoistic. We should not be under the impression that we are the ruler of the world, because the other four factors will not permit it and, finally, the Central Will may not be in favour of it. Therefore, all that we do in any manner whatsoever—whether physically, psychologically, verbally, personally, socially, in any

way whatsoever, whether it be a good action or a bad action—all these are decided by this fivefold factor involving itself in every action.

Tatraivaṃ sati kartāram ātmānam kevalam tu yaḥ, paśyaty akṛtabuddhitvān na sa paśyati durmatih (18.16): In the light of the fact that five factors are involved in the performance of work, if anyone foolishly thinks that he or she alone is responsible for doing it, then very foolish, very idiotic, very wrong indeed is the motive of that person. In the light of the fivefold factor being there behind every action, no one should have the hardihood to imagine that “I do it”. No ‘I’ can succeed here. Because of the unintelligent approach to a particular context in the world by a person who considers himself as all-in-all in the matter of working, one does not succeed.

Yasya nāhaṃkṛto bhāvo buddhir yasya na lipyate, hatvāpi sa imāl lokān na hanti na nibadhyate (18.17): We may confront the whole world if we like, and yet if our ego is annihilated completely, that is, if we do not have even an inkling that we are doing the action and feel that the Universal Will is operating through us, if that is the case, then we may even work the destruction of things, yet no result will follow as a nemesis of painful experience, provided—this provision is very important—provided we have totally annihilated our egoism and we do not even know that we are existing, and we always feel that the Universal is operating through us. Otherwise, we will be bound by anything that we do.

jñānam jñeyam parijñātā trividhā karmacodanā karaṇam karma karteti trividhaḥ karmasamgrahaḥ (18.18)

jñānam karma ca kartā ca tridhai'va guṇabhedataḥ procyate guṇasamkhyāne yathāvacchṛṇu tānyapi (18.19)

Now, the Lord shifts his attention to some other subject. Up to this time, all that we have heard is about karma, or action—right action, or proper action. Now we are led to

another subject altogether: “The nature of knowledge, the nature of the object of knowledge, the nature of the one who knows or has the knowledge, the nature of all action whatsoever in the process of perception, and the nature of the doer in the context of perceiving or knowing, this I shall describe to you now.”

There are three kinds of knowledge: *sattvic* knowledge, *rajasic* knowledge and *tamasic* knowledge. What is *sattvic* knowledge? It is that knowledge or wisdom or insight by which we are able to see the unity in the midst of the diversity of things, and we can locate the one Absolute manifesting itself in all these varieties of forms. If the variety of objects in the world do not in any way preclude our vision of the Absolute being immanently present in all things, and if we can see it directly with our own eyes, as it were—the Universal Absolute hiddenly present in the midst of all these apparently divided things—this knowledge, if at all we have got it, is to be considered as the best of knowledge. The highest knowledge is this, the best knowledge is this; *sattvic* knowledge is this.

But, this knowledge is not given to everybody. We are not so superior in our evolution. There is *rajas* predominating in us. We always see things as distinct from one another. We cannot see any kind of connection of one thing with another in this world. Everything seems to be thrown pell-mell, here and there. Something here, something there—we do not know what is where. This is the kind of world in which we are living. That is *rajasic* knowledge, not the knowledge that sees oneness everywhere.

Pr̥thaktvena tu yaj jñānam nānābhāvān pr̥thagvidhān (18.21): Everything is different. There are trees here, cattle there, water here; there is a solar system there, earth here, planets there, human beings here, animals there. There is no connection of one thing with another thing; everything

stands independently by itself, as it were. This kind of idea that we entertain—namely, that everything is independent by itself and there can be no connection, no relation whatsoever between one thing and another thing—that knowledge is *rajasic* because it is the perception of a distracted mind that is divided inside and, therefore, it sees division outside also.

Then there is the worst kind of knowledge. *Yat tu kṛtsnavad ekasmin kārye saktam ahaitukam, atattvārthavad alpaṁ ca tat tāmasam udāhṛtam* (18.22): Whereas *rajasic* knowledge at least recognises the existence of many things, *tamasic* knowledge clings to one thing only. It has intense attachment to one person, one object, one occupation, one character, one event, one circumstance, whatever it is—intensely hugging it, and considering that one thing only as everything, as if other things do not exist at all. Let alone the consciousness of unity, that is too far—even the consciousness of other equally valid things being there is not taken into account. There is only clinging to one thing, like a mother clinging to one baby: “My baby is everything; other babies don’t exist in the world. And if my baby survives, very good; let the rest go to the dogs.” This kind of attachment is the worst kind of knowledge, where one clings only to one thing due to the feeling of mine-ness, possessiveness, attraction and attachment. This kind of knowledge is *tamasic*—the worst kind of knowledge.

Niyataṁ saṅgarahitam arāgadveṣataḥ kṛtam, aphalaprep-sunā karma yat tat sāttvikam ucyate (18.23). Now we are again taken to the realm of *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic* action from another angle of vision altogether, which is a subject we shall look at another time.

Discourse 49

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER CONTINUES

TYPES OF UNDERSTANDING, DETERMINATION AND HAPPINESS

Lord Krishna is not tired of repeating again and again that we should do work. Wherever there is an opportunity, he brings in that point that we should do work, lest we become lost in God-consciousness. He is afraid that we will be thinking too much of God, so he again and again brings us down to earth by saying, “Do work! Do work!” Having said so many things about *jnana*, now he says what good action is.

Niyataṁ saṅgarahitam arāgadveṣataḥ kṛtam, aphalaprep-sunā karma yat tat sāttvikam ucyate (18.23): *Sattvic* karma is that which is performed by one who considers that performance as an obligatory duty and not an imposition from outside, and does the duty without any kind of attachment or feeling of mine-ness in regard to the work. He will not say it is his work. It is just work, and it does not belong to anybody as their property, and it is free from like and dislike. Action can be performed for the fulfilment of a desire, or it can be done for harming people; there can be negative action or positive action. But the duty that is referred to here is free from likes and dislikes. It is not intended to please oneself, nor is it intended to harm somebody else. *Niyataṁ saṅgarahitam arāgadveṣataḥ kṛtam*: It is duty, free from mine-ness and attachment in regard to it. *Aphalaprep-sunā karma*: With no eye to the fruit thereof.

There are so many conditions. Firstly, it should be considered as a duty and not as an imposition. Secondly, it should be done without any kind of attachment. Thirdly, it should not be motivated by like and dislike. Fourthly, there should be no eye on the fruit that accrues from the action. That kind of action, with so many conditions attached to it, difficult indeed to perform by ordinary persons, is called *sattvic* karma.

Yat tu kāmepsunā karma sāhaṁkāreṇa vā punaḥ, kriyate bahulāyāsaṁ tad rājasam udāhṛtam (18.24): *Sattvic* action is spontaneous, and does not fatigue the person. This is one characteristic of good action. We will not be tired of doing *sattvic* action. *Sattvic* action cannot fatigue us, because we are doing it of our own accord as something that has to be done. But if we are doing it for somebody else's sake and not due to our own personal choice, then it will fatigue us. So, the Lord says that if anyone does action with intense longing attached to it, whatever be the nature of that longing, and it is also filled with egoism—"See what I do! I am capable of doing this. What do people think? What do they know about me?"—if this kind of egoistic boasting is at the back of any kind of performance, together with desire of some nature, yet it is attended with fatigue because one gets tired at the end of the day by doing that work, if the nature of the work causes fatigue engendered by egoism and is filled with desire, it is called *rajas* karma.

Anubandhaṁ kṣayaṁ hiṁsām anapekṣya ca pauraṣam, mohād ārabhyate karma yat tat tāmasam ucyate (18.25). When we undertake an action, we must know our capacity to do it. Are we fit for it? To imagine oneself to be competent to perform a work, while really one is not competent, is lack of wisdom. It is not necessary to underestimate oneself, but it is also not necessary to overestimate oneself. It is necessary to judge oneself impartially as to one's capacity and fitness for a particular kind of work or action. When a person does

not consider his fitness for undertaking a work, and does not consider the consequence that may follow from that action, the harm that it may do to others and the injury that may result, and the work is done with a confused state of mind, such an action is called *tamasic* karma, the worst kind of action.

Muktasaṅgo'nahaṁvādī dhṛtyutsāhasamanvitaḥ, siddhya-siddhyor nirvikāraḥ kartā sāttvika ucyate (18.26). *Sattvic* action is defined once again. It is an action performed by those people who are free from attachment—*muktasaṅgaḥ*; who do not have any kind of a trace of egoism on their part—*ahaṁvādī*; and are full of enthusiasm for the work. It is not fatigue but enthusiasm, zest, and an indefatigability that is felt before undertaking any work. *Utsāha*, which is enthusiasm, spiritedness, and a love for what is good, should be the motive behind performing action, whether one succeeds or not. This is because, as mentioned earlier, the fruit of an action is not in anyone's hand. The fruit is the product of the cooperative activity of five factors.

Therefore, if we do something to the best of our ability but have not succeeded, it is because we have not taken into consideration the other four aspects. Finally, one cannot succeed in life unless one is practically omniscient in nature. An ordinary person cannot know what consequence will follow from what action, because we cannot know all aspects of the matter at the same time. *Sattvic* karma is free from the longing to achieve its fruit, free from egoism, filled with enthusiasm, work undertaken spontaneously by oneself for the welfare of all people.

Rāgī karmaphalaprepsur lubdho hiṁsātmako'suciḥ, harṣaśokānviṭaḥ kartā rājasah parikīrtitaḥ (18.27). *Rajasic* karma is a different kind. It is, right from the beginning until the end, filled with some kind of longing: "I expect some fruit from this kind of undertaking. It must come." The focus is not on the means, but on the end. It does not matter what

means we adopt, provided the end is achieved. But the correct process of action is that the end cannot be justifiable if the means is not justifiable. The end is nothing but the evolutionary completion of the means. When evolution takes place, the means evolves into the fruit of itself; that is called the end. The end is the consummation of the means. Inasmuch as the end is the consummation of the means, there cannot be any qualitative difference between the means and the end. Hence, it is foolishness and a kind of idiocy to think that the end justifies the means.

Attachment, desire, longing, and passionate clinging are the characteristics of *rajasic* action, not of *sattvic* action. *Karmaphalaprepsuḥ*: Always thinking of what comes out of the action performed. *Lubdhaḥ*: Full of greed for the fruit. *Himśaātmaḥ*: Causing injury to people, and not caring what negative effect the action may have on other people, as long as one is satisfied. *Aśuciḥ*: Impure motive is at the back of it. Sometimes one is elated, sometimes one is depressed. When there is a little indication that perhaps success is on the horizon, one is elated; but when the conditions change, there is immediately depression. A person floats on the surface of the sea of happiness and sorrow, and does not know what will actually be in store for him tomorrow, whether it will be happiness or grief. That kind of undecided state of affairs in the future is veritably grief itself. *Harṣaśokānvitaḥ kartā rājasah parikīrtitaḥ*: Such a person is *rajasic* in nature.

Ayuktaḥ prākṛtaḥ stabdhaḥ śaṭho'naiṣkṛtiko'lasaḥ, viṣādī dīrghasūtrī ca kartā tāmasa ucyate (18.28). "Oh, what a difficult work it is! Why should I undertake that work?" That is a *tamasic* attitude. Always grieving—complaining in the beginning, complaining in the middle, and complaining in the end. There are some people who always complain when they do some work. They complain before starting it, while doing

it, and also at the verge of completion. *Dīrghasūtrī*: Taking a long time to do a thing. If something can be done today, they will take three days to do it. They go on thinking about it for three days, and on the fourth day they think how to do it, and on the fifth day someone has to push them to do it. This kind of procrastination is the thief of time, as they say, and such people are called *dīrghasūtrīs*. *Ayuktaḥ*: Always in a state of grief and diffidence, and not inwardly united to the spiritual goal. *Stabdhaḥ*: Highly crude in behaviour, thinking only of the material end, always in a state of mental torpidity. The mind is not active, not clear, not at all moving for days together; and when it starts moving, it will move in the wrong direction. *Śaṭhaḥ*: A person who is totally unreliable, shrewd and cunning in the performance of affairs, a bad character, and basically lethargic in his nature. All these qualities go to form what is called *tamas*.

This is briefly some recapitulation of the characteristics of three types of actions done by three kinds of people—*sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*. This subject has been dealt with in more detail in the Third and the Fourth Chapters, and here it is only a summing up, a *simhavalokanam*. *Simhavalokanam* means going on, going on, and then looking back—like a lion. A lion goes on walking, and then after some time it turns to see what is behind. That kind of looking back is called summing up, recapitulation, *simhavalokanam*.

Now the *buddhi*, or the intellect, is discussed. Three qualities of the intellect are mentioned here—three types of intellect, understanding. *Buddher bhedaṁ dhr̥teś caiva guṇatas trividhaṁ śṛṇu, procyamānam aśeṣeṇa pr̥thaktvena dhanañjaya* (18.29): “Hey Arjuna, listen to the characteristics of understanding, the characteristics of determination, which I shall now touch upon briefly.”

Pravṛttiṁ ca nivṛttiṁ ca kāryākārye bhayābhaye, bandhaṁ mokṣaṁ ca yā vetti buddhiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī (18.30): *Sattvic* understanding, or intellection, is that which knows what is to be done and what is not to be done under a given condition, what is proper and what is not proper. Place, time and circumstance condition the undertaking of any work to determine which work may be suitable at a particular moment and which work may not be suitable at that moment. That which may be fitting in this particular spot may not be suitable at another place, and that which is fitting under conditions prevailing now may not be fitting under conditions prevailing in a different manner altogether or in some other place.

Therefore, everyone should understand this peculiar tantalising character of the method of choosing what is proper and what is improper. One cannot easily know what is good and bad. The goodness and the badness of an undertaking is not merely an ethical or a moral question. It is a philosophical and metaphysical issue based finally on the very purpose of existence itself. Only a well-baked philosopher can have some insight into what is finally good and what is not. By reading a book or a code of law, or a Smṛiti such as the *Manu* or the *Yajñavalkya Smṛitis*, one may know something of the nature of goodness and badness under specific conditions, but under what condition which kind of actions are to be performed cannot be catalogued in a book. We have to decide for ourselves what criteria we will hold in judging what is proper and improper. This is a crucial question before us, and the judgment in this regard should be based, finally, on the ultimate purpose of life. That is why one has to be very intelligent in choosing any course of action. Such a person is *sattvic* who knows what is proper and what is improper, what is good and what is bad, what is to be done and what is not to be done, what is a cause of bondage and what is going to

be liberating. Only such a person can be really intelligent, and that understanding can be regarded as *sattvic* in its nature: *sa buddhiḥ partha sattviki*.

Yayā dharmam adharmaṁ ca kāryaṁ cākāryam eva ca, ayathāvat prajānāti buddhiḥ sā pārtha rājasī (18.31): A *rajasic* person considers a wrong place as a proper place, a wrong time as a proper time, a wrong circumstance as a proper circumstance, and mixes up the concepts of *dharma* and *adharma*. Many people do wrong actions under the impression that they are doing some dharmic activity, because the idea of *dharma* is not clear in their mind; it is localised, politicised. Geographical, historical, communal, religious and political circumstances may vitiate the very concept of what is good and bad. We cannot decide what is ultimately good and what is ultimately bad as we are involved in these conditioning factors of human society. Such an involved kind of thinking is called *rajasic buddhi*, because it does not know what is *dharma* and *adharma*, what is to be done and what is not to be done, and misconstrues everything. A thing which is injurious is regarded as very good, and that which is harming others is regarded as something contributory to the welfare of people. Such a person is *rajasic* in nature.

Adharmaṁ dharmam iti yā manyate tamasāvṛtā, sarvārthān viparītāṁś ca buddhiḥ sā pārtha tāmasī (18.32): The worst kind of understanding is *tamasic buddhi*, which totally misconstrues all things in a topsy-turvy manner. Totally wrong things are regarded as very good things—*adharmaṁ dharmam iti yā manyate*—on account of a clouding of the intellect. Every kind of objective in life is viewed from a selfish point of view. There is no ability to link the undertaking to the final purpose of life, because that consciousness of the final purpose is completely obliterated from a *tamasic buddhi*.

The 'determination' that will be taken up for discussion in the coming verses has a connection with understanding. Intellect and will go together. The capacity of our deciding factor—decision, determination, volition—depends much, or perhaps wholly, on understanding. To the extent of our understanding, to that extent also we have the power of will. If the understanding is weak, the will also is weak. In these verses we have been told something about the three types of understanding—*sattvic*, *rajasic* or *tamasic*. Now, three types of determination or volition are mentioned here.

Dhṛtyā yayā dhārayate manahprāṇendriyakriyāḥ, yogenāvy-abhicāriṇyā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī (18.33). What is *sattvic* determination? That exercise of will by which we are able to restrain the mind, the *prana* and the sense organs with great force of the logical capacity within, being united in a state of yoga inwardly with no distraction in the mind and wholly concentrated on the final aim of life—that kind of decision, determination, or *dhṛtiḥ*, is *sattvic* in its nature.

Yayā tu dharmakāmārthān dhṛtyā dhārayate'rjuna, prasaṅgena phalākāṅkṣī dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha rājasī (18.34): *Rajasic* determination is that which keeps in view the product of one's action, whether it is good or otherwise. Dharma, *artha* and *kama* are considered as the primary motives behind any kind of work, and moksha is completely ignored. Where moksha is not at all in the mind of a person, and it is not taken into account in the judgment of values, dharma may look like *adharma*, and *adharma* may look like dharma. *Kama* will ruin a person; and *artha*, or desire for material goods, will be harmful for the security and welfare of life. Hence, *rajasic* determination takes into consideration only the secular values. Here dharma is to be understood only in the sense of that kind of behaviour or conduct which will be conducive to the fulfilment of desire and material welfare, and not necessarily

of moksha. We have emotional desires and material greed. If these two desires can be fulfilled somehow or the other, and we regard that way of fulfilment as righteousness, and we are always thinking of what will accrue through the undertaking in which we are engaged, that is *rajasic* understanding.

Yayā svapnaṁ bhayaṁ śokaṁ viṣādaṁ madam eva ca, na vimuñcati durmedhā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha tāmasī (18.35): *Tamasic* determination or will is filled with sleepiness, fear, grief, despondency, pride, and a deluded state of thinking. These are qualities of a *tamasic* individual. *Durmedhā dhṛtiḥ*: A determination that is motivated by a bad or a wrong type of understanding. *Mada* is a kind of vanity that one feels in oneself. *Vishada* is despondency. *Soka* is grief. *Bhaya* is fear. *Svapna* is lethargic sleeping or a torpid condition of the mind, which is not inclined to any kind of activity. If this is the characteristic of a person, such a person is *tamasic* and is unfit for doing anything at all.

Three kinds of understanding and three kinds of decision or determination have been mentioned. Many kinds of themes constituting three categories are taken up in this fashion. As understanding is threefold and determination is threefold, happiness also is threefold. There are three kinds of happiness.

Sukhaṁ tvidānīm trividhaṁ śṛṇu me bharatarṣabha, abhyāsād ramate yatra duḥkhāntaṁ ca nigacchhati (18.36): “Now I shall tell you what is real happiness. That which leads you finally to sorrow and that which will lead you to real happiness, I shall tell you what it is.”

Yat tadagre viṣam iva: True happiness, or real happiness, lasting happiness, genuine happiness, looks like poison in the beginning. Very painful is any kind of effort in the direction of real happiness, but in the end it is like nectar. There is a proverb that says, “You have to soil your hands in order to get sweet milk from the cow.” Anything that is intended for our

final welfare looks like a bitter potion in the beginning, and we will be very unhappy even to undertake it. Whether it is yoga exercise, *japa*, meditation, study, *sadhana* or whatever it is, it will look very boring and painful, but is going to lead to final bliss. That which is really good looks undesirable and repulsive. *Yat tadagre viṣaṁ iva pariṇāme'mṛtopamam, tat sukhaṁ sāttvikam proktam ātmabuddhiprasādam* (18.37): That kind of happiness which will finally delight the self inside, make our understanding blossom and bring us inner peace, which ends in the nectarine experience of bliss though in the beginning it may look like a poisonous bitter stuff, should be considered as real *sattvic* happiness.

Viṣayendriyaśaṁyogād yat tad agre'mṛtopamam, pariṇāme viṣaṁ iva tat sukhaṁ rājasam smṛtam (18.38). Sense indulgence appears to bring immediate pleasure, unlike *sattvic* happiness which looks very bitter in the beginning. Here, nectar is felt in the beginning itself. When the sense organs indulge in the objects which they long for, they seem to be drowned in nectar, so they long for the objects again and again, and one can spend one's entire life indulging in these sense objects. But in the end, terrible, painful consequences will follow. Mental grief, physical debility and rebirth will follow as a consequence of sense indulgence. *Viṣayendriyaśaṁyogād yat tad agre'mṛtopamam*: That which looks like nectar in the beginning because of the contact of the sense organs with their objects, but which will lead one to sorrow in the end, is called *rajasic* happiness.

Yad agre cānubandhe ca sukhaṁ mohanam ātmanāḥ, nidrālaśyapramādotthaṁ tat tāmasam udāhṛtam (18.39). For instance, the happiness that one gets by drinking alcohol is *tamasic* happiness. It will completely delude our brain and put us into a state of stupor, giving us the false impression that we are in a state of joy. Intense smoking and drinking may come under this category because they appear to bring some kind

of satisfaction to a person, but it is a deluded mind that thinks in this fashion. The person is happy in the beginning, in the middle and in the end—because he is drunk. In a person who is drunk, the nerves are stimulated and appear to be always in a state of happiness, but they are going to collapse completely after some time. Such happiness which is totally undesirable is *tamasic* happiness. *Nidrāasyapramādottham tat tāmasam udāhṛtam*: It will lead to sorrow and sleep. A drunken man sleeps, and when he wakes up he again drinks, and after drinking again sleeps, and after sleeping again drinks on waking up. What kind of happiness is this? This is the kind of life that some people live in the world—*tamasic*.

Na tad asti pṛthivyām vā divi deveṣu vā punaḥ, sattvaṁ prakṛtijair muktaṁ yad ebhiḥ syāt tribhir guṇaiḥ (18.40): Some specific instances of the working of the three *gunas*—*sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*—have been mentioned here. There are infinite instances that can be used to illustrate this, and they are classified as being either *sattvic*, *rajasic* or *tamasic*. Actually, neither on earth nor in heaven is there anything which is not controlled and conditioned by the three *gunas*. Everything in the entire creation, in all the realms of being, is a modification of the three qualities of *prakṛiti*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Therefore, we always have to try to bring the *sattvic* quality to the surface of consciousness because it is perspicacious and it will give us some inkling of the higher purpose of life. The *rajasic* and *tamasic* *vṛttis* will make us completely oblivious of the higher values of life, make us sunk in secular affairs, make us think in terms of sense objects, and cause us to take rebirth. We should develop *sattvic* attitudes in understanding, in determination, in will, and in happiness.

Discourse 50

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER CONTINUES

KNOWING ONE'S DUTY

The Bhagavadgita has been telling us varieties of things in terms of the three *gunas*—what is *sattvic*, what is *rajasic* and what is *tamasic*. Nothing on earth or in heaven can be said to be free from the operation of the three *gunas*. Not even the gods are free from the action of *gunas* on them.

*brāhmaṇakṣatriyaviśāṁ śūdrāṇāṁ ca param̐tapa
karmāṇi pravibhaktāni svabhāvaprabhavair guṇaiḥ* (18.41)

*śamo damas tapaḥ śaucarṇ kṣāntir ārjavam eva ca
jñānam vijñānam āstikyaṁ brahmakarma svabhāvajam* (18.42)

*śauryaṁ tejo dhṛtir dākṣyaṁ yuddhe cāpyapalāyanam
dānam īśvarabhāvaś ca kṣātram karma svabhāvajam* (18.43)

*kṛṣigaurakṣyavāṇijyaṁ vaiśyakarma svabhāvajam
paricaryātmakam̐ karma śūdrasyāpi svabhāvajam* (18.44)

Here we have an indication of the manner in which society is to be organised, vertically as well as horizontally. The horizontal discipline and stabilising of life is called *varna dharma*. The vertical process of ascent of the individual is in the *ashrama dharma*. Actually, the whole of ethics, the entire code of conduct and behaviour, is summed up in three things: 1) the concept of dharma, *artha*, *kama* and moksha; 2) *varna dharma*; 3) *ashrama dharma*. Nothing in the world can tell us about ethics more than these three things. How we have to conduct ourselves in regard to the ultimate aim of life, how we have to conduct ourselves in relation to people outside, how

we have to conduct ourselves in regard to our own self—these three enunciations sum up the whole of reality. That which we are, that which is outside, and that which is above are the threefold definitions of reality.

The ultimate goal, in its complete structure, is delineated in the principles of dharma, *artha*, *kama*, moksha. Perhaps you all know what it means, as we have touched upon this subject elsewhere in the course of earlier discourses. The concept of this fourfold aim known as the *purusharthas* is a highly compassionate, integrating and well thought-out discipline of life. Our requirements are classified into four principles: material needs, emotional needs, and ethical needs, all leading to spiritual needs. The ethical need is dharma, the material need is *artha*, the emotional need is *kama*, and the spiritual need is moksha. The concept of moksha, or the liberation of the soul, determines the other principles of dharma, *artha* and *kama*. This fourfold valuation of the whole of life is to be put into practice in our personal and social life, and is not there only to be philosophically contemplated as principles in textbooks. We have to live in this world in such a manner that we shall move upward gradually in the direction of the liberation of the inner spirit, and such a liberation is not possible unless we disentangle ourselves from our involvements which cause us bondage.

The bondage is also of three kinds. Total ignorance of the ultimate aim of life is the greatest bondage, the inability to get on with people outside is another bondage, and not knowing what is happening to one's own self is a third bondage. One should not be ignorant in this matter. It has to be very clear to us as to what kind of person we are. We should not underestimate or overestimate ourselves. We must also know how we have to conduct ourselves in human society, where there are other people like us living with a common interest. Then,

we have to be very clear about what it is that we are aiming at in the end, from the cosmic point of view. The cosmical aspiration is, therefore, summed up in this fourfold principle of dharma, *artha*, *kama*, moksha. But this concept of moksha has to be implemented in our daily life in society, and in our personality.

The terms used here—Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra—refer to intelligence, power, wealth and labour. These are the footstools, as it were, of human society. No one can be entirely intelligent, no one can be entirely powerful, no one can be entirely wealthy, and no one can be entirely fit for hard labour. There is a classification of the ability and endowments of people according to a variety of reasons. A person is born into some condition and circumstance. Some people are intelligent right from the beginning, some are royally construed right from the beginning, some have trading and economic tendencies right from the beginning, and some are traders, workmen, industrialists, technologists, etc., by their predilection and inclination. It does not mean that people can be classified only into four sections. There can be hundreds of differences among people, but this is broadly the category corresponding to our inner psychic faculty. We have *buddhi* or intellect inside us, there is will or volition in us, there is emotion or feeling in us, and there is also the impulse to action or work inside us. The fourfold classification of human society into Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra, representing the ruling class, the guiding class, the wealthy class and the labour class, has relevance to the inner psychic preponderance of intellectual capacity, administrative capacity, economic capacity and working capacity. When these four are blended together in a proper form, society is supposed to be stable.

Though society is stable, somehow or the other, by an administrative system that is introduced in this manner by

bringing about some harmonious adjustment of capacities and intelligences, there is also a need for working out a system of inner development. It is not enough if we are merely stable socially. We also have to be perfect inwardly in our own individuality. *Varna* dharma, which is actually what is meant by this social group mentioned, is concerned only with external society, and *ashrama* dharma is concerned with ourselves. Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra are external, social, outward, whereas Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sannyasa refer to the inward graduated ascent of the spirit to higher and higher dimensions of comprehension.

These two have to go together. Socially we are involved in a particular location, and we have to work and contribute our might for the welfare of society in accordance with our placement, location or situation in which we find ourselves or for which we are fitted in society. Together with that, we also have to work for our development. The four stages of inner development, known as *ashrama* dharma, are Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sannyasa.

In the early stages, for about twenty-five years at least, a person lives a life of utter self-restraint and study, under a teacher. The parents do not, according to the ancient system at least, allow their sons to remain at home when they come of age for education and study. When a person comes of age for education, he is sent out to a teacher, and he is supposed to be there for at least twelve years, if not more, as the case may be. This Brahmacharya stage of self-restraint and service to the Guru, and study of the Vedas particularly, is supposed to be a foundation that is being laid for one's personal life. What we have been in our early years will tell upon us in our later years. What were we doing for the first twenty or twenty-five years? What kind of life did we live? That will have a direct impact upon our life after fifty or sixty years of age. The energetic,

disciplined, hard life that we lived early on will bear fruit which we can reap towards the end of our life. But if in our early years we have lived a dissipated, carefree life, without any kind of discipline whatsoever, it will have a very deleterious effect when we grow old. That is why it has been always prescribed that early years should be of complete control, complete discipline—biological, psychological and physical—apart from the social involvement already mentioned as *varna* dharma.

After this stage of Brahmacharya, one usually enters into household life, because that is supposed to be a stage where one learns the ways of life. The world is made up so many complicated involvements. The isolated life of a Brahmacharin is good for conserving energy and making one strong enough to face life, but one must know what life is. One gains knowledge of life by living a socially construed family life, into which one is generally introduced after the Brahmacharya stage is over. But when one comes to maturity of experience—where the hair turns grey, as it were—there is a necessity to withdraw oneself from too much concern over family affairs or even social affairs, and a desire should arise inwardly to look to the need for a higher kind of living, what may be called spiritual living. Then one lives a secluded life. This stage is called Vanaprastha life. It is not actually total renunciation like a Sannyasin, but it is isolated, secluded living, away from the family atmosphere. One may live in a temple or in an ashrama for some time, and then go back to the family, and then again go for retreat, thus habituating oneself to a life of non-involvement in family life. That continues for some time.

Usually, the expectation is that one should live a life of Brahmacharya for twenty-five years, a life of Grihastha for another twenty-five years, Vanaprastha for the third twenty-five years, and Sannyasa for the last twenty-five years. But considering the age limit of people these days and there being

no standard hope of everybody living one hundred years, we have to limit the duration of the stages mentioned according to the circumstances. Nevertheless, the stages are valid even today, and in connection with this kind of internal and external discipline, the Bhagavadgita goes into these brief statements of Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra.

The duties of a Brahmana, a Kshatriya, a Vaishya or a Sudra are determined by the *gunas* of *prakriti*—*svabhāvaprabhāvair guṇaiḥ*. One is not born a genius, one is not born wealthy, one is not born an administrator, nor is one a labourer right from birth. The conditions of living accrue or grow around oneself due to various circumstances occasioned by past karmas as well as one's present abilities.

Internal restraint of the sense organs, external control over the active senses, purity of motive inwardly and outwardly, forgiveness, straightforwardness, knowledge and wisdom, spiritual experience, and belief in God are considered to be the main characteristics of a Brahmana. The characteristics of a Kshatriya are valour, heroism, spiritedness, determination to achieve a goal, power which does not diminish, never retreating in war, charitableness, and a feeling of responsibility, as the ruler, for the welfare of other people. These are considered as the Kshatriya's dharmas, the warrior's, the ruler's, the administrator's dharma: *śauryam tejo dhṛtir dākṣyam yuddhe cāpyapalāyanam, dānam īśvarabhāvaś ca kṣātram karma svabhāvajam*.

The economic group is called Vaisya: *kṛṣigaurakṣyavāṇijyam vaiśyakarma svabhāvajam*. Tilling and taking care of land, producing grains, trading, wealth, protecting cattle, carrying on business—all these come under the Vaisya's duty. Actual hard work, whether industrially, technologically or in any way whatsoever—that which requires hard labour—is the prerogative of the fourth class, known as Sudra.

Sve sve karmanyabhirataḥ saṁsiddhiṁ labhate naraḥ (18.45): Each one is to perform one's duty according to the station in society in which one is placed. Then it is possible for one to progress further. *Svakarmanirataḥ siddhiṁ yathā vindati tac chr̥ṇu:* "I shall now tell you how, by performing one's own duty, one reaches the highest."

Yataḥ pravṛttir bhūtānām yena sarvam idaṁ tatam, svakarmanā tam abhyarcya siddhiṁ vindati mānavaḥ (18.46): One attains perfection by adoring the Almighty Being by one's own knowledge and capacity, and performing one's duty in accordance with that knowledge and capacity. God does not expect us to do anything beyond ourselves, beyond our capacity, and no one can expect from us what we cannot do. Our *svadharma* is that which we can do and, therefore, we must do. With that, the Supreme Being Himself will be satisfied. Our worship of God should be through the work that we do according to our ability and our concept of duty, performed in a totally unselfish manner: *svakarmanā tam abhyarcya siddhiṁ vindati mānavaḥ*.

Śreyān svadharma viguṇaḥ (18.47): We should not try to intrude into a field of work for which we are not fitted. In that case, we will find that our knowledge and capacity are not adequate for the purpose. Either we would bungle on account of our not being suitable for that kind of work, or we would not be utilising our genius adequately by choosing some lesser kind of work while we are actually expected to be involved in a higher kind of work. So, one should be able to judge for oneself the knowledge and capacity that one has in respect of any kind of duty to be performed in society; and that capacity of choice of duty is actually the worship of God through *svakarma*. *Svadharma* and *svakarma*—one's own duty is best because we cannot expect to do more than what our duty can permit us to do. Another's duty—that is, work that is not intended for us and for which we are not fitted—is not recommended.

Svabhāvanīyataṁ karma kurvan nāpnoti kilbiṣam: According to our nature, according to the predilection of our psyche, the inborn characteristic of our own personality will decide what kind of work we have to do and what duty is expected of us. Then we shall not have any kind of fear of sin because we are doing the best that we can—*kurvan nāpnoti kilbiṣam*.

Sahajaṁ karma kaunteya sadoṣam api na tyajet (18.48): It is incumbent on oneself to do one's own duty, though it becomes difficult to carry on that work due to some defect involved there. We may be ill, or we may not have the appurtenances required for performing our duty. Nevertheless, we should not transgress the boundaries of what we are expected to do in this world. That is our rule; that is our law: *sahajaṁ karma kaunteya sadoṣam api na tyajet*.

Sarvārambhā hi doṣeṇa dhūmenāgnir ivāvṛtāḥ: There is what is called dignity of labour. Every work is equally good. We should not say, "Why should I do this kind of menial work? That person is doing better work." There is no such thing as menial work and better work in this world. It is all a contribution from one's own point of view for the total welfare of humanity. Every work is equally divine; every work is equally contributory to the welfare of one's own benefit as well as others'. Work should not be compared. We should not say, "That person is doing a superior work, and I am doing an inferior work." There is no such thing as inferior work, and no such thing as superior work, just as in a huge mechanism we cannot say which part is superior and which part is inferior. All parts are equally necessary because even if one little part is not working properly, the entire mechanism will be dislocated. So, the concept of dignity of work, and the divinity that one can see in the performance of duty, is to be the guiding factor in one's daily life; and there should be no complaint either in regard to placing oneself in a so-called inferior position or

imagining that somebody else is in a higher position. There is no higher position or inferior position. Each one is fitted for something, and that must be done; and what we are not fitted for, that of course we cannot do. So, we should not complain.

Sarvārambhā hi doṣeṇa dhūmenāgnir ivāvṛtāḥ: Actually, every work has a defect in it, whether it is higher work, lower work, that man's work, this man's work. Nobody can be omniscient. Everybody is human. Inasmuch as we lack complete knowledge of every kind of involvement in a particular undertaking or work, there is likely to be some difficulty to be encountered on the way. We will not get everything that we want even if we work to the best of our ability and expectation. This is because, as mentioned earlier, there are five factors determining the result of an action, and inasmuch as no one can know all the five factors working in an action—one knows only one or two—those factors of which we are ignorant will react upon us in a deleterious manner. So it is not that everybody will work perfectly without any kind of pain involved in it. Every work involves some kind of pain, whether we regard it as higher work or lower work. Every undertaking has a defect behind it, because *rajoguna* and *tamoguna pravritti* are also together with the *sattvaguna pravritti*. We cannot always be in *sattvaguna*, under the impression that everything will be well. Everything looks well for some time, but then *rajoguna* comes and distracts our mind, and *tamoguna* comes and puts a stop to our work. Hence, there is a defect in every kind of undertaking. Knowing this, one should not compare one's work with another kind of work. All work is equally good or equally bad.

Asaktabuddhiḥ sarvatra jitātmā vigatasprhaḥ (18.49): The final yoga is summed up here. How do we practise final yoga when we are about to depart from this world? It is by being totally detached in understanding, and freeing the intellect from involvement with anything whatsoever in the

world. *Asaktabuddhiḥ sarvatra*: In everything, be detached and have no attachment. *Jitātmā*: Restrained in one's own self. *Vigatasprhaḥ*: Having no liking for any particular thing in the world. *Naiṣkarmyasiddhiṁ paramāṁ sannyāsenādhigacchatii*: This kind of attitude of self-restraint is called *sannyasa*, the abandonment of every kind of involvement. Thus practising, one attains to a state where one need not do anything. *Naiṣkarmya siddhi* is a state where karmas automatically find their fulfilment, and we need not have to engage ourselves in any work later on. Just as rivers move, but they need not move after they reach the ocean, so too one has to work hard until the Universal Being is reached. There, all actions find their consummation. Therefore, it is called *naiṣkarmya*. That is the ultimate perfection which is reached by *sannyasa* dharma, which is constituted of freedom from attachment, self-restraint, and absence of desire for all things.

Siddhiṁ prāpto yathā brahma tathāpnoti nibodha me, samāsenaiḥ kaunteya niṣṭhā jñānasya yā parā (18.50): "How does one attain to this perfection, and attain to Brahman in the end? Please listen to Me. I shall tell you in brief."

Buddhyā viśuddhayā yukto dhṛtyātmānam niyamyā ca (18.51): Purifying one's intellect from the dross of *rajasic* and *tamasic* desires. *Dhṛtyātmānam niyamyā ca*: By restraining the lower self with the power of the higher self—that is, by restraining oneself in the light of the aspiration for a higher reality. *Śabdādīn viṣayāms tyaktvā*: Cutting off connection of all five senses with the objects by withdrawing the five senses from their corresponding objects. *Śabdādīn viṣayāms tyaktvā rāga dveṣau vyudasya ca*: Freeing oneself from *raga* and *dvesha*, attachment and aversion, like and dislike for anything, and having an equilibrated attitude towards all things.

Viviktasevī laghvāśī (18.52): Always wanting to be alone to oneself, and not feeling happy in the midst of people. The

more we are alone, the more we feel free and happy. That is the characteristic of a spiritual seeker in an advanced stage. *Laghvāśī*: Eating only as much as is necessary, and not eating like a glutton. *Yatavākkāyamānaḥ*: Working only to the extent it is necessary to work. He does not work beyond his limit and become fatigued. He speaks only when it is necessary to speak, and does not speak unnecessarily. He also restrains the mind, and thinks only when it is necessary to think in a particular line. Otherwise, he does not think anything at all because of his inward spiritual approach. *Dhyānayogaparonityam*: Always intent on the supreme meditative mood on the ultimate goal of life. *Vairāgyam samupāśritaḥ*: Totally renouncing all attachment to worldly involvements, all perishable objects—anything that is external, spatial and temporal—renouncing all these things by *vairagya* dharma.

Ahaṁkāraṁ balaṁ darpaṁ kāmaṁ krodhaṁ parigrahaṁ vimucya (18.53): Abandoning self-consciousness, not patting oneself on the back that “I have achieved something. I am a spiritual seeker. God is very kind to me, I have advanced so much”. Do not say this, and do not even feel in your mind that you are a superior person, because nobody can be regarded as so very high in the eye of God. Do not be proud of your energy, strength and capacity; do not be vainglorious in your approach; do not desire things which are unnecessary; do not be subject to anger and irritation; do not accept anything which is not actually necessary for a reasonably comfortable life; never have a feeling of ‘I’-ness and ‘mine’-ness in regard to things; do not go on asserting yourself by saying, “I, I, I” and “mine, mine, mine”. None of these things are permitted, finally. Therefore, one must be calm and quiet inwardly, established in Brahman, free from these turmoils of the psyche which come in the form of ego, etc. Then one becomes fit for the realisation of Brahman, *brahma sakshatkar*—*brahmabhūyāya kalpate*.

Brahmabhūtaḥ prasannātmā (18.54): One who is established in Brahman is calm and quiet, and composed in oneself, and neither grieves nor wants anything—*na śocati na kāṅkṣati. Samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu madbhaktim labhate parām*: Devoted to God ultimately, and wanting nothing else. Having an equilibrated attitude towards all living beings, high and low, one is centred in God, and loves God and nothing else—*madbhaktim labhate param*.

Bhaktyā mām abhijānāti yāvān yaś cāsmi tattvataḥ (18.55): The Lord says, “A true devotee knows what kind of person I am, what kind of Reality I am.” This means knowing what God is, what God does, what is the characteristic of God, and what one actually attains after reaching God. All these things will become clear when the devotion intensifies. Then, one enters into the Absolute. *Tato mām tattvato jñātvā viśate tadanantaram*: Knowing God as He is in Himself is a precondition necessary to enter into God. A conceptual appreciation of God’s existence is different from an appreciation of His Existence as He is in Himself. This is possible only if you totally annihilate your egoistic individuality, do not conceive God as if He is something outside you, and do not go on insisting on your own individual existence also. Let God be, and you should not be. When God takes possession of all things, your existence ceases to be and you are no more there, and then it is that you have entered into the Absolute. When you are there looking at God, or thinking that you are there contemplating on God as an independent person, you have not entered. You are only outside beholding, conceptualising, thinking and intellectualising. That is not enough. The entering into the very substance of God is the final aim of life, which is possible only when you cease to be, by a total abolition of your encrustations of physical and psychical personality. Then your soul merges in God.

Sarvakarmāṇyapi sadā kurvāṇo madvyapāśrayaḥ, matprasādād avāpnoti śāśvataṁ padam avyayam (18.56): If you work as a worship of God, whatever be the work that you do—let it be anything, even the littlest of activities of yours—may these activities be dedicated to God as a humble offering. By the grace of God, Who knows your goodness and your devotion, you shall attain to that Eternal Abode—*śāśvataṁ padam avyayam*.

Cetasā sarvakarmāṇi mayi sannyasya matparaḥ, buddhiyogam upāśritya maccittaḥ satataṁ bhava (18.57): “O Arjuna! I am telling you that with all your mind, with all your heart and with all your soul, be devoted to Me. Abandoning all other concerns in this world, and resorting to the yoga of contemplation through understanding, which is called *jnana* yoga, be rooted in Me, and let there be no other concern in your mind—*maccittaḥ satataṁ bhava*.”

Maccittaḥ sarvadurgāṇi matprasādat tariṣyasi (18.58): “Because of your intense devotion to Me and your rootedness in Me, you shall cross over all the turmoil of life by My grace. But if you insist on your own *ahamkara* and say, ‘I shall do this, and I shall not do that’—then you will be responsible for what follows.” You shall actually perish if you insist on your egoism and say “I shall do this, and I shall not do that” as Arjuna said in the beginning of the First Chapter. *Atha cet tvam ahamkārān na śroṣyasi vinankṣyasi*: “If you do not listen to this good advice and insist on your egoism again and again—well, you will reach nothing finally.”

Yad ahaṅkāram āśritya na yotsya iti manyase (18.59): “Because of egoism, you are saying, ‘I shall not take up arms, I shall throw down everything, and I shall not do any work.’” This was the attitude of Arjuna in the beginning. “If you are so egoistic and you decide everything for yourself—okay, do it. This attitude of yours is not going to succeed finally, because

prakṛiti will compel you to act. Even if people inwardly decide not to do anything, not to work at all, and maintain silence, it is not possible. As long as the body and mind—which are the properties of *prakṛiti*—are there, and because *prakṛiti* is always in a state of motion, it is not possible for any person to be inactive. *Prakṛiti's* *gunas* will compel you to act. So, don't say, 'I shall not do.'"

Svabhāvajena kaunteya nibaddhaḥ svena karmaṇā, kartuṁ necchasi yan mohāt kariṣyasi yavaśo'pi tat (18.60): Even without your wanting to do a thing, you shall be forced to do it on account of the operation of the *gunas*. It is not that you deliberately want to do something. Even your so-called deliberate undertaking is a compulsion from a higher source, which you cannot avoid. Therefore, do not decide individually, egoistically that "I shall do, I shall not do". Let there be no such individual decision on your part. Surrender yourself to the Almighty, and all shall be well with you.

Discourse 51

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER CONCLUDES

THE BHAGAVADGITA CONCLUDES

The Bhagavadgita is coming to its conclusion.

Īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānāṃ hr̥ddeśe'ṛjuna tiṣṭhati, bhrāmayan sarvabhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā (18.61): Ishvara, the Supreme Creator of the universe, is residing in the heart of all. He is all-pervading, transcendent, above this creation that He has manifested from Himself, yet residing in all hearts as the ruler of all, and also the Self of all. From the objective point of view, He is the dispenser of justice—the Creator, Preserver, Destroyer. From the subjective side, He is the deepest consciousness—the Atman.

In the deepest recesses of the heart of all beings, Ishvara, the Supreme Lord, resides. He controls the destiny of everything that is created, and rotates, as it were, the fates of people and all things as if they are mounted on a machine which He is operating—*yantrārūḍhāni*. By a kind of power, which is called *maya* here—an inscrutable force, *shakti*, that He wields and exerts on everyone—He exercises a permanent control on all things. His rule of law does not require any emendation in the course of time. Once creation was willed, everything necessary for the maintenance of this creation was also simultaneously willed.

Yāthātathyato'rthān vyadadhāc chāśvatībhyas samābhyah (Isa 8) is a passage from the Isavasya Upanishad. Ishvara, when He projected this universe, also made a law to maintain this

universe in a stable form. This rule of law that He laid down at the beginning of creation for the purpose of the origin, the sustenance, as well as the end of all things does not require any change from moment to moment. Those changes that may be required under given conditions in the process of history have already been well thought out at the origin of things. If history is a process of turmoil, and everything seems to be out of control—anything can happen at any time, people seem to be exercising a kind of free will—all this has also been decided in the beginning of things. That there shall be a kind of turmoil, that there shall be an end of a certain epoch in history, and that there shall also be a remedy to it, was willed in the beginning of things. That is to say, omniscience being the quality of God, Ishvara, there is no necessity for His omniscience to get amended from time to time. His parliament is an eternally set organisation. It does not call for changes under any circumstance. The whole thing is controlled permanently, for ever and ever, right from the beginning, as a machine may be controlled by an operator of the machine.

Tam eva śaraṇaṁ gaccha (18.62). Such a Being exists; such a Lord is ruling the whole universe. Resort to Him. Surrender yourself to Him. Seek refuge in Him. *Tam eva śaraṇaṁ gaccha sarvabhāvena bhārata*: From the whole of your being, from all sides of your being, go and surrender yourself to that Almighty. Do not surrender only some part of your nature; do not reserve something to not be offered to God. *Sarvabhāvena*: Every aspect of your being has to be offered. Every aspect, every facet, and in every way is this surrender to be effected—total surrender is called for—and seek refuge in Him: *tam eva śaraṇaṁ gaccha sarvabhāvena bhārata*.

Tat prasādāt parāṁ śāntiṁ sthānaṁ prāpsyasi śāśvatam: By the grace of this compassionate Almighty Lord, Ishvara, you shall attain to the peace that surpasses understanding—that

supreme peace which is eternal and untarnished by the process of spatial and temporal history. His grace, please seek it.

Iti te jñānam ākhyātām guhyād guhyataram mayā, vimrśyaitad aśeṣeṇa yathecchasi tathā kuru (18.63): “I have told you everything that is necessary. Is there anything left now? I have concluded by the word that God is supreme. Surrender to Him is the final word. Devotion to the Supreme Being is the ultimate *sadhana*. I have told you the secret of all secrets. Consider deeply the pros and cons and the various aspects of this wisdom that I have imparted to you, and then do what you like.” After having said this much, Sri Krishna does not compel Arjuna by saying, “Therefore, do this.” After saying all these things, Sri Krishna says, “Do whatever is proper according to your opinion.” There is freedom even then.

Sarvaguhyatamam bhūyaḥ (18.64): “A very great secret I have imparted hereby.” *Śṛṇu me paramam vacaḥ*: “Again I shall tell you something, a very great secret indeed.” *Iṣṭo’si me dṛḍham*: “Because you are very dear to Me, you are devoted to Me, therefore I feel like telling you something more about this great secret of the love of God. Listen to Me.” *Tato vakṣyāmi te hitam*: “For your welfare I say this.”

Repeatedly, again and again, these instructions are given in different places of the Gita. *Manmanā bhava* (18.65): “Let your mind be absorbed in Me.” *Madbhaktaḥ*: “Totally be devoted to Me.” *Madyājī*: “Offer everything to Me; sacrifice everything to Me. Whatever is there, including your own self, let that be offered to Me.” *Mām namaskuru*: “Prostrate yourself before Me.” *Mām evaiṣyasi*: “You shall attain Me.” *Satyam te*: “This is the truth.” *Pratijāne priyo’si me*: “I promise that you are dear to Me and you shall certainly reach Me, if only you follow this advice in the letter, as well as in the spirit.”

Sarvadharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja, ahaṁ tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣyayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ (18.66): “The

power of God is greater than the power of all the people in the world, in all creation. Renounce all the rules and regulations of the temporal world, which are temporary because they require transformation, change, emendation from moment to moment; but stick to the supreme dharma which is devotion to Me. Leave other dharmas which are characteristic of performance of work, etc., in the world of diversity, because all that variety of dharma is subsumed under this greatest of dharmas, that is, love of God. There is no dharma equal to that.”

There are varieties of dharmas in this world: family dharma, individual dharma, social dharma, political dharma, Kshatriya dharma, Brahmana dharma, and so on. They are all good in their own way, in their own place, but they are all nothing before the utter surrender of the soul to God. And all these dharmas, these rules, these Smirtis, these law codes—these systems of operation of secular dharma—are all included in that highest of spiritual dharmas, namely, unity with God.

Mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja: “Surrender yourself to Me, and resort to Me only. I shall destroy all your sins.” This is a great statement indeed, because it is believed that sins cannot be destroyed. *Avashyameva bhoktavyamkṛtamkarma shubhā shubham, nābhuktamkṣīyate karma* (B.V.): These verses tell us that unexperienced karma cannot leave us; we have to undergo the effect of what we have done. Wherever we go, the karmas will follow us.

The greatest sin is ignorance of God, and every other form of crime, offence and sin is an offshoot of this ignorance of the Ultimate Reality. Because the final sin is the separation from God Himself, unity with God will destroy all sins—just as all evil that we perform in the dream state will be destroyed automatically by waking up. In dream we have borrowed so much wealth from somebody, we have committed this offence, that offence, all our property has been taken away, we are in a

state of great grief. We are on our deathbed, as it were. All these stories can be found in the Yoga Vasishtha. All the experiences, all the sorrows, all the agonies, all the obligations, all the duties, all kinds of relationships that we were involved in during the state of dream do not produce any effect whatsoever when we wake up into a consciousness higher in quality than the dreaming state. The mere transformation of consciousness is equal to the fulfilment of all duties. Otherwise, even after waking up from dream we have to pay the debts that we have incurred in dream. We have to take care of all the children that we produced in the dream state because deserting our own children is a great sin, so why should we not also think of them when we wake up? Nothing will affect us, because consciousness determines everything. God-consciousness being the highest of awakenings, the world stands in relation to it as a dream. So, all the values, all the goodness and the badness, evil and sin in this world, whatever we call it, is like mist before the sun. It is annihilated root and branch because we have fulfilled the highest law. The offences and the sins that we commit in this world are no doubt violations of certain laws, but the fulfilment of the highest law includes all expiation in regard to the violations of laws that we have performed. God takes care of us to see that we shall not be punished, because we have done the greatest duty, more than anything that the world can conceive; and we have performed the greatest sacrifice, not comparable with any sacrifice that we can think of in this world; and we have cut at the root of all sin by uniting ourselves with God. Therefore it is that the Lord says: "I shall free you from all sins." *Ahaṁ tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayaiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ.*

But we should not be under the impression that we can go on committing some foolish acts and God will come to our aid. He comes to our aid only when we are oblivious of our

own existence, we are totally unaware of even the existence of the world, and we are absorbed in the Universal God utterly. It is in that condition of total transcendence of oneself that it is possible to expect this kind of blessing from the Almighty whereby all our offences are pardoned. Otherwise, as long as we are world-conscious and body-conscious—we know that there is a world and we know that there are people and that we also exist—then this law does not apply. We will have to reap the fruits of our karmas. Therefore, this is not a blanket cover for every kind of state of consciousness. It is applicable only to one state of consciousness—which is unity with God, not otherwise.

Idaṁ te nātapaskāya nābhaktāya kadācana, na cāśuśrūṣave vācyam na ca mām yo'bhyasūyati (18.67): “This great scripture should not unnecessarily be broadcast in the streets, and it should not be communicated to people who have not done some austerity in their life.” *Atapaskāya*: “One who is indulgent and grossly attached to objects in the world, totally far away from self-restraint, to such person communicate not this knowledge. One who has no devotion to Me, who carps at Me, denies Me, also to him let this not be communicated.” *Kadācana*: “Never. Do not communicate this to those who do not want to listen. They will say, ‘What are you boring into my ear?’” *Na cāśuśrūṣave vācyam*: “To such people, do not say anything.” *Na ca mām yo'bhyasūyati*: “Those who are jealous, and who deny the very existence of God Himself, to them let this secret be not revealed.”

Ya idaṁ paramaṁ guhyaṁ madbhakteṣvabhīdhāsyati, bhaktiṁ mayi parāṁ kṛtvā mām evaiṣyatyasaṁśayaḥ (18.68): “But those people who are devotedly concerned with communicating this knowledge to true devotees of God, their devotion increases by this act of communicating this knowledge spoken by Me to you.” Speaking of glorious things is also

a glory for one's own self. When we speak of lofty things, our minds are lifted to a lofty level. Therefore, our devotion to God is also enhanced simultaneously by our loving communication of this knowledge to true devotees of God. *Mām evaiṣyati*: "Then you attain to Me." *Asaṁśayaḥ*: "No doubt."

Na ca tasmān manuṣyeṣu kaścin me priyakṛttamaḥ (18.69): "I have no friend more dear than this person who is intently thinking of Me, and who glorifies Me wherever it is possible by teaching this wisdom to those who are really devoted. I consider that person as very dear to Me indeed. No one is equal to that person in devotion to Me." Dearest to God is one who is always considering God as his dearest. If to us God is the dearest, then God also will consider us as the dearest. *Na ca tasmān manuṣyeṣu kaścin me priyakṛttamaḥ, bhavitā na ca me tasmād anyaḥ priyataro bhuvi*: "No one is equal to him. No one in the world can compare with this devotee whose soul is rooted in Me and who is spending his entire life in communicating this wisdom to others who are truly devoted to Me."

Adhyeṣyate ca ya imāṁ dharmyaṁ sarṁvādam āvayoḥ, jñānayaajñena tenāham iṣṭaḥ syām iti me matiḥ (18.70): "If anyone studies this Gita with love and devotion, full of the feeling of the righteousness of God, if anybody studies this conversation between Me and you intently, daily, with concentration of mind, I shall consider that I am worshipped by *jnana yajna*." The worship of God through knowledge is called *jnana yajna*. So, the highest knowledge, or *jnana*, is here embodied in the Bhagavadgita text. "Whoever studies this lovingly, devotedly, every day, is veritably performing *jnana yajna*, the wisdom sacrifice. This is My opinion," says the Lord.

Śraddhāvān anasūyaś ca śṛṇuyād api yo naraḥ (18.71): Not only those people who study this every day, but even those who listen to this affectionately and with faith, with no prejudice, with no dubious mind, no doubts, and without the evil

of faithlessness. *Śraddhāvān* is a person endowed with real faith. *Anasūyaś ca*: With no doubt in the mind. *Śṛṇuyād api yo naraḥ sopi muktaḥ*: One who hears in this manner, such a person also should be considered as really liberated. One who is united with God is liberated, one who studies the Gita is also liberated, and even one who listens to it is also said to be liberated. Very great compassion indeed! *Sopi muktaḥ śubhāml lokān prāpnuyāt punyakarmaṇām*: Even such a person who merely listens to this great wisdom and teaching shall attain to the higher regions of the blessed ones.

“Arjuna, have you understood what I said? Has something entered your head?” *Kaccid etacchrutaṁ pārtha* (18.72): “Have you listened to what I said with concentration of mind—*ekagrena chetasa*—or was your mind wandering and you were listening some of the things, and not to everything? Did you listen to everything that I said with concentration of mind? Has your delusion gone? Have I dispelled your delusion?” *Kaccid ajñānasaṁmohaḥ pranaṣṭas te*: “Please tell Me whether or not your delusion, with which you began speaking to Me in the beginning, has gone.”

Now Arjuna says, “My delusion has gone, O Lord!” *Naṣṭo mohaḥ* (18.73): “I have no more confusion about duty now. I understand what is proper and improper.” *Smṛtir labdhā*: “I have recollected, my memory is restored as to what is good for me and in what manner I should conduct myself in the fulfilment of this ultimate goodness. I had lost my highest memory earlier. I did not recollect my higher nature, and I considered myself as an ordinary individual, related to the Kuru family, fighting the battle of life. Now I remember. My memory has been raised to the status of my relationship with the higher realities, with Your own Self also, finally.” *Tvatprasādān mayācyuta*: “All this is by Your grace, O Lord! O Imperishable Being, with Your blessing and kindness I have regained my

true consciousness. Now I am steadfast, without any kind of doubt.” *Sthito’smi gatasaṁdehaḥ*: “I have absolutely no doubt about anything now. I am steadfast in my duty, and I shall do what You say.” *Kariṣye vacanam tava*: “Here am I as Your disciple and Your servant, ready to do whatever You ask me to do.”

Here is the final word of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, and also the final word of Arjuna, where the whole subject of the Bhagavadgita is clinched.

The Bhagavadgita was told by Sanjaya to Dhritarashtra, right from the beginning, because Dhritarashtra was the person who raised the question, “What is happening in the battlefield of Dharmakshetra Kurukshetra? What are my children doing? What are the Pandava children doing?”

In answer to that, Sanjaya started recounting the entire history of the war, and he ended by saying, “Bhishma fell.”

“O Bhishma fell? Tell me everything. I am very much disturbed by hearing it.” Dhritarashtra wanted to know all that was happening.

Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa came and said, “If you want to see all things by yourself, I shall bless you with a vision with which, from this room in the palace, you will be able to see everything that is taking place in the *yuddha-bhumi*. Would you like to see that? I shall bless you with that vision.”

Dhritarashtra said, “I do not want to see this kind of horror. I shall be satisfied if someone tells me what is happening.”

So Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa blessed Sanjaya with divine vision. He could see everything that was taking place. Not only that, he could also know what anybody was thinking in their mind. There were millions of people on the battlefield, and Sanjaya could know what each one was thinking at what time, apart from what they were doing.

Such a person, Sanjaya, now speaks. *Ityahaṁ vāsu-devasya pārthasya ca mahātmanaḥ, saṁvādam imam*

aśrauṣaṃ adbhutaṃ romaharṣaṇaṃ (18.74): “My hair stands on end when I speak this, when I recount this great story of the Mahabharata. This conversation between Krishna and Arjuna—this miraculous, hair-raising, marvellous, tremendous conversation between Sri Krishna and Arjuna—I have come to know fully by the grace of Vyasa.”

Vyāsaprasādād (18.75): “I came to know by the grace of Vyasa.” *Chrutavān etad guhyam ahaṃ param*: “This secret of secrets, which others could not know. Nobody knew what Sri Krishna was speaking. Nothing was known to other people, but I know everything because of the blessing I received from Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa. I am elated. I am in a state of rapture because of the vision of the yoga of Bhagavan Sri Krishna.” *Yogaṃ yogeśvarāt kṛṣṇāt sāksāt kathayataḥ svayam*: “The greatest Yogesvara Himself is teaching yoga. What can be a greater blessing than to listen to that conversation? The greatest Yogesvara is teaching yoga, and I have listened to that. I consider this as a great blessing from Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa.”

Rājan saṁsmṛtya saṁsmṛtya saṁvādam imam adbhutam, keśavārjunayoḥ puṇyaṃ hr̥ṣyāmi ca muhur muhuḥ (18.76): “I smile within myself. I am in a state of horripilation again and again by remembering again and again this wondrous conversation of Sri Krishna and Arjuna. Marvellous, I should say. There is no other word to describe this.” *Adbhutam*: “Wondrous is that conversation.”

Tac ca saṁsmṛtya saṁsmṛtya rūpaṃ atyadbhutaṃ hareḥ, vismayo me mahān rājan hr̥ṣyāmi ca punaḥ punaḥ (18.77): “Remembering again that Visvarupa, I could see it, which others could not see. I could behold that terror-striking Cosmic Form by the blessing of Sri Vyasa. Remembering it now, again and again, that miraculous Form of Sri Hari, I am really stunned. I am stupefied when even remembering it.

I am highly elated that I had the blessing of having this vision of the Supreme Universal Virat, which nobody else could see.”

Yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇo yatra pāṛtho dhanurdharaḥ, tatra śrīr vijayo bhūtir dhruvā nītir matir mama (18.78). Wherever is Sri Krishna, and wherever is Arjuna—Sri Krishna, the Master of yoga, and Arjuna, the wielder of the bow—wherever these are seated in one chariot, there is prosperity, victory, happiness, and firm qualities. Whenever Bhishma was accosted and asked who will win finally, he used to say *yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato jayaḥ*: “Wherever is Krishna, there is victory.” *Yato dharmas tataḥ kṛṣṇo yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato jayaḥ*, or in another way, *yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato dharmo yato dharma tato jayaḥ*: “Wherever is dharma, there is Krishna; and wherever is Krishna, there is dharma; and wherever is Krishna, and hence dharma, there is victory certainly.” Bhishma said this, to the chagrin of Duryodhana, who showed a wry face and went from there saying, “I don’t depend on you people. I have others, like Karna.”

Sri Krishna represents divine grace, cosmic power, eternity operating in all temporality; and Arjuna represents humanity, the essence of mankind, the essence of human effort, the essence of aspiration, the essence of movement towards God. Arjuna is the specimen of the human individual, and *gandiva dhanush* is the instrument of action. It can be a fountain pen in the case of a writer, it can be a pickaxe in the case of a labourer, it can be a needle in the case of a doctor—anything can be considered as an instrument of action. It is symbolic of the manner in which one engages himself or herself in action. That is symbolised in Arjuna with the *gandiva dhanush* in hand. And every one of us is an Arjuna holding a *gandiva dhanush* in the sense that we are individuals with a destiny ahead of us, which we have to achieve with hard effort and with rightly motivated action.

But merely human effort will not work. There is a necessity for its being backed by Universal Grace. The Pandavas, including Arjuna, were not lacking in effort. They had the highest, strongest and the most virulent weapons in their hands. But they could not have moved persons like Bhishma, Drona and Karna even an inch but for the miraculous, subtle, unknown operation of divinity in the form of Bhagavan Sri Krishna and all the gods.

Therefore, effort is very necessary. The Bhagavadgita tells us again and again: “Do work! Do not be idle! Do not resort to inaction! Always be active! But be motivated to do righteous action.” Even then, it was necessary to reveal the Cosmic Form of God. Where is the need for the glorification of God’s power in Chapters Seven, Eight, Nine, Ten and Eleven if mere action is sufficient, and karma yoga is all, and the consciousness of righteousness in the performance of duty can liberate us? If that is the case, there is no necessity for the other chapters of the Bhagavadgita, such as the Visvarupa Darshana.

God’s grace has to be there behind every effort. There is a joint action taking place between the individual and God. That is symbolised by Arjuna and Krishna seated in one chariot. That is Ishvara and *jiva* in this very body. They are working together like two birds perched on the same tree, as it is said.

“Wherever this unity of purpose between God and man is achieved fully, and they are working in harmony, one not conflicting with the other’s motive, there shall be victory, there shall be prosperity, there shall be glory, and perfect quality. This is my opinion,” says Sanjaya.

*Om tatsaditi śrīmad bhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyām
yogaśāstre, śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvāde mokṣasaṁnyāsayogo nāma
aṣṭādaśo’dhyāyaḥ.*

*Hari Om Tat Sat
Sri Krishna Bhagavan ki jai!*

Appendix

SRI KRISHNA—THE GURU OF ALL GURUS

This day happens to be the most blessed and adorable day of the advent of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, which goes by the name of Sri Krishna Janmashtami. Sri Krishna is considered as Jagatguru; he is the teacher of all teachers, the Guru of all Gurus—*Krishnam vande jagadguru*. There is no Guru equal to him. We consider Bhagavan Sri Krishna as an incarnation of the Supreme Being. You may have heard through your studies that there have been many incarnations of Vishnu Narayana: Mastya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Parasurama, Sri Ramachandra, and Bhagavan Sri Krishna.

One of the traits of the human being is to observe and evaluate everything from the viewpoint of the human being only. We judge even God from our point of view. “Where is the goodness of God,” we ask, “when He has created a world of evil—tempests, tornados, earthquakes, sufferings, drought and flood? What kind of God has created this world? God could have created milk and honey through the waters of the Ganga, instead of giving plain water. He could have created a round earth, without ups and downs, so that we may not fall down and break our legs. Why did God not do that, in all His capacity?” This is how we think.

So, the object that we think remains what it is, and it refuses to get into the yardstick of comprehension of the human being. People find fault with Rama and Krishna, also. “What kind of Rama is he? He killed Vali, and banished Sita, and so many things.” We do not understand that these

Avataras are the indications and symbols of the development of divine consciousness. There is a gradational ascent through the evolutionary process of consciousness into greater and greater perfections. Rama was not supposed to have behaved in any other way than he did behave. It was one stage in the evolution of the incarnation. He was Maryada Purushottam, an ideal human being, with all the qualities that we can find in a human being. We cannot, and should not, expect qualities which are not in a human being, because he was Maryada Purushottam, a perfected human being—God manifested as a gentleman.

Here we have Sri Krishna Avatara, which is supposed to be a symbolic representation of the manner in which God Himself works. Nobody can know how God works, and whatever idea we may have of the manner in which God works, it is not appreciable to us because He devastates our ideas of propriety, ethicality, necessity, human-ness, and social values. Everything is put upside down.

We have systems of observation psychologically, humanly and socially. These are turned upside down by God. Actually, God is nothing but the total topsy-turvy operation of the human way of thinking. It is a *shirshasana* of the consciousness of man that is required to understand what God is. We should not stand on the footstool of our consciousness, but on the brain of our consciousness.

The universal comprehensiveness and adjustability in a perfected order is something incomprehensible to a human being. We cannot think the whole universe in our minds; and God is supposed to think only in that manner. God's thought is universal thought, whereas our thought is social thought, family thought, community thought, national thought, political thought, army thought, police thought, court-case thought, and any other thoughts we have in our minds.

There is always something that we grab and something that we exclude in our perception, which is the opposite of God's way of inclusiveness. There is nothing that God can exclude from His thought, whereas in a human being, it is impossible not to exclude something. We seem to be the opposite of God in our way of thinking. We cannot grab the whole world into our comprehension at any time. Our way of thinking is only of our family, our office, our salary, our community, our relations, our property, and whatever belongs to us. When we say we are concerned with whatever belongs to us, we are not concerned with that which does not belong to us. So, to whom does the other thing belong? It is not our concern.

Here is the difference between God thinking and a human being thinking. Inclusiveness is the nature of God's operation; exclusiveness is the nature of the human way of thinking. Whenever we think something, we have to exclude something from the purview of our thought. That is to say, total thought is something unknown to a human being; and God is nothing but total thought.

I am referring particularly to the great incarnation of Bhagavan Sri Krishna today on the occasion of this spiritual advent. Whatever he said and whatever he did was totally beyond the comprehension of the human psyche. Whatever he did from childhood till the end of his life is a historical incomprehensiveness for us. There is nothing that we can comprehend meaningfully in his actions. Everything looks funny, strange, and out of the way.

Read the Bhagavadgita, which he spoke. Everything is difficult. One *shloka* seems to be contradicting another. One thing is said, then another thing is said. Everything is said in the seven hundred verses of the Bhagavadgita; but what is said, finally? We cannot make it out, due to the multifarious and multifaceted instruction that has been given to us

through the multi-faced Universal Being, the Vishvarupa. The one brain, and two eyes, and one thought of the human being cannot comprehend it. We must have as many heads as the Vishvarupa has in order to understand what the Gita said – as many eyes, as many mouths, as many processes of thinking, and as wide a consciousness.

The necessity to portray the advent and actions of these incarnations is precisely to present before us a picture of the divine way of operation taking place in the world. We do not like floods overflowing, destroying villages and killing people. We do not like cyclones breaking everything, throwing off rooftops and cutting off trees. We do not like tornadoes or drought. What is it that we like? Sri Krishna's comprehensiveness is itself an instruction. We do not require any commentary for the Bhagavadgita. The life of Krishna is a commentary on what he has said. As intricate as the multifaceted activity of Sri Krishna is, so intricate is also the multifaceted teaching of the Bhagavadgita. If we can understand who Krishna was, we can also understand what the Gita is.

Suffice it to say that Sri Krishna is considered as the ray of the Absolute, something like total comprehensiveness and infinite capacity, omnipotent in behaviour, with nothing impossible. He can set right anything in one minute, and if the necessity arises, he can dismantle the whole parliament of the cosmos and take up the reins in his own hands, which he did sometimes in his own career. Rules and regulations he did follow, but he could break any rule if the necessity arose, just as we can do anything to our own body for the sake of its sustenance.

We can have surgery performed on the limbs of our body. We can lose half the body by surgery. It is a very unfortunate thing, yet we may go to a doctor, pay *lakhs* of rupees as a fee, and remove half of the body so that we may be happy.

Where is the happiness when we have lost half of the body? This losing of half the body is necessary in order that we may exist as a complete human being. A complete human being is not the whole body. Even a half body can be a whole human being. We can ask any person who has lost everything below his thighs, with only the other half remaining, "Are you a half man?" "No, no! I am a full man," he will say. That means the person is not the body. In a like manner, impossible it is to understand this divinity operating; and it is futile on the part of anyone to understand either Krishna or Jesus.

Another example before us is Jesus Christ. He never behaved like a human being. He behaved like God Himself. All that he said is beyond the comprehension of the world. The way in which he behaved is not the behaviour of an ordinary human being. He toppled the existing laws, and broke the norms. The stereotyped procrustean bed of ethics was broken to pieces and he brought a divine law, which we have beautifully quoted in what is known as his Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament is something like a counterpart of the Bhagavadgita teachings.

Great men think alike, and they perform actions in a similar way. They belong to a different fraternity altogether. God-men are God-men everywhere, and there is no such thing as an Eastern God-man or a Western God-man. And we should not use the word 'men', also. They are not men, they are not women—they are persons. We have no language to use. A woman can be a God-man, but because of the linguistic limitations we do not want to use words like 'woman' and 'man'. So, we have to coin some new word. These days we say it is a 'person', a God-intoxicated person. It can be what is called a man or a woman, but at that time they cease to be human beings, and are neither men nor women.

Sri Krishna and Jesus Christ were neither men nor women. They were androgynous perfections, standing for the word of the Almighty, who Himself is not a man or a woman. We may say “God, the Father in heaven”; it is a human, paternal way of addressing God. It is a psychological necessity. But God is impersonality—not human in nature. That was portrayed dramatically, as if in a theatrical performance, in the picturesque drama of the life of Bhagavan Sri Krishna. This wonderful day we are observing it, and it is up to us to invoke the great blessings of this Master so that he may enter into us. Mighty we may become. A mighty person was Jesus Christ; mighty was Bhagavan Sri Krishna. May you all be mighty people!

