

Death by Stars

Excerpts From The Religious Annals of Science

Srimad Bhagavad Gita:

Bg. 11.32

श्रीभगवानुवाच
कालोऽस्मि लोकक्षयकृत्प्रवृद्धो
लोकान्समार्हर्तुमिह प्रवृत्तः ।
ऋतेऽपि त्वां न भविष्यन्ति सर्वे
येऽवस्थिताः प्रत्यनीकेषु योधाः ॥ ३२ ॥

The Supreme Personality of Godhead (Sri Krishna) said:
Time I am, the great destroyer of the worlds, and I have come here to destroy all people.

On July 16, 1945, humanity tested the first atomic bomb. Onlookers witnessed a blinding flash of light at the testing site of Las Alamos. The bomb's inventor, Robert J. Oppenheimer quoted Srimad Bhagavad Gita 11.32 during detonation. On Aug 6-9, 1945, the allies detonated the very same bomb at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. 1,90,000 people passed away from radiation poisoning.

Prologue.

GENESIS 1:3

“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.”

Light. The force that *gives* us life. Light. God's energy that *does not* fade. Light. Which *drives* photosynthesis. Light. That *tortured* the likes of Einstein over its duality. Light. Whose nuclear fusion *creates* power for humans. Light. The *power* that atom bombs carry. Light *that* destroys.

Fossil fuels were the first to go. Earth's atmosphere had succumbed to global warming due to intense burning and accumulation of greenhouse gases. Thankfully, venting some of these gases into space had mitigated some of the worst disasters. To meet the ever increasing demands for energy, humanity quickly needed some alternative options. One of the

promising aspects was building water dams and wind farms. But, O believer!! All these options required large swaths of land. How could a finite planet like earth ever hope to accomodate large human populations and their ever growing contraptions? There is a limit to how much the natural balance could be tilted to favour humans.

We then tried to directly harness the power of the sun, the biggest natural source of nuclear fusion in our galaxy. For these, we invented solar panels. There was a catch: 1) these panels could only be installed in areas where there was enough sunlight throughout the day 2) such panels occupied a lot of area. It served us well, but as our populations grew, even this was not enough. Humans launched these solar panels in orbit to effectively capture all the sun's energy which could fall upon earth and use that for power generation.

Joel 2:31

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

Our biggest mistake was to think that things that live long enough are immortal. One such everlasting resource had been our sun. But, there is nothing special about it: it's just a star like countless others in the universe. While stars burn for 8 billion years, that's just a speck on the cosmic scale. Now, the time for our sun hath come.. and mankind is again threatened to be plunged into darkness. This darkness is not a mere absence of light. It's a black abyss where time itself holds no meaning, the scientific equations governing big-bang collapse, and a black coldness fills the cosmos. We have only three options: i) search for a new sun (ii) find a way to plug this cosmic-leak or (iii) wither away and die.

Office of Pope Gregory,
The Vatican Archives.

Act 1:

Atomization of the soul.

Area 52

Los Alamos

United Federation of Earth.

A white sun shone on a cabin in the centre of Las Alamos. From outside, it was a building like any other: brown, withered away as its bricks crumbled under intense heat. An insignificant piece of history which shall become lost over time.

Dr. Krishna Mohan nervously twirled his moustache. It had grown to be quite long. "Hmmm, that's fine, the longer it is the better, it differs me from these other nude faces... What's in it for them? They'll just keep coming to their desks everyday, do the same job, go back home, have sex, sleep and continue the same monotonous routine till they die. Animals also do that. It's my ass on the line, not theirs. 44 years of blood and sweat on this project.... it better work today, or maybe i go public before these government guys torture me any further ".

Krishna inhaled deeply. Intense chlorinated scent of a thoroughly sanitised prison filled his lungs. He exhaled and looked at the control room around him. It resembled one of those old NASA rooms he had read about in school- people staring at a large screen on a wall and checking readings from various sensors from their terminals. 'My mouth is getting so dry', thought krishna. 'They said that the trinity test of the atom bomb was intense, it seems like a childish memory to me now.' Krishna searched for water at his desk, but couldn't find any. 'I can't leave my station, not right now.'. He settled by just licking his parched lips for moisture.

AI: T minus 20 mins until photon test.

Krishna playfully poked the nude face sitting near him: 'Hey Nyle, what's the status on Area 53's end? Are they receiving the light we are sending to them? What's the update on the receptive intensity?'. It had taken around 26 years, but finally they had managed to dig the tunnel from one end of the earth to another. Earth's core had so much molten pressure that whatever they built apparently kept collapsing onto itself. One physicist figured that the solution was to tile the tunnel walls with electromagnetic fields to repel the incoming molten plasma. Anyways, it had worked in the end. They had a stable tunnel. Now, area 52 and area 53 proudly stood at diametrically opposite ends of the earth.

Nyle: "W..w..well i ha..ave area 53 on the line. The experts on their end say that they cannot see anything. But, the tech team on our side is saying that we are definitely sending them the highest luminal intensity we could ever muster."

Krishna replied: "Don't look so worried man. I don't know why those fools think we can see anything. 6000 miles is a long distance. Whatever light you shine from one end is bound to be swallowed by the darkness. Anyways, we will know soon. Nyle, I am relying on you. Don't be so nervous when we conduct our tests. Just confirm AI's measurements without becoming too emotional. You can always cry afterwards". "If we still have a planet left to cry upon". He added grimly. Nyle went back into staring at the computer screen.

AI: T minus 15 mins until photon test. All non essential personnel please proceed to the observation chamber.

Krishna's attention flitted unconsciously to his terminal. A woman stared back at him with a stony face. *"My dear Jess, the sweet love of my life"*. They had both met at Oxford's graduate ball: he was graduating with a PhD in astrophysics, while she was finishing up her doctoral thesis on Religious Studies. Krishna belonged to a Hindu household, while Jessica Edwards was a devout catholic. But, matters of the heart have a way of cutting across matters of race and religion. *"We have been so happy these last 30 years. Science has always been my god. Jess has always respected that. I never gave a rat's shit about what she believes in. The trillions who follow her faith can't all be wrong.."*

He turned around and grinned nervously towards the observation chamber. *"She surely can see me from back there"*, Krishna hoped. But, the woman's face in the monitor remained unchanged as if he was a stranger. Krishna turned back to monitoring the ignition chamber. *"I can't blame her, not after what I am about to do. Maybe she will never forgive me."*

AI: T minus 10 mins until photon test. Please make way for the VIP's in the observation chamber.

Nyle eagerly tugged Krishna's sleeve: *"Krishna, the president is here. Also, a couple of Nobel prize winners from MIT and Caltech. They are waiting for us in the observation chamber"*.

Krishna got irritated: *"How many times have I told you to not get distracted? These politicians come and go like seasons. Most of these noble winners have never seen action beyond their tiny labs. Our craft is more practical. Nobody can replace us. Get back to work."*

-

Nyle: "Ok, ok, don't keep shitting on me. I'm not your son".
"Oh sorry, it slipped my tongue. I didn't mean to hurt your and Jess's feelings over Sam...". Nyle sadly crawled back to his terminal.

AI: T minus 5 mins until photon test. All non essential personnel please proceed to the observation chamber.

Krishna coughed up on his microphone: "J...J...Jess it's time..."

The woman on the screen gave a nod and disappeared.

"Nyle, can you please open the elevators to the control room when Jess comes in".

The elevator doors opened and Jess dragged a wheelchair inside. She didn't seem to be alone. The wheelchair carried the body of a frail 12 year old child. His skin seemed to be a ghastly shade: a blend of black coffee and white milk. But, his body was tough to look at. Most of the nude faces in the room diverted their eyes away...

Bottles of glucose and medicine hung from the chair. Several plastic tubes ran around in circles into the child's heart and arteries. A mechanical whirr filled the room as Jess entered: sound of the machines pumping poisonous medicines and glucose into the child's lifeless body.

Krishna: "You can let go of his head."

Jess just kept staring: "You know i can't, his neck can't support itself."

Krishna: "Just do it, put Sam in the reaction chamber, it's time. You have done your part. I'm also his dad. It's time for me to care for him now."

Jess kept standing on the spot.

Krishna: *"Nyle, can you help the womaaan."*

Nyle grabs the chair from Jess. Forcefully, she lets go. He wheels the child into the reaction chamber. Jess covers her face and runs back into the safety of the observation chamber, back where Krishna couldn't see her cry.

Sam's head lobs over his chest with no one to support him. The whites of his eyes show, as if someone possessed. There is no black pupil visible. A narrow stream of saliva trails from his mouth towards his shirt like that of a newborn child.

Krishna eagerly peers into the reaction chamber. Sam's mouth lays open as if saying: "Papa, I don't want to go." His heart melts. His eyes fixate on the bible on his desk. Jess had gifted it to him on christmas. *"I have to do this, it's my responsibility now."*

AI: T minus 1 min until photon test. T- 60, 50, 40, 30,20,10.

Nyle: *"Krishna, it's time, press the trigger... here, let me help you".*

AI: Ignition commencing.

A blinding light and intense thunder fills the chamber. Everyone in the control room ducks under their terminals

Nyle (shouting): AREA 53 REPORTS THAT THEY ARE AT 70% photon intensity.

Krishna (on microphone): What is the energy absorption at our end?

Nyle (amazed): 1 billion yettawatts, and still counting... should i hold?

Krishna: Yes, we want to see our peak yield.

Nyle: 80 BILLION YETTAWATTS AND CLIMBING. WE CAN'T HOLD MUCH LONGER. THE DYSON RECEPTORS ARE ALREADY PUSHED PAST LIMITS. THE PLANET WILL BLOW UP!!!!!!!!!!!!

Krishna: Wait, just a bit..... Now!! Deviate the dyson eye by 5 degrees so that it misses the earth. There we go....

AI: Commencing smoke clearing and de-contamination protocol. Everyone can remove their protective glasses now.

Nyle: We did it, it works!!

Krishna (hopefully): Do you see Sam in the reaction chamber?

Nyle: No trace of him. Not even the wheelchair.

The control room broke into a thunderous applause. Everyone was agitated to shake Krishna's hand. He sobbed uncontrollably: *"Oppenheimer's bombs had merely given radiation poisoning to unknown people. Hindus burn their dead while christians bury them. Only bones are left. I gave Sam an even grander exit. His very soul has been atomized. I lovingly killed him."*

Act 2: The Dyson Dilemma

AI: Testing sequence has concluded. All essential personnel please proceed to the observation chamber for debrief.

Krishna peeped through the conference room's keyhole. A round table sat in the centre of the room. It seemed full, except for one empty spot. *"Nice of them to wait for me, my Knights of the Round Table. Well, pseudo-knights. It's not as if they shoulder my burden equally. I bet if any of them could even survive a tenth of my pressure."*

Krishna opened the door, which screeched. "Damnn, they should really repair this thing ". Everyone in the room fell silent. Krishna calmly strolled to the back of the room for a refreshment. *"Let them stare, i'm hungry"*. He poured himself a coffee, taking his sweet revenge on others. His toungue watered. "Wow, Lisa finally got my favourite double chocolate dunkin donuts, let me grab one". Krishna sipped his coffee with an audible irritating noise. *"Man, this is boiling"*. It had left a white milk smudge on his moustache. He wiped it with the back of his left hand.

"Respected Gentlemen" Krishna looked around and smirked at the woman near him "and Mrs. President. Thank you so much for travelling so far and wide to see today's ignition sequence. As you know, we had our first successful dyson test after failing for 26 years. The world is never going to be the same".

Physicist 1 (from MIT): "Dr. Krishna, we already know how dyson machines work. Can you please quickly chase to the point. I can't stay here the whole day." Krishna wanted to slap him. He settled by ignoring him.

Krishna continued: "As I was saying, we are facing our worst fear. Our sun is about to die. For humanity's day to day operations, we need a lot of energy. But, the amount of energy the sun is sending to the earth barely meets the consumption of one city, let alone the entire planet. We have already maximized the energy outputs from our fusion plants, but that's not enough. We quickly needed to do something to fix this to prevent ourselves from succumbing back to the dark ages. I thank you all for having patience with me over these last 26 years. It took us a lot of time to reach this point, but we finally got here. Yes, Mr freeman?".

Bill Freeman (Physicist, descendant of Freeman Dyson, credential status unknown): "Dr. Krishna, can you please explain the meaning of your experiment. It looks cool, but I must admit, I don't entirely understand it".

"Sure, Dr. Bill, we are getting there. Tchh.. Tchhh. You should know the work of your granddad. It was he who conceptualized the first Dyson Sphere. Anyways, as you all know, a typical star like our sun is spherical in shape. It generates energy by nuclear fusion. The radiation is emitted equally in all the directions by such a horrendous fireball. However, not all the energy is received by earth. A large portion of the generated energy just shoots off into the emptiness of the space. What a colossal waste!!" cried Krishna.

"For over 8 billion years, we never cared for it. Whatever the sun sent us, was enough for our needs. But, the sun recently started changing its color from yellow to white. That spelt

trouble: it was running out of hydrogen. It has worsened over time: The amount of energy it is sending towards us has gradually decreased, making us sitting ducks. Our next bet -"

"Hmm... Hmmm..." the president cut him. "Dr. Krishna, what does this have to do with the events that have transpired here today?". Krishna glared at her.

"Ms. President, I cannot sacrifice detail for the sake of conciseness. Please be patient. I promise to make it worth your while."

"As I was saying, there is a cosmic band-aid to this problem. We could effectively redirect the radiation from the sun towards earth, which was earlier getting wasted. For this, we need to build a sphere around the sun. Yeah... the same sphere Bill's granddaddy hypothesized. By reflecting the light from all the directions towards a single focal point, we can direct all the energy which the sun generates towards our planet. A sweet and simple plan" Krishna grinned.

Bill Freeman (worried): "Krishna, it's super simple, and that's the problem. Thousands before you have tried and failed. What makes you think this time it will work?"

"Excellent, finally an intelligent question!!". Krishna clapped his hands. The sound boomed in an otherwise soundless room. "I must admit, today's experiment was on a smaller scale. Even then we got a yield of 80 billion yettawatts. Much more than we ever generated on earth. When we scale up it's going to be even more."

Bill cried: "CAN'T YOU SEE THAT YOU ARE RUNNING INTO A CHICKEN AND EGG PROBLEM? The closer you get to the sun, the hotter it becomes. No metallic structure we build around it could withstand such high temperatures. Similarly, the farther you go from the sun, the bigger sphere you would need. How will you get so much raw material!!"

Krishna laughed: "My dear bill, think.... What is the nearest celestial body to the sun? It's Mercury. As long as we build the sphere in that orbit, we should be good. As for the raw material, when will we use the asteroid belt? Those pieces of rocks are just floating around doing nothing. I dare say,

transport them from Jupiter's Orbit to Mercury, and use that to build the dyson sphere. Finally, a worthy use for our space miners in that colony."

President(amused): "Big ambitions Mr Krishna, big ambitions indeed. It's going to cost money.. a lot of it. Who will pay for this heroic adventure?"

Krishna (surprised): "Well, the planet government of course Mrs. President. Please don't tell me that you guys are still thinking of money when our very survival is at stake!!". The president just kept looking at him coldly, seeming unconvinced.

Bill: "I see even greater loopholes. For example, the earth moves in circles around the sun. Therefore, their relative position to each other is always changing. How will you make sure that whatever energy the dyson sphere sends reaches earth correctly? Earth is like a small needle in the blackness of space. How will you reach it?"

"Bill!! It's possible to calculate exactly the position of the earth with respect to the sun in real time. Our geostationary satellites use the same principle. We will just have to compensate for the fact that owing to the large distance between sun and earth, even light takes 8 mins to reach us. So, we will have to calculate the earth's position 8 mins in advance. That should be possible, it's not like earth changes its orbit every day on some foolish god's whim" joked Krishna. "It's a purely deterministic path governable by our beautiful mathematics"

Bill (seeming unconvinced): Well, okayyyy... but like you said, the distance between the sun and earth is huge. wont light lose its energy when it reaches us?"

Krishna: "You really need to revise the basic physics bill....You can't keep doing high level stuff and forget the basics. Light is an electromagnetic wave and space is vacuum. photons don't lose any energy while travelling towards us". "Even then, right now we only tested the energy output by covering less than 1% of the sun. Once we cover the whole of it, i think it would be enough for all our needs"

Bill (coldly): "and won't that be a problem , too much of it? Surely, we can't consume all the energy we would receive from the sun. I'm sure we don't even have the technology to store it yet. how will we get rid of the excessive energy... lest it blows all of us?

Krishna (irritated): That's where our tunnel between area 52 and 53 comes into play Bill... We receive energy on one end (say area 52) and syphon off the excessive energy using the tunnel. Area 53 collects the unused photons on the other end of the tunnel and then vents them into space. Easy peasy...

"Oooh, and after 12 hours it would be Area 53 facing the sun and we would be on the dark end. Area 53 can continue collecting the sun's energy and we would switch to venting photons into space. By switching our roles alternately every 12 hours in this way, we can maintain a 100% uptime". Krishna opened both his hands, and puffed up his chest, as if performing a magic trick in front of trillions. Not that they would ever know who he was.

Bill (almost convinced): "Hmmm, I understand your tunnel is long, but it's only 100 metres wide. Can you imagine the technical challenges of what you are talking about? Standing at the sun, you want to shoot a ray of light so that it lands directly on your tunnel. If we deviate by even 1 m, the earth's surface will crack like an egg. Too risky bet Krishna, too risky..... We would need to guarantee 100% calibration all time. It will be difficult but not impossible."

Lisa (giggling): "Ha ha Ha.. Ssorry, I couldn't stop myself. This seems like the transporter in the Thor movie and Star Trek. Shoot a ray of light and get transported to different planets." Krishna's fondness for Lisa didn't offset his foul mood. Not this time.

Physicist 1 (sarcastically): "All you say makes sense on paper, but I am not sure you can deliver on it. Why should we believe you?. I think you are just promising wonders to rob us of money. You might fool all the other people gathered here, but not me... I have been in the field for far too long."

Krishna could not take it any longer. He threw the cup of coffee in the physicist's face. It was still very hot.

Krishna (now bellowing): "I VAPORIZED MY OWN CHILD!!!! WHAT MORE PROOF DO YOU NEED? YOU ARE WELCOME TO STEP INTO THE REACTION CHAMBER. I WILL LOVE TO REPEAT THE EXPERIMENT ON YOU. DON'T BLAME ME ALL YOU FUCKS DO IS KEEP ARGUING PROBLEMS. I AM OFFERING A SOLUTION NOW. TAKE IT OR DIE!!!!" Krishna grabbed him by the collar and punched his face. The physicist howled. It takes four of the president's bodyguards to restrain Krishna.

President: "Dr. Krishna, this is my last warning. We know you are a genius, but you are also a dangerous psychopath. You MURDERED your own child just to make your point. Please restrain yourself or I shall have you restrained. Your only value to us is your expertise: it would take a long time to find someone capable of doing what you can. And that's a time we don't have. This whole venture is already straining my nerves as it is. Please don't force my hand. I am already leaning towards it..".

Krishna (now glowering): "Mrs. President, I notice that the bearers of your office no longer carry the black briefcase our grandfathers had called "The football". There is no point in blowing ourselves up with nuclear weapons. Our sun is already getting extinguished. We are already going to be destroyed."

"I now offer you what previous presidents never had. The Dyson Controller. You can use this to save us. Or you can use this one to destroy us sooner." Krishna added with tears in his eyes.

His bloodshot eyes scoured the room for Jessica. "I don't care about anyone else now". But, there was no one there. Jess had already left him.

Act 3: The Consciousness Conundrum

The Reception
Office of the Catholic Church
Vatican City

Krishna: "I don't know why you have brought me to this unholy place. It has already been two hours. How long will it take? It will waste the entire day, eh?? You told me that it would

be quick? Do you know how many appointments I had to push back for this? What in the newton's name is going to happen with this visit anyways?. I think it's just going to be a colossal waste of time".

Jess: "I knew you were going to say that. If you want to continue living with me, and our remaining children, you have got to try this. For my sake and yours. Otherwise, there is no point. You would have been lost past redemption. You gotta meet him today. Even if we have to wait the whole night."

Krishna thought: *"She seems adamant, let me not add more fuel to fire"*. He strolled eagerly to the white-robed receptionist at the frontdesk.

"O sister, can you please tell how long it will take? All he does is pray. Just kneeling on the floor and praying. Why does it take THAT long. Can't he see us? We have far more important matters to attend to..."

Sister Mary: "Dr. Krishna, let me check again for you, you know, he's ever-patient... but please let me be bold: he also has limits... let me try again for you"" (she picks up the phone)

"The mass is just finishing up. He will be out anytime now".

The big doors close. The holy man had just finished granting public audience to the billions gathered in the outside courtyard. It remained a dream for many to meet him in private.

Jessica rushed to meet the man. He wore long white robes. She kissed his hand. On a closer inspection, Krishna saw that she was kissing his finger. Well, not the finger directly. The finger had a large golden ring on it. Apparently she was kissing that. *"Maybe she's already replaced me"*

Jessica eyeballed him as if asking him to kiss the ring himself. Krishna remained rooted on the spot. Jessica broke down into an apology:

"O my holy father!! Trillions seek your audience. Yet, you were kind enough to grant an audience to a humble servant like

me. Please forgive me for the transgressions of my husband. I make myself believe that he is a good man at heart, although he might not act like it. O father!! I am nothing but a small beggar, and I bow before you for thy guidance. I don't know what to do. Merely thinking about our situation dries my mouth, raises goosebumps on my body and paralyses me. I shall be forever humbled by hearing your divine words".

Pope Gregory: "Sister Jessica... Don't be so modest. You are the wife of a very important man. You shoulder an immense responsibility. Recent times have put us in turmoil never encountered before in the papal history. I must admit: I have been praying longer than usual, pondering on similar matters that now plague you. By HIS mercy, I shall try to give my advice. Please step into my private quarters, for the words we shall speak today are deep, things not meant to be heard by those with faint hearts."

Krishna, Pope & Jessica step into his cozy quarters. The room was shielded from electro-magnetic radiation and sound proofed. Krishna mused *"Apparently, this guy also needs science to help him in matters of relegion."* They followed the pope to his quarters.

Jessica (blurting at Pope's back): O father, I am haunted by my dreams. Will my husband go to heaven for serving the need of humanity?. Or, will he go to hell for killing his own child? Or will his fate be worse? Is his spirit going to forever haunt this earth with neither heaven nor hell accepting him.?

Pope Gregory (turning around): "Sister Jessica, I sympathize with you..... yes, the final judgement terrifies a lot of us. Sadly, relegious matters are not binary decisions with precise yes/no answers. They are probabilistic. It will depend on a whole lot of subjective factors. In John 3:16, it is said : "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life".

We cannot live without committing sin. But, faith can liberate us, for HE paid the price for all of us. For elaborating further, I shall need to talk to your husband. Please let me talk to him.

Pope (To Krishna): "Dr. Mohan, I have been eagerly following up on your top-secret research program. I am greatly disturbed by your recent actions involving Sam. In Exodus 20:13, Moses stated: "Thou shalt not kill". Yet, you have murdered your own son in the gravest manner possible. In the petition for today's appointment, your wife has mentioned that you are a godless man. So, it seems that you have not taken up to faith as your wife as... so there is no scope of redemption. I am intrigued then Mr. Mohan, if God is of no importance to you, why have you agreed to this appointment today?".

Krishna (muttered): "Hi, Pope Gregory, may I call you Greg?" The Pope nodded. "Greg, I love your religious annals of science. Unlike other nincompoops, you seem to understand the connections between science and religion. One scientist to another *spiritual scientist*, I thought to ask a few questions which I don't dare to ask any others. The pope seemed flattered and amused.

Greg : "Thanks Dr. Krishna, yeah the recent biblical times require me to sympathize with the public in a scientifically compatible way. I value your criticism."

Krishna: "I realized that today's meeting would be unequal. YOU are the world leading authority on one of the biggest religions in the world, and I am but a mere scientist. If we were to have a moral conversation as equals, I needed some scientific help to normalize our gaps". A glint of mischievousness entered Krishna's eyes. "So, I trained a language model on all the religious texts ever written overnight, and it shall help me make my arguments." Greg, I don't mean to disrespect, but the arguments I raise might be deep based on the statistical patterns that the model can estimate. warned Krishna (somewhat) over-confidently.

"Sure, Dr. Krishna, let's hear how does Artificial Intelligence help you justify your actions. What does it say about you killing your own son!!" cried the Pope.

"Well you see Greg, my boy had brain cancer. Stage 4 at that. You can't cut the brain to remove the tumour like the rest of the body. The skull gets in between. Even if you do, the cancer always comes back in such later stages. All you can do

is keep radiating it. Well, we did that initially, until he started coughing up blood, and lost crucial functions of the body. He became confined to a wheelchair. We had to put him into a comatose state, otherwise his body would start having fits. And I couldn't see my boy suffer like that any longer!!". Krishna broke down.

"Tell me then, Greg, what was the option for me? Should I leave him silently suffering in a helpless vegetative state? You already denied our application for euthanasia on moral grounds. What could I have done? So I opted for him for a greater scientific purpose in which he served us all. Is there anything wrong with that?"

Pope Gregory (visibly furious): Your boy was not suffering, since he was in a coma. He was getting ready to be with HIS father. Job 1:21: "Naked (without possessions) I came [into this world] from my mother's womb, And naked I will return there. The LORD gave and the LORD was taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."

YOU had no right to play god. It's HIS decision, NOT yours.

Krishna: Well, I would beg to disagree. If the body is in a coma, the patient is still suffering. When you eat a painkiller, you suppress the pain signals to the brain. However, the pain is still there. From that standpoint, it seems that I did Sam a HUGE favour. Hindus believe that the soul can never be destroyed and moves on to a new body after death. I helped Sam make that transition faster.

Pope Greg: "Even if he was, that doesn't morally justify your actions, Krishna."

Krishna: Well, my model warned me that you were going to say that. But, it also says that Hindus have a sacred book called the "Srimad Bhagavad Gita". The hero of that story Arjuna apparently fought and killed his family members on the battlefield, and that appeared to be justified as adhering to the will of the god. Even in Islam, Muhammad was willing to sacrifice his own son to God". Why is it wrong when I do that?. Maybe it was the GOD's plan for me.

Pope Greg: "A difficult argument indeed. Even then, you didn't have to subject Sam to such a ghastly death by the star. You could have used anything else in your ignition experiments. Why lose a precious human life just to make your point?"

Krishna (anxiously): What else could I use? I needed a living tissue in my experiments.

Pope Gregory: "You could have used an animal or a plant". Genesis 9:3 (NIV) states, "Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything." Even the first organism to ever go in space was the dog Laika. Tell me, why didn't you take motivation from the very scientists you claim to admire? enquired the pope.

Jessica grabbed Krishna's arm as if forcing him to stop offending the pope. However, Krishna pressed on.

Krishna: "So you say that I could have used an animal or a plant, but it is not okay to sacrifice a human for the sake of science. Why is that?"

Pope Gregory: The bible explicitly states: "Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." This shows that humans have souls. But, the level of consciousness animals have is different and perhaps lower.

Krishna (intrigued): Why do you think that humans are more conscious than animals?

Pope Gregory: Genesis 1:27 (NIV) states "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." Since man was directly created in the image of God, he is apparently at a higher level.

Krishna (interrupting): "See that is where I would argue with you to death. How do we measure intelligence? Is it the ability to do some tasks better than others? It has been proven that Blue Whales are smarter than us. Does that make them more conscious than us?. Machines have already passed the Turing test. You could not tell them apart from humans by just

looking at their responses. Does that mean machines also have a soul?"

"You also mentioned that animals have lower levels of consciousness than us. But why? I see an animal eat, cry on losing their young ones, nurture them when they are born. In all ways, they have similar perception to stimuli as what a human would respond to. If they didn't have souls, would they have been able to exhibit such behaviours?".

The nobel prize winner Jagdish Chandra Bose has already shown that plants also feel pain, when u break their branches. Just because they can't express it by visibly crying does not mean that they are not conscious.

Pope Gregory: "So what would you have us believe Dr. Krishna? that all animals, plants and humans are at an equal level and it is a sin to kill any of them?" If so, what will we eat?. Don't tell me the only option is to ingest those nutritional capsules you have invented. I'd rather eat air. Matthew 12:31-32 states: "every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. I warn you Dr. Krishna, you have not directly insulted our church, but you are getting dangerously close.

Krishna (nervously): I beg your forgiveness O holy father. All I wish to say is that things are not black and white as you believe. As a scientist, I believe in universal principles: there is a fixed set of rules that explain everything in nature. That's a quest that even Einstien died searching for. Our recent work on Grand Unified Theory has already done that.

However, it seems that our relegions have not yet reached a common consensus. It is difficult to get leaders like you even in a common room to debate on this. If you can't , how can common men find peace?. I urge you to start a debate to resolve these apparent differences in the faiths all over the world. Science only solves problems, but relegion gives us hope... The biggest power to fight against glaring odds. And that's what we would all need in these troubled times, O father.``

The pope looked troubled and gazed at the window. The first rays of sun had started to show. He muttered:

"You are leaving us with deep questions Dr. Krishna. I don't have any answers for you. I shall pray to HIM to give you faith and guide your actions".

Jessica pulled Krishna's hand: "Time to go.."

Krishna obliged. As they exited the Papal Chambers, his eyes fell on a sculpture of hercules struggling under the weight of a giant rock. The inscription below it read:

"A lot of men die for their countries, and are known as soldiers"

"Some of them become stars on walls, and are mourned as martyrs"

"One of them is only known by his deeds, but never by face. And he shall be worshipped as a God".

A sense of calm fell over Krishna. His steps raced back towards Area 52.

"Humanity's survival depends upon me. Jess or no Jess, I need to build the next generation of Dyson Spheres. If not me, who would?"