THE GLORY OF GOD

A SUMMARY OF THE SRIMAD BHAGAVATA MAHAPURANA

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

We are immensely delighted to offer our new book *The Glory of God—A Summary of the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana* by Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj to the devotees of the Lord. Highlighting the supreme glory of the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana, the great sage Suta says in the Twelfth Skanda of this divine scripture: *śrīmad-bhāgavataṃ purāṇam amalaṃ yad vaiṣṇavānāṃ priyaṃ, yasmin pāramahaṃsyam ekam amalaṃ jñānaṃ paraṃ gīyate, tatra jñāna-virāga-bhakti-sahitaṃ naiṣkarmyam āviskṛtaṃ, tac chṛṇvan su-paṭhan vicāraṇa-paro bhaktyā vimucyen naraḥ* (S.B. 12.13.18).

The glorious Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana is a sacred Purana which is loved and adored by the Vaishnavas; it speaks of the one Supreme Reality which is all consciousness and absolutely pure, and which is the goal of Paramhamsas. In this Purana, renunciation, coupled with spiritual enlightenment, dispassion and devotion has been expounded. Anyone devoutly listening to it, carefully reading it and pondering it attains final beatitude.

Pujya Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj's divine personality bears witness to this great truth that Supreme Knowledge and Supreme Devotion go hand in hand. This unique book presents the devotional outpourings of the loving heart of a great Vedantin. The discourses which comprise this book were given by Worshipful Sri Swamiji Maharaj during Sadhana Week in July 1995. In these daily talks, Swamiji presented the essence of the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana in his own characteristic style, interspersing in-depth and illuminating interpretation with stories and narrations. This book is a treasure of knowledge presented in a form which is enjoyable and easy to understand for all.

—The Divine Life Society

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Discourse 1

KING PARIKSHIT'S QUESTION TO SUKA MAHARISHI

In ancient times, Raja Parikshit raised a question in great detail that amounted to asking whether we are living in this world alone, or whether it is possible that we may be citizens of some other worlds also.

This question of King Parikshit was connected with the background of his own life, which has the antecedent of the great story of the Mahabharata. When Asvatthama, the son of Acharya Drona, discharged the invincible missile known as the Narayanastra with the hope of ending the Pandavas in a single instant, he felt that his aim of life was complete. Since this was an *astra* which could not be faced by all the forces of the Earth put together, he was under the impression that the Pandavas had been reduced to ashes. As the Pandavas were at a distance, Asvatthama climbed to the top of a tree in order to see the heap of ashes that were their remains, but to his surprise he found the Pandava forces were as jubilant as ever, and it did not seem to have occurred to their minds that anything had happened at all.

Asvatthama obtained his *astra*, which is known as the Narayanastra, as a special gift from his father Drona when he insisted that he should be given something which Arjuna did not know—because, naturally, it should be accepted

that a disciple is not as great as one's own son. Due to this persistence, Drona bestowed an indomitable power known as the Narayanastra upon Asvatthama, knowing well that the boy was mischievous and was likely to use it unwarrantedly. Drona warned him that it should not be used recklessly, yet he knew that he would not listen to his advice. So, as a safeguard, he did not teach him the art of using it a second time or the art of withdrawing it. It could be discharged once only, and then it would extinguish itself.

When, to Asvatthama's consternation, the attempt to destroy the Pandavas with this missile failed, he ran away from the field cursing everybody and yelling out that even fathers are not to be trusted these days because his father duped him, as it were, by saying that he had initiated him into an invincible *astra*, which actually amounted to nothing.

When Asvatthama was shouting like this while running away, he met the great Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa, who asked him what the matter was.

Asvatthama said, "My father did not tell me the truth. I was initiated into the invincible force called Narayanastra, being told that no one on Earth can stand before it; but when I used it, nothing actually happened."

The great Vyasa replied, "My dear boy, your father has not made any mistake. He gave you that strength which no one else in the world could wield. But you used this *astra* of Narayana against Narayana Himself. Therefore, it would not work."

Disgusted, and with the persistent desire to end the Pandavas, Asvatthama took resort to another *astra*, called the Brahmastra, and let it off with such ferocity that he thought it would end the Pandavas' progeny so that

they would have no descendants and their family would finally be extinguished. What did he do? He directed this Brahmastra to the womb of Uttara, the queen of Arjuna's son Abhimanyu, thinking that her womb would be destroyed. But God's power has no end. It is limitless, and it can act in the required manner at any moment of time. The great master Sri Krishna, with his power of yoga, entered the womb of Uttara and withdrew this invincible Brahmastra into himself. Here, again, the efforts of Asvatthama failed.

This boy, the child in Uttara's womb who Asvatthama attempted to destroy, was Parikshit, the only descendent of the Pandava brothers. Due to a tragic historical event that took place, which is told in the beginning of the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana, Parikshit was to die by a snake bite. Frightened by this possibility, Parikshit wound up his reign of the kingdom and sat in *prayopavesa* on the bank of the river Ganga, wishing to end his life, which was to come upon him within seven days, according to the curse of the son of a great rishi. It was at that time the great Suka Maharishi happened to pass that way, and he was received with great respect by the audience seated around King Parikshit. When everybody paid obeisance, Suka asked them the reason why they were all gathered on the bank of the Ganga.

Parikshit put a question: "What is good for man, especially at this hour when my life is about to end?"

How are we to answer this question? What is good for any person? In the freezing heights of the Himalayas, it is good to have a blanket over oneself. But a blanket is not good in the hot deserts of Africa; we would like to have cold water there. When we are hungry, it is good to have delicious food; when we are vomiting due to illness, it is

good not to eat at all. Anyone who desires his or her own good cannot answer this question of what is actually good for oneself, because whatever answer we give, we will find it is connected to some cause thereof, and it is not the final good.

Riches will end, the body will wither, and life is uncertain. None of these things connected with life in this world can be regarded as really good in their ultimate sense. Then, what is really good for the human individual? The difficulty in answering this question arises because we think that we are living only in this world of sensory perception.

To this great question, Sri Suka answers in a majestic manner. The ascent through the levels of creation through which one has to pass, and in which one is involved even at the present moment, is not merely a future event; it is only an unfolding of the involvement that is already there even at this present moment. Suka's answer was that we belong to all the worlds at the same time. We are citizens of every level of existence.

You must have heard that the levels of our own individual psychic being, known as the chakras, represent the levels of cosmic existence. Bhuloka, Bhuvarloka, Svarloka, Maharloka, Janaloka, Tapoloka and Satyaloka are the names given to these possible levels of total creation. These levels are correspondingly represented by the circular fields—or semicircular, as the case may be—of what are called the chakras in one's own body so that at one moment, at a single stroke of time, a person is in all the levels of creation.

At the very beginning of the Second Chapter of the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana this question is answered briefly, and reference to this is also made in the beginning of the Eighth Chapter of the Srimad Bhagavadgita when

Bhagavan Sri Krishna says: *akṣaraṁ brahma paramaṁ svabhāvodhyātmam ucyate bhūtabhāvodbhavakaro visargaḥ karmasaṁjñitaḥ*; *adhibhūtaṁ kṣaro bhāvaḥ puruṣaś cādhidaivatam adhiyajñoham evātra dehe dehabhṛtāṁ vara* (B.G. 8.3-4). Our involvements in this life are explained in this beautiful contextual answer of Bhagavan Sri Krishna to Arjuna when He says, "That which is the ultimate good is the Supreme Brahman."

A similar question was raised by Yudhishthira at the end of the Mahabharata war when he went to Bhishma, who was lying on a bed of arrows, and Bhishma's answer was that it is better to remember Vishnu and recite his one thousand names, not only at the end of time, but at all times, because the end of time is at any time. Even this very moment can be the end of time. So, when we ask the question, "What is good for me at the end of time?" it is implied that it is that which is good for us at all times because, knowing the brittleness of things in the world, all times are the end of time.

The supreme good, therefore, is the Supreme Brahman, the Ultimate Reality—*akṣaraṁ brahma paramaṁ*—which is intimately, vitally, inextricably connected with *svabhavah*, which is called the Atman. The internal, essential nature of the human individual, known as the Atman or the Self, is the true nature of a person. That is why it is called *svabhava*, the true disposition of an individual. Our selfhood is what we are; and how we behave, how we act, and how we think and feel depend upon the true nature, which is our own self, displayed through the various categories constituting this psychophysical individuality. This is *svabhava*.

Bhūtabhāvodbhavakaro visargaḥ karmasaṁjñitaḥ: Action, in the real sense of the term, is the force that ejects

this cosmos right from the topmost level of creation—the atomic *bindu* of creation, prior to the bursting of this total potentiality into the two halves of positive and negative forces. Everything, all action—any impulse whatsoever, down to the movement of an ant—is controlled by this great event that took place at the beginning of creation. The origin of action is there in the action of the cosmos.

This concept of total action is again portrayed in the Purusha Sukta of the Veda, which compares the whole creation to a cosmic sacrifice performed by God Himself, as it were. The self-alienation of the Supreme Being, the Mahapurusha, into this visible cosmos is a surrender of His own true nature of universality into the externality of creation, in which act He has sacrificed Himself, as it were. The greatest *yajna* is the Purusha Yajna, which is not to be translated as human sacrifice, as Western scholars sometimes translate this great hymn of the Rigveda.

Thus, the origin of action—everybody's action, up to the action of the atom—is impelled by this great action of the Purusha—*bhūtabhāvodbhavakaro visargaḥ karmasaṁjñitaḥ*. Really speaking, there are not many actions taking place in the world in terms of various individualities. One action is taking place, as the rumbling of thousands of waves in the ocean is actually the one action of the ocean itself. Many actions are not taking place in the ocean; it is one impulse of the root and the heart of the bowels of the ocean that rises up as the waves. Just as one action is taking place in the ocean, one action is taking place in this cosmos also.

Adhibhūtaṁ kṣaro bhāvaḥ. The perishable nature of all things is called *adhibhuta prapancha*, the externalised projected form of physical nature. The very fact of

being external is a tendency to evolution and destruction. Everything in this world evolves from the lower level to the higher level. What is called evolution is nothing but the destruction of the earlier process for the birth of a new process. This takes place in one's own body in the form of growth and decay, and it also happens in the world outside in a cosmic evolutionary process. No one can live without dying in their earlier condition, and we could not have grown into the adults that we are if the earlier babyhood had not been transcended by the decomposition of those constituents of baby individuality into the adulthood in which we are placed now.

Action is cosmic action, and the characteristic of all visible physical things is perishability—*bhūta-bhāvodbhavakaro visargaḥ karmasaṁjñitaḥ*; *adhibhūtaṁ kṣaro bhāvaḥ puruṣaś cādhidaivatam*.

The Purusha, who is the principle of cosmic sacrifice as we have it described in the Purusha Sukta, is also the indwelling presence in all our hearts. He is the source of individual sacrifices and right action, virtuous action, etc. He is the impeller from the recesses of our own heart. This is the source of individual impulses. *Adhiyajñoham evātra*: The field of activity is also God Himself. God is the director of the drama of creation, and also the actor. He does not employ people to act in the theatre. He himself appears as all the actors in all forms of manifestation, and He also directs it from another point of view. He is the performer as well as the witness of all performances.

These descriptions in the beginning of the Eighth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita point out that we belong to all levels of existence. It is, therefore, not to be considered as something unwarranted that a time comes when we have

to shed this body, because every day we are shedding the earlier components of our body in the process of rising into a more healthy condition. Cells of the body decompose every moment of time, and it is believed that every seven years all the cells are changed; we become new persons altogether. But we do not feel that there is a jump after seven years into the next seven years. The jump does not get the attention of consciousness because the link that happens to be there between the first seven years and the subsequent seven years is also inundated by consciousness—so rapidly, that we do not feel that we are growing at all. Otherwise, if this linkage of development is not filled in by consciousness, we would feel jerks every time we jump from one level to another level. Such jerks are not experienced on account of a rapid action of consciousness, just as the rapid flashing of many pictures on a screen makes us feel that it is a continuous movement although they are all small pictures, one independent of the other. The rapidity of the action of consciousness makes us feel that we are continuously one whole human being.

But, at death, the consciousness withdraws itself. That is why we feel such a fear: some tremendous upheaval takes place when we leave this body. The fear of death that was hovering in the mind of Parikshit had to be removed by this great admonition of Sukadeva Maharishi, which is the highlighting feature of the beginning of the Second Chapter of the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana.

It is believed that this great scripture, the Srimad Bhagavata, is like a delicious nectar. It is as sweet as *kheer* because, as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa Deva used to say, it is a combination of the sugar of devotion, the energy of the *ghee* of *vairagya*, and the milk of knowledge. *Jnana,*

vairagya, and *bhakti*—all the three are combined in a wonderful manner in the narration of the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana. Sri Krishna himself is supposed to be indwelling this wonderful scripture. We do not physically see the personality of Bhagavan Sri Krishna now, but we see him as the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana. Whoever studies the Bhagavata is supposed to be reading the life of Bhagavan Sri Krishna himself in all its cosmic forms. Whoever gives *dana,* or charity, of one copy of the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana is actually giving Lord Krishna himself to the devotees.

It is an incomparable scripture. Its eighteen Skandhas represent the eighteen processes of the evolution of the cosmos. In Indian culture, the number 'eighteen' has been regarded as very sacred. The Bhagavata contains twelve Skandhas, the Mahabharata contains eighteen Parvas, the war took place for eighteen days, and the Bhagavadgita has eighteen chapters. It is a great mystery. According to the traditional belief in the computational meaning of numbers, eighteen represents victory. According to a traditional calculation in India especially, the number 'eight' is represented by the word '*ja*', and the word '*ya*' is represented by the number 'one'. The old system used to read the letters from right to left, and not from left to right. So '*ja*' and '*ya*' mean '*jaya*', or victory. The Mahabharata book is also called Jaya by Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa.

The same question that was raised by Parikshit was also raised by Narada Maharishi to Brahma, the supreme Creator—to which, in the form of a reply, Brahma, the Creator, narrates the whole process of creation. The Bhagavata's description is that Narayana sleeps on the cosmic waters at the end of creation. In the philosophical

circles of Vedanta and Sankhya, these cosmic waters are actually, philosophically speaking, the potential *prakriti,* and the consciousness that is immanently present in this potential condition is Narayana, even as our Atman is alive even in the state of deep sleep. The evolution from sleep to waking is like the creation that is taking place. The whole system of creation described in the Bhagavata Mahapurana is comparable to the precise description of the involvement in creation as we have it in the beginning of the Eighth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita.

Thus, as we are ready to bestow thought on what is really good for us, that alone can be considered as good which will be valid when we enter the different levels of creation. That which is good is a single visa that is given to us for entry into all the levels of creation. Since what is good in this world may not be good in other worlds, if we regard whatever goodness we manifest in our life in this world as the total reality, it may not carry us further to the other worlds, as they may require another qualification from us. Unless we belong to the other world in some way or the other, we cannot be received in that world. If we are citizens located only in one world, how would we enter into other worlds? That is why there is a visa system, which is the permission to enter given by one country to an individual from another country. That is to say, when we enter from one world to another, one country to another, we have to acclimatise ourselves to the laws prevailing in the new country. So is the case with the permission that is required to go to another world. We cannot go freely. We have been sticking only to this world, with no idea that we belong to another world also.

Though the rise from one level to another level is usually gradual, as is described to us in the Srimad Bhagavata and the Puranas, it is also said that a sudden rise is possible. It is something like this. If one thousand rose petals are kept one over the other, and a needle is passed through them, we may say that the needle pierced all these petals at one stroke, whereas, in fact, the needle passed sequentially through one petal to the next in spite of the impression that it was an instantaneous action. Similarly, by the force of the power of yoga and meditation, we may compress the total process of the ascent through all the levels of creation into a so-called instantaneous action, though we cannot escape the law of any level of creation.

We may travel quickly by airplane, trudge on foot, or sit in a bullock cart. If we travel by airplane it takes almost no time at all to reach our destination, but we have covered the same distance. Hence, we may accede that both answers to this question are valid. Instantaneous evolution is possible, as reaching a place quickly is possible by airplane; yet, we have to remember that we have passed through all the stages abruptly due to the speed with which we have moved.

Progressing quickly is possible only if our yoga is intense. *Tīvrasaṁvegānām āsannaḥ* (Y.S. 1.21): Nearness to Reality is provided by one's intensity of feeling for it. The feeling is the touchstone of our ability to reach the levels of creation. If we can feel all things at the same time, all things will come to us at the same time.

But the individual, mortal as he is, is unable to deepen the feeling to such an extent, and he is unable to pass through these levels of creation as a needle passes through the thousand rose petals, because the intensity of his feeling is not sufficient. That is to say, our longing for freedom is

not adequately accentuated. There is a temptation in this world which tells us that there is something here which is good enough, and we need not seek another good in some other realm of creation. This interpretation of there being something permanently good in this world is provided to us by the wrong activity of the sense organs. We are caught in the web of sensory activity, which tells us that this world is all.

But the senses also tell us that this world is not all because of the dissatisfaction that follows from every kind of so-called satisfaction provided to us by the sense organs. Because the contact of the senses with objects gives satisfaction, it may bring us to the conclusion that this world is wonderful and it is good in itself, but the bitter consequence that follows from this so-called goodness of the satisfaction gained through these sense organs is also indicative of the fact that this is not really good. So the senses are our teachers in a way, apart from their being what people generally call deceivers. They are pointers to two levels of reality at the same time. If we want to dub them as evil because they do not give us permanent satisfaction, well, we are free to do that. But they also tell us through their subtle dual action that this world is not a total satisfaction, though when the senses contact the objects there seems to be a temporary sensation which looks like joy. That no joy in the world can be complete, that everything has an ending—one day we will die, with all our joys—is also an indication by the senses that this world is not all.

So, what is good for us is a question that arose in the beginning itself. The good is not merely the good of this world, which is only a relative good because that which appears to be good now may not be good tomorrow. Also,

even now, the idea that something is good is not complete because the relativity of the character of the apparent goodness of a thing is due to the cause that is behind the appearance of this goodness, and that cause is completely out of our vision. The reason why we feel satisfaction through the contact of the senses with objects is not known to us. We know only the result, but the cause of it is not known. Some mysterious action takes place, like the operation of a person controlling puppets in a puppet show. We see only puppets moving, and we enjoy the play, not knowing that somebody is manipulating strings to control their activity. Likewise, we are not aware of what takes place when we contact things in the world which give us joy, because these are puppet shows. Maybe they look beautiful and we can go on enjoying them every day, but we do not know why they are moving. They are moving due to the action of somebody else. In a similar manner, the apparent goodness and joy of the contact of the senses with objects is due to the operation of a cause, of which we are totally oblivious.

Thus, ignorance is at the back of the so-called joys of life. If we know the cause, we will be disappointed in one second. There is a thief behind this joy that we appear to have in this world. That thief is trying to rob us of whatever energy we have. Sankaracharya, in one of his verses, tells us that there are many thieves in this world, and they are ready to rob us of all the treasures that we have got in the form of energy. Our energy becomes depleted through every form of sense contact, and we become old and withered and weak, and then perish due to a total exhaustion of the energy quantum of our personality.

We may say in this sense that the senses are deceivers, but philosophically there is another aspect which makes us give them some credit also, when they tell us that all things are not well. That all things that glitter are not gold is seen by the dissatisfaction that follows. Whatever be the position that we hold in this world, whatever be our wealth and property, we will feel the sting of the fear of losing it one day or the other, so even when we possess it we are aggrieved by the possibility of being robbed of it by the time process. Therefore, sorrow is the beginning, sorrow is the middle, and sorrow is the end, say the sense organs, together with the so-called poisoned nectar that they feed us in the form of sense contacts.

So goes the great lecture of Suka Maharishi to the varied questions of Raja Parikshit, which is the introduction to the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana, a wondrous scripture which every one of us should read.

Discourse 2

THE PROCESS OF CREATION

If any scripture of the Hindus can be compared with the Bible, it is the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana. It consists of twelve books, the first nine of which are something like the Old Testament, and the Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth can be compared to the New Testament. In the earlier sections—the first nine books—we have a cosmology of the whole of creation, and practically the history of mankind as conceived from the point of view of a religious interpretation of the process of creation. Suka Maharishi placed before Raja Parikshit a picture of the Cosmic Being, through whose Being, through whose Person run all the levels of existence—seven realms above and seven realms below, from Patala to Brahmaloka. Having described this wondrous structure of creation through every level which one has to pass in the process of spiritual evolution, Sri Suka now turns his attention to the possibility of self-purification through the worship of the lesser gods, who operate through every level of creation as the fingers of the Almighty working everywhere.

The gods in heaven cannot be counted, even as the fingers of God cannot be counted. They are like infinite triangles that can be drawn on the canvas of space, all which have a base and an apex, the apex connecting the

relationship between the two points at the base, representing the perceiver and the perceived, the subject and the object, in a transcendent presence called the *adhidaiva*. The process goes on rising, one above the other, until the Supreme Person is reached. Thus, the gods in heaven represent the different layers of superintending authority in the levels of creation, and one may take them all together at one stroke for a total meditation on creation in its entirety, or each one of them can be taken separately for the purpose of concentration.

For instance, Suka Maharishi says: *brahma-varcasa-kāmas tu yajeta brahmaṇaḥ patim* (S.B. 2.3.2). A human being has various desires, aspirations and longings. Every longing can be fulfilled by adoration of a particular divinity. If you aspire for radiance in your face, energy in your personality, and lustre in the whole of your being, then meditate on Brahmanaspati, who is the abode of all lustre; if you long for knowledge, enlightenment, wisdom, meditate on a person like Lord Siva; if you want health, vigour of personality and long life, offer your prostrations and adorations to Surya, the resplendent lord of the skies; if you want mental peace, balance of feeling, concentrate your mind on the moon as identical with yourself; if you want a warlike energy and strength in your person, meditate on Skanda, the generalissimo of the gods; and if you want to be free from every kind of obstacle along your successful approach in life, pray, offer your adoration to Ganapathi, or Ganesha Bhagavan, who is the remover of all obstacles.

But having said all these things, Suka concludes by giving his final opinion: *akāmaḥ sarva-kāmo vā mokṣa-kāma udāra-dhīḥ, tīvreṇa bhakti-yogena yajeta puruṣaṁ param* (S.B. 2.3.10). Infinite desires can be fulfilled by

infinite adorations of different varieties, summoning the angels in heaven in different ways, which are the *upasanas* as mentioned; but if you want nothing or want all things at the same time, then your heart should be devoted to the Supreme Narayana who is the *mokshadata*—the giver of liberation.

The condition to attain Narayana is that we want nothing or we want everything at the same time, because wanting everything is equal to wanting nothing. The trouble is that we want only certain things, and not all things. No one can humanly long for all things in the world at the same time. But why does the mind make this discrimination in asking for things? Why does it ask only for little things? Here is the trouble with human nature: it wants, but it does not want everything. But in the condition of moksha, liberation, we have to either want everything or not want anything. *Akamah* means one who has no desires of any kind; *sarva-kamo va* means one who has desires for all things at the same time. *Moksha-kama udara-dhih*—whose intent is on liberation alone; such a person has to worship the Supreme Purusha. That is the Great Person who superintends the whole creation—the Father in heaven, if we want to call Him so.

This way of instruction by Suka Maharishi continues through the Second Skandha, or the Second Book, of the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana, and the same subject is continued in the Third Skandha where an elaborate description of the creational process through Brahma is described. This description of the coming of things from the supreme Creator as we have it in the Srimad Bhagavata practically tallies with modern findings of the process of evolution. The Bhagavata does not say that God created man in the

beginning. There was an evolutionary process, as conceived in scientific circles—namely, God created the Earth and the heavens, as it is said in the Bible, for instance, but He did not create man immediately.

Here is a little departure in the story of the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana. There is the vast ocean, the vast Earth, the entire physical universe before us—sun, moon, stars, all things. God created vegetation first. The plant kingdom manifested itself in the process of evolution. In this context, a question arises: Did God create all things at one stoke with a fiat of His will, or did He allow things to grow gradually from lower to higher species in a systematic manner? Both seem to be a valid answer in this connection. It is something like what goes on in the dream world. Do we suddenly dream mountains, rivers and things in our perception of dream, or is there a gradual perception of things from one stage to another? We can say both are equally valid. We fall into sleep and suddenly begin to dream, and the entire picture of the dream world is before us as if it has been created at one stroke. In that manner, we may say that the universe was created by a fiat of God by His will which He announced: "Let there be light"—and there was light. That is all. One word of God is enough, and the whole thing is manifested.

But after having created this total with the fiat of His will, there is no objection to the idea that the process of evolution took place gradually, because the theory is that creation is a cyclic process. It is not a sudden emerging of things that did not exist earlier. It is not that God created the world from nothing. We may say that, in some way, God does not create things Himself, as the sun does not create the problems of life, though without it no movement

can take place here. God is responsible for the evolution of the potentials that existed during the conclusion of the previous cycle—called *mahapralaya*, the dissolution of the cosmos after one hundred lives of Brahma, the creative principle.

The one hundred lives of Brahma is something difficult to imagine in one's mind. There are four cycles of time, called Krita Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga and Kali Yuga. Kali Yuga, which is the time through which we are passing now, is considered to be the worst of times because there is conflict everywhere, which is why it is called Kali, which means quarrel. There is quarrel everywhere in this particular time of our life in this world. This period of Kali is supposed to range for about four lakhs twenty thousand years (420,000). Double that time is the duration of Dvapara Yuga. Treble that time is the duration of Treta Yuga. Four times the duration of Kali Yuga is the duration of Krita Yuga. When these fourfold cycles of such long duration revolve one thousand times, it is one day of Brahma; and that length of one thousand cycles of similar duration is the night of Brahma. These cycles constituting the day and night of Brahma make one full day of Brahma, and Brahma lives for one hundred years. Calculating Brahma's lifespan is like calculating the distance of the stars—so many light years, and much more than that.

This creation lasts as long as the life of Brahma continues. When the hundred years of Brahma are over, there is cosmic dissolution. All the world will become liquid, as it were; there will be cosmic waters. But the question will arise, what happens to the individuals, people like us, when everything in creation is dissolved during dissolution? Do we attain liberation? No, we do not attain liberation even if

the whole world is dissolved, because liberation is freedom from desires of every kind. A mere physical dissolution of things does not mean the dissolution of mental desires. Just as sleep is not the end of the day and is only a commencement of the next day, in a similar manner, this cosmic sleep at the time of dissolution is a universal cessation of all activity but not a liberation of the forces of individualities. They will all be dissolved into a seed form of subtle potentiality when the universe dissolves after such a lengthy period of time—namely, one hundred years of Brahma, the Creator. And then there is creation once again.

The process starts in a similar pattern as it was in the earlier creation. The pattern is the same, but the details are different. The mould is cast forever, but the souls inhabiting these moulds vary according to the various stages of evolution in which they find themselves. That is to say, everyone has to pass through every species of creation. One has to be a mosquito, a frog, a snake, a boar, a lion, an elephant, a cow, a bull, and every blessed thing. They are moulds, or patterns of individualities, into which the mental construct—or the souls, we may say—are cast, so that the moulds permanently stay as they are, but the contents inside, the rulers there, differ at different stages of evolution, just as a particular house can be occupied by different people. The house is the same; it does not change, but today someone occupies it, and tomorrow another person occupies it. In the same way is the *yatha purvam akalpayat* (R.V. 10.190.3), says the Veda: As before, so creation starts once again.

The reason why there is such a degree in the process of evolution is that every species is given a chance to assert itself. No one can be considered as superior or inferior in this process; everybody is good enough. A tree is as good

as a lion for its own purpose. We cannot say that a lion is superior to a tree; that comparison is not allowed anywhere in the scheme of creation. Even an insect has its own soul, and the ant's insistence on the right to survive is as important as the elephant's insistence on the right to survive. We cannot say an elephant is better than an ant. No such comparison can be made.

There are supposedly eighty-four lakhs (8,400,000) of species through which every soul has to pass; and we may say, as human beings, we have passed through these and become human beings, which is a great achievement. *Manushyatvam durlabham* is the adage of the ancient masters: It is difficult to be born as a human being because we have to cross these stages of all the lower species in order to be endowed with the prerogative of being born a human. If we read the Jataka stories of Buddha's previous lives, we will find this interesting account of what Buddha was in his earlier times. He was everything—every kind of animal, a cannibal, a thief, a lecherous man. Buddha was everything at one time or the other, and there was nothing that he was not. He passed through all these stages of human nature until he assumed a position of human attainment, of Buddhahood. Likewise is the case with all individuals who are going to be Buddhas—who are on the way to the achievement of it, in some degree or the other.

There is no double promotion in the process of evolution; every stage has to be passed through. Everyone has to work hard, and everyone has to work in the same way as everyone else, and achieve it by effort. This is the rigidity of the law of the universe, where justice is meted out to every person without any kind of partiality. A tree has to be a tree, a snake has to be a snake, a frog has to be a frog,

and an elephant has to be an elephant. Whatever one is, one has a right to exist. The right to exist is the prerogative given by God's ordinance that no one can destroy another living being, because each one has a right to exist. That is the important point in the evolutionary process. In every stage, we find that all stages are equally important. Every stage is a level of reality—a kingdom, we may say, a kind of principality or empire which is inhabited by citizens of that particular stage, and all those citizens are as valid as citizens of any other realm.

We consider human beings as everything. We think of peace in the world—world peace. Generally, as human beings, we only think of peace for humanity, and not for lions and snakes. We do not think of their peace, as it is not our intention. We do not want peace for any animal or insect in the world; our attitude is that they can take care of themselves. We have roundtable conferences only for the peace of mankind because man can think only as man, and he cannot think as any other species.

We are to give justice to everybody, but that is not possible because of the insistence of the personality of each individual. A snake cares only for itself, and it can strike anyone who comes near it. It does not think that all are equal. It is not possible for even a human being to think that all are equal, because the insistence of the body and the survival instinct of the particular personality—the shape into which one is born—is so strong. But justice is meted out by the judiciary of the cosmos, and that judiciary has an eye everywhere and knows all things that are taking place. A snake is respected in the same way that a saint is respected; there is no difference.

But for us it is horrible to hear all these things. Is God as affectionate towards a snake as He is towards a saint or sage? The point is, there is no comparison of one level with another level. We have passed through that level, and we were snakes once upon a time. Would we have liked to be killed when we were snakes? We loved ourselves so much that we would have liked to continue as cobras because it is 'me', it is 'myself', it is 'I'. The snake does not say that it is a snake; it says that it is 'me'. Similarly, the human being does not say, "I am a human being." The human being says, "I am 'me', and you cannot interfere with me." The insect also says, "You cannot interfere with me."

But no particular species can consider this vast concept. It is not possible because together with the justice that requires a vaster vision of all things in the world, there is an indomitable pressure from inside us to mind our own business and not care what happens to others. But justice is not like that. God's vision is all-pervading and sees all things equally, in every way—with one eye only. God does not have many eyes. The many eyes that we speak of in the Visvarupa are actually only one eye, like the many rays of the sun constituting one energy.

So is the process of creation which is described in the Third Skandha of the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana, which Brahma himself narrates to Narada on his particular request as to how things came to be at all—again the same question as to what is good for mankind, or what is good for anybody. To this question, Sukadeva answers by these analogies given through various stories in the Skandhas of the Bhagavata.

Incidentally, we have to say how the Bhagavata came into being at all. It was written by Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa,

the great sage, after he completed writing the Mahabharata and the seventeen Puranas. It is said in the beginning of the Srimad Bhagavata that after having completed the Mahabharata, the great epic into which every knowledge has been pressed into service by the wise Vyasa, he felt that something had been left out and he had not completed his work, and he was disturbed by this 'something' which he could not properly comprehend.

At that time Narada came and asked, "What is the problem? Why are you looking despondent?"

Vyasa replied, "I have written everything conceivable on dharma, *artha* and *kama* in the Mahabharata, yet I feel that something has been left out. I have to complete my mission, but I cannot properly picture what it is that I am expected to do."

Then Narada said: *yathā dharmādayaś cārthā muni-varyānukīrtitāḥ, na tathā vāsudevasya mahimā anuvarṇitah* (S.B. 1.5.9). "You have not sufficiently glorified God in the Mahabharata. This is the defect of your work. You were busy with the narration of the epic—heroes, characters, and their vigorous opposition among themselves. You described the war in a mighty manner, but you have missed one thing. You have not adequately paid your honour, your homage, your tribute to the Almighty Creator of all this. In the Mahabharata epic, you have not expressed your love for God sufficiently. You have placed before people all the rules and regulations, but man cannot live only with rule, law and regulation. He also wants love. God is not merely a judge; He is also a parent, a father and mother. You have always considered God as a judge, as a terrifying person sitting at the top of creation and dispensing what is due to people. Maybe God is that, but He has a very kind and affectionate

heart, which point you have missed in the Mahabharata."

The glory of God is the subject of the Srimad Bhagavata. How can the glory of God be described? Is it possible for any mind to think what greatness God is? Whatever we say about Him is like a shadow in comparison to the radiance of the sun of the Supreme Being. Whatever we lack in our personality and find inadequate in this world, we seem to place it in God. We consider the opposite of all the defects of this world as the qualities of God. Everything is dying in this world, so we say God is deathless; everything is finite in this world, so we say God is infinite; everything is found only in one place in this world, so we say God is everywhere; everybody knows only certain things in this world, so we say God knows everything; everybody has a little strength, so we say God is all-powerful. That is to say, we are unable to positively describe what God Himself is, so we describe God as a counterpart of the defects and inadequacies that we see in creation. What other things can we say about God? Nobody has seen Him. We have only a feeling about Him, which we arrive at as a conclusion, as an inference from the circumstances of life and the difficulties we are passing through.

Thus originated the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana. It is the outcome of the samadhi-consciousness of Vyasa. The Bhagavata is called the Samadhi Bhasha. Vyasa's language of samadhi is the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana. He has given us the final word, and there is nothing more to say. It is said that after Shakespeare wrote *King Lear*, he had nothing more to say; or some say that after Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest*, he threw his magic wand into the ocean as there was nothing more to write. Some such thing is also told about the Srimad Bhagavata. When Vyasa wrote

the Srimad Bhagavata, there was nothing more for him to tell humanity. All knowledge is comprehended within this scripture. *Vyasochhishtam jagat sarvam* is an old saying: Whatever has been spoken from the mouth of Vyasa is all the knowledge about the world. Whatever we find in the world, we will find here; and whatever we cannot find here, we will not find anywhere else. That is the vastness and the depth of Vyasa's writing.

The Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana is written in a very intricate style of Sanskrit. It is not like the Ramayana of Valmiki, the Mahabharata or the seventeen Puranas, which are written in simple Sanskrit. Anyone who knows some Sanskrit will understand what these are about, but even a Sanskrit scholar cannot understand the language of the Srimad Bhagavata. It is highly intricate, very involved, and is scholarship raised to the height of perfection. It is said, therefore, that the Bhagavata is the test of the scholarship of a person. If we want to test the depth of a person's scholarship, we have to test his knowledge of the Bhagavata. The verses are so intricate, so deep and pregnant with meaning, one thing meaning many other things—particularly certain sections like the Veda-stuti in the Tenth Skandha, which is a very intricate prayer that the Vedas offer to the Almighty, the meaning of which cannot be known on a casual or a grammatical reading of the verses. There is wisdom thrust into every verse of the Srimad Bhagavata. Mere Sanskrit knowledge will not do to understand it. It requires a commentary and an exposition in order to know what each section says.

Vyasa wrote the Srimad Bhagavata in this manner, and Suka is the mouthpiece of this great gospel. Vyasa taught the Bhagavata to his son Suka, which he reiterated to Parikshit

on that particular occasion mentioned already.

The whole of sadhana practice, in all its varieties, is described in the Srimad Bhagavata. The difficulty in the practice of sadhana is that it is an attempt on our part to reach God. That is sadhana. The way in which we have to conduct ourselves inwardly and outwardly in order to attune ourselves to the requirement of God's presence is our sadhana. True sadhana is really difficult because it is an adjustment of our personality to the requirements of God's justice, and nothing can be more difficult than this prospect before us. As I mentioned, God's justice is incomprehensible. It involves the varieties that He has created in the world, all of which are taken into consideration at the same time. When God thinks, He thinks all things at the same time. It is not like a human being thinking, with one thought after the other. Hence, the adjustment of personality in the practice of sadhana to the requirement of God would mean an adjustment to the totality of the structure of creation and the rising of the spirit of our total personality in this adventure. It is not merely thinking, feeling or understanding that is going on in sadhana; it is the rising up of everything that we are into a focus of direct action.

I was reading a book that was presented to me, entitled *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. I went through that book and found it is so interesting, and it gives us the whole technique of sadhana. 'Zen' is a Japanese word for meditation, which is *dhyana* in Sanskrit and *chan* in Chinese. *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*—you will be wondering what kind of subject this is. The complicated structure of the motorcycle consists of various parts, but usually we are not aware of their existence. We only want to push a button, sit on it, and then ride. But how this

button works, how the motorcycle is running, how many parts are involved in it and their cooperative, harmonious activity, with so much affection—can we imagine the total action taking place through the multifarious parts that constitute the motorcycle? The maintenance of it involves, equally, a great attention paid to each and every part—cleaning every nut and bolt, and so on, to perfection, in the maintenance of a motorcycle. Our body may be compared to that motorcycle. Every little thing that we think, feel, act, understand, and are, is important for us. We cannot ignore any part of our personality. Everything is beautiful.

Zen considers everything as beautiful. When we sweep the floor, we are not doing a dirty act. It is a great art of perfection, neatness; and the broom is an object of attention, not simply a thing about which we can be callous. If we wash a vessel, it is a great art of attention in which we are engaging. So is the case with every action, whether it is cooking, preparing tea or offering anything to a guest that comes—a great art, great perfection, great beauty, and great totality. Everything is wonderful; this is Zen's conception of all things in the world. Even a leaf on a tree, even a twig that is moving, all are beautiful. The twig is moving in the breeze, how beautiful! The leaf is moving, how beautiful! The sun is shining, how beautiful! The river is flowing, how beautiful! The mountain is standing, how beautiful! Why not say it is all beautiful, instead of saying it is all stupid? Zen does not accept that things are stupid.

Likewise, in the practice of sadhana there is no stupid thing in this world. Even our thoughts are not stupid; they have to be taken care of as our own children. We may have naughty children, but it does not matter, because they are our children. All children, even of the same parents, are

different—one can totally differ from another in many respects—yet, they are to be taken care of as a single total in the family unit. In a similar manner are the ways in which we have to conduct ourselves in relation to the world. A little attention is to be paid to every thought that comes to the mind. *Manana* is only this much. If a thought comes, adore it, worship it. "My dear child, what do you want?" Why has this thought come to you? Give it what it wants; it will stop crying, and will go. But if you tell the thought, "Go, you idiot! I don't want you," it will come back yelling with greater force. Therefore, no thought should be brushed aside as unwanted, because it is our child. It has come through our brain, and we are throwing it away. It arises because of a necessity. It will not come unnecessarily. We should understand that necessity by paying careful psychoanalytical attention to it. All thoughts are our thoughts, not somebody else's, so we cannot reject them unless we reject a part of ourselves, which cannot be done. Yoga is not a rejection of any particular, but an inclusion of all things in a total whole, with a beautiful vision of all their existences, just as in Zen. That is sadhana.

The Bhagavata Mahapurana is a total beauty, and not an admixture of tiny pieces thrown together higgledy-piggledy. The Srimad Bhagavata says that it is the complete structure of the body of Bhagavan Sri Krishna. We cannot say that the body of Sri Krishna is made up of useless little parts. It is all living radiance amalgamated into a total whole of perfection and wondrous light that was Sri Krishna's body, and that is embedded into the Srimad Bhagavata by the thought of the samadhi of Vyasa Bhagavan.

So, the sadhana of the Srimad Bhagavata is a divinity operating within us in terms of the divinity that is

pervading everywhere. We may say that sadhana is God within us seeking God without, or we may say that it is God within us seeking God Who is everywhere. For that, we must be conscious of everything that is happening anywhere as being part and parcel of our relationship with the fraternity of humankind—not only humankind, but of all species and all levels of creation: Bhuloka, Bhuvarloka, Svarloka, Maharloka, Janaloka, Tapoloka, Satyaloka. At one stroke we assert our citizenship of all the levels of creation, and the gods become our friends. The denizens are ruled by divinities, and these divinities who are protecting the very quarters of creation will protect us, says the great scripture. We are not friendless and helpless in this world. The quarters of heaven, the very horizon dominated by a god, is ready to help us.

So goes the variety in this description of the story of creation. It is not merely a tale that is told to us for our cajolement, but a great meaning introduced into our practical life. We shall see this in the lives of some of the great saints depicted in the Srimad Bhagavata, such as the stories of Jada Bharata, Dhruva, Prahlada and others—and, finally, the life of Bhagavan Sri Krishna himself, with which the Srimad Bhagavata consummates.

Discourse 3

KAPILA'S INSTRUCTIONS TO DEVAHUTI

In the Third Book of the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana we have an elaborate presentation of the instructions given by Maharishi Kapila to mother Devahuti. Everyone should read this wondrous conversation between Sage Kapila and Devahuti for the variety of themes dealt with in this connection. Among many other things which are very important from the point of view of a *sadhaka,* the emphasis that Rishi Kapila lays here is concentration on God as the Supreme Person. The concept of God as a Person is pre-eminent in all religions. We cannot but conceive God as a Great Person, Whose limbs have to be the objects of our concentration. The minute details of this process are described by Kapila in these chapters.

In every religion, we will find that God is conceived as a Person—whether it is the Father in heaven, Allah, Ahura Mazda, or Narayana, Brahma, Vishnu, Siva. Whatever be the nomenclature of this Great Divinity, the idea behind it is the Personality of God. The structure of human individuality is such that it cannot but feel the necessity to encounter the Ultimate Being as a Person, because the devotee expects a response from God. The heart of the devotee does not feel comfortable with the imagination that God is a transparent, ubiquitous pervasiveness which includes the devotee also,

so that the possibility of response between the devotee and God is not well defined.

For instance, we hear in the Old Testament that the Jews had a covenant with God. They would deal with God as if He was their caretaker, their well-wisher, and He would fulfil all their requirements. The very feeling that such a covenant with God is possible arises due to the conviction that God is such a Person with Whom we can have concourse.

The principle of devotion to God emphasises this aspect of a Person, but not like a human person, which is mortal in its nature. This is a metaphysical Person, inconceivable to the ordinary mind, the deathless Personality of God—the Mahapurusha, as we have it described in the Purusha Sukta of the Vedas. The very name Purusha suggests the idea of the Great Person.

Also, we should be satisfied and happy during the time of meditation. It is one of the conditions of successful contact with God. We cannot satisfactorily place ourselves before God Almighty with a sense of fear of Him, as if He is a terror in front of us and we do not know what He will do to us. The conviction of the devotee is that God will always do good, and His response is not always so uncertain that it causes insecurity in the heart of the devotee. We reach out to God and approach Him for succour because we feel certain that He will help us, and He will not harm us. We cannot conceive Him like a universal magnetic field, by touching which we do not know what reaction will follow. There is a confirmation in the heart of the devotee that only a good thing will follow.

That is the reason why God as a Supreme Person is considered as magnificently beautiful. It is a great art presented before us, an attraction which satisfies not only

the mind, the feeling and the heart, but even the sense organs which seek the perception of beautiful form. That is how Maharishi Kapila describes God as the Marvel of marvels. We also have this type of description in the vision of Narayana that was granted to Brahma, partly in the Second Book and in the early part of the Third Book of the Bhagavata. God is always considered as a divine protector, a parent—a father and mother. The feelings of satisfaction, affection, and aesthetic completion go together in our worship of God. This is the reason why in every religion God is considered as a Supreme Person.

We also have in our scriptures the description of the Mahapurusha, Purushottama. *Ato'smi loke vede ca prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ* (B.G. 15.17), says Bhagavan Sri Krishna in the Bhagavadgita. We cannot describe Him in any other manner except as Purushottama, the best of all *purushas*. Here the word '*purusha*' does not connote a male being, but means an inclusiveness of all particulars, bereft of the distinction of male and female. We cannot say whether God is male or female, because that majesty is so complete that we cannot describe God section-wise or partially in terms of social connotations.

How does Maharishi Kapila describe the majesty of God, so that we may contemplate on Him? Yesterday I mentioned the Zen technique of attention paid to minute particulars of anything which becomes the object of concentration. Here is a similar description of meditation on every minute part of the body. The visualisation of God rises gradually from His feet to the cosmic apex of His head, which is all-pervasive. There are Sanskrit *stotras* which are called Vishnu Padadikeshantavarnanam—or, in a reverse way, Vishnu Keshadipadantavarnanam. From the

conceived hair of the Supreme Person down to the feet, and in the other order, from the feet to the Supreme head with His hair, is a kind of *vipasana* meditation of a mysterious type, taking the mind from top to bottom and from bottom to top. We are looking at God from head to foot in all His finery, completeness, beauty, ability and omnipotence.

Because of the magnificence and the might of God, the mind may not be in a position to conceive the whole of Him in one stroke. Even when we look at an ordinary individual, we cannot visualise the entire person at one stroke. We see only some part of the person for the purpose of our practical activity, and concentration on every limb is not done, generally speaking. But in order to attract the attention of the mind to the beauty and perfection in every part of the body of God, it is said that everything is *madhuram*. *Adharam-madhuram*—everything is sweetness, like sugar candy, where we cannot say that any part is not sweet.

In the case of an ordinary mortal, there is a distinction made between the functions of the head, heart, lungs, feet, hands, and so on, but in the case of the Mighty Person, such distinction is not made. Any part is as good as any other part. We cannot say that His feet are inferior to His head, as no such comparison is possible in the case of God's Personality. His limbs are described for the purpose of meditation. Every part is capable of doing the function of any other part. This is how we have it in the Bhagavadgita and in the Veda. *Sarvataḥ pāni-pādam tat sarvato'kṣi-śiro-mukham, sarvataḥ śrutimal loke sarvam āvṛtya tiṣṭhati* (B.G. 13.13): Every part of His body is eyes and ears, every part is mouth, every part is feet, every part is hands. He can work with His feet, not merely with His hands; He can see with His toes and speak with His nose, because every function

is an attribute of every part of God. It is not a limitation of concept as in our own personality where one organ cannot know the function of another organ. There, every organ is all organs because God is All-in-all.

Vishnu Padadikeshantavarnana is the subject of this description for the purpose of meditation: Beautiful are Your feet—resplendent, radiant. Rays of sunlight emanate from His toes—not merely a dazzling light before which we have to close our eyes, but a mellowed honey-like flow which is at the same time sweet and satisfying. Anything that proceeds from God is beautiful and sweet. If He speaks, it is beautiful, sweet words; if He thinks, it is beautiful, sweet thoughts; if He acts, it is beautiful, sweet action; if He blesses us, it is sweet blessing. There is nothing but sweetness in His case. And this sweetness is not a quality like the quality of sweet objects. It is the essence of God Himself.

One of the specialties of the Srimad Bhagavata is that it highlights the sweetness of God rather than His majesty and omnipotence. In the Mahabharata, for instance, there is special emphasis on the greatness, the power, the potency, and the ability of God as the incarnation Bhagavan Sri Krishna. Here, in the Bhagavata, that is not taken into consideration pre-eminently, as in the case of the Mahabharata where Vyasa always presents Lord Krishna as a fearsome personality before whom everybody has to bow, and no one can take advantage of him. Even kings come down from their thrones at the very sight of him, as he is a fear to everyone and nobody can stand before him. This is how the figure of Bhagavan Sri Krishna is presented in the Mahabharata. But here in the Bhagavata, God is not to be feared. He is a source of joy, *madhura*. In the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana the loving character of God is

emphasised everywhere, in all the Skandhas, right from the beginning to the end.

The reason is that in our meditations we require a total absorption of ourselves in God. It is not enough if only our intellect is illumined by the clarity of perception of the omnipotence of God; it is also necessary that other faculties in us, such as feeling and aesthetic sense, should also be satisfied. Usually, the mind of man cannot conceive such a completeness of God. Can God give us everything? It is said that He can. But our frailty does not feel itself competent to accept this possibility of everything being possible for God at all times, because we do not believe that He is a mother. We always believe that He is a judge whose dispensation can be for or against. But a mother's judgment is not against, it is always for. In a similar manner, in the Bhagavadgita and also in the Srimad Bhagavata, Bhagavan says, "Whoever loves Me, I shall love him abundantly." Many characteristics of God are involved in this concept.

Now, coming to the point of meditation on God as the Supreme Person, we have to see how we can visualise Him in our presence as a mighty inclusiveness—a Person standing before us in all glory and perfection. We require a little bit of imagination and the power of will to concentrate like this.

We say that God created the world. The Bhagavata does not deny this fact that God created the world because the mind of the human individual cannot but accept that God created the world. We cannot violate our own sense of feeling. The Bhagavata does not expect us to violate our own feelings and acceptances, and takes them as they are. And like a good schoolmaster taking the student from the level of his own standard, the Bhagavata gradually takes us

from our own standard of incompleteness and finitude, and the needs incumbent upon this finitude, to another level.

All the parts of this personality are equally distributed systematically, beautifully, like an artistic presentation. We have no occasion in the world to see beautiful things in such a complete manner. We have a sentimental perception of beauty which is valid for some time, but it does not persist for all time. Nothing that engulfs us in its beauty for all time, under any circumstance, is available in this world. That is available only in God, who is Supreme Beauty. Inasmuch as we are not accustomed to perceive such beauty in the world, we find it hard to conceive God in that perfection. This is why there is struggle in the beginning of the attempt at meditation. The mind gets revolted by the concept of perfection.

The beauty should be perfect, as incomplete, imperfect beauty cannot attract. But we have not seen perfect beauty anywhere in the world. Every beauty is imperfect; it has a flaw behind it, which we always ignore for the time being, for practical purposes; and that which is ignored will come up one day or the other and tell us that our concept of the beautiful object is not complete. But here, it is not like that. Nothing is hidden; it is open beauty.

Thus, Maharishi Kapila takes us gradually from the various parts of the Supreme Person to every other part. We can look at His head, His eyes, His nose, His hands, His chest, His whole person. What do we see there? We see the whole cosmos embedded in Him. We are not looking at an extra-cosmic Person standing on the top of the world, with His feet on the Earth as if the Earth has no connection with Him. This Mighty Person, called the Visvarupa, includes all the creation that He is supposed to have made. In the

Visvarupa-darsana we find all the worlds rolled up in one mass. *Ihaikasthaṁ jagat kṛtsnaṁ pasyādya sacarācaram* (B.G. 11.7): "You can see the whole universe here," says Bhagavan in his Visvarupa.

Hence, the mind cannot feel the necessity to get distracted or to go in some other direction. We may not feel at that time, "I am contemplating an extra-cosmic Supreme Person seated in heaven, and I have left the Earth which also seems to have some value for me." These values which are supposed to be in this world are included in this Supreme Magnificence, because God is not merely a transcendent creator, He is also an immanent material out of which the whole universe is created. *Abhinna-nimitta-upadana-karanatva* is the nature of God—that is, the unity of Being is the material cause as well the instrumental cause of creation. A potter is only the instrumental cause, and not the material cause, of the pot because the material is the earth, the clay, out of which it is made. But here, the material cannot be outside God. The timber, the beams and the support of this world are made up of God's Person Himself. In the great Skambha Sukta in the Atharva Veda, we have a question: What is the timber out of which the house of God is built? What are its beams; what are its pillars; what is the structure? The answer is that the pillar, the beams and the timber that are used are made of God only. That is the answer of this great Skambha Sukta: the structural pattern of God is the substance of the world also.

So, in this great Person you find the world of your dear delight. All your delights are embedded there. All the honey that you can think of in every flower of the world, you will find there in that Universal flower of completeness. You will also find all your relatives there, if you want to see them.

Your friends will be there; your treasure will be there; your property will be there; you yourself will be there. Can you imagine God in this fashion? "Difficult it is," says Maharishi Kapila, because the mind's attachment to lesser things is so poignant it does not easily release itself from their clutches.

In one place, Maharishi Kapila says, "Who is there in all creation free from total attachment to the finite objects of the world except Narayana, the great rishi who is supposed to be abiding in Badrikashrama? Except Him, who can resist the temptations of life?" In all the creations of Brahma, who is free from attachment except Narayana Himself? He is Tapomurti, whose incarnation is incidentally described in the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana, and there is also a reference to Nara-Narayana in the Mahabharata.

In Brahma's court, when all the divinities were seated, two persons rushed across without even paying attention to Brahma and the audience. How would you feel if two people suddenly, unceremoniously, crossed through the audience when you were holding a conference and large number of people were seated? Would you feel it is all right? People were surprised, and wondered who these two persons were. Brahma alone knew, and to the query of the gods seated there in audience, he said, "These two are Nara and Narayana. They do not have any concern for me or for any one of you. They have risen above common perception. The power that they wield is more than the power of the wind, the sun and the moon."

This dual force of Nara-Narayana is in Badrinath. In the Mahabharata there is a story about them. There was a king called Dambhodbhava, who wanted to conquer the whole world. He did not want to leave anything unconquered. He extended his kingdom to the shores of the ocean, and there

was no king whom he had not vanquished. But his egoism did not feel satisfied, and he wanted to conquer more.

He went to Brahma and said, "I have conquered everybody, but still I have the desire to conquer more. Is there anyone whom I have not conquered? Tell me, so that I can conquer him also."

Brahma wanted to tease this egoistic king, and said, "There are two persons whom you have not yet conquered, and you may go there and see if you can do anything to them."

"Oh! Is it so? Let me know who they are," said Dambhodbhava.

"They are Nara-Narayana. They are in Badrikashrama. You can show your strength to them," replied Brahma.

"I will conquer them," the king said.

He went to Badrikashrama with a huge army, and told Nara-Narayana, "I have come to seek battle."

Nara and Narayana replied, "This is not the place for battle. We are rishis. We are calm and quiet people. We don't require any disturbance here, and you should not come and speak to us in this manner."

"But I have been told by Brahma that you are capable of meeting me, and I want to have a battle with you," said the king.

Again Nara and Narayana said, "This is not a proper place for battle. We do not fight with anybody."

The king again persisted. Then Nara and Narayana took a little piece of grass and let it off, and it shot like a piercing arrow through the eyes, the chest, and every limb of the king and of every soldier, who were thousands in number. They cried in agony. They did not know whether they were alive or dead.

The king prostrated before Narayana and said, "Please withdraw this curse upon us. I made a mistake, and I accept that I am defeated by you."

Then Nara withdrew the *astra*, and the king and the army left.

The very thought of these Maharishis is a purifying *tapas* for us, an uncontaminated perfection of *tapas* force. "Except for them, who is free from any kind of desires?" says Maharishi Kapila. This is incidental to the main subject.

The main theme is concentration on the Mahapurusha, for which, first of all, we have to equip ourselves with the characteristic of feeling that we have had enough with everything in this world. If we feel that we have not had enough of this world, this Person cannot be an object of our meditation. A sense of ennui and a feeling that we do not require anything else should take possession of us. We had a surfeit of all things in the world. A person who is defeated by the world cannot go to God. We have to conquer the world first; it is a snare placed before us. We have to pass through that net that is placed before us, and overcome it. This is the battlefield, actually speaking, in which we are not to be defeated. We have to win victory in this field of battle of the Mahabharata, which is taking place in the form of this very Earth itself in front of us. So, unless we have conquered the temptations of life, we will not be able to have an attraction for God. This is also very marvellously described by Maharishi Kapila. I am not going through all the details of it, due to shortage of time.

There are obstacles which we cannot imagine in our life. I mentioned that there are levels of creation—Bhuloka, Bhuvarloka, Svarloka, Maharloka, Janaloka, Tapoloka, Satyaloka—and while we pass through all these levels of

creation, we have also to encounter the citizens of these various levels. We have to make friendship with them. The higher we go, the greater is the beauty that we see. The Earth has only crude beauty and a crude capacity to satisfy, whereas in the other levels there is subtle power everywhere; and as we move higher and higher, we will find the capacity to satisfy ourselves becomes more and more. The sense organs, which glut in the beauties of the world, will be engulfed by another beauty which they cannot contain, and the eyes may not be able to fully comprehend the grandeur of satisfaction that is available in the higher worlds.

These are described to us in great detail in an allegorical fashion as the Amrita Manthana, in another Skandha of the Srimad Bhagavata. Amrita Manthana is the churning of the ocean by the gods and the demons in order to acquire nectar. Both good people and bad people want to be immortal; they do not want to die. So is the case with the Devas and the Asuras who, in order to become immortal, wanted to drink the nectar which would rise when the ocean was churned. When they churned the ocean, at the very outset they found it brought forth the opposite of what they expected. What they expected was one thing, and what came was something else altogether. The expectation was for nectar, but poison came first.

At the beginning of the attempt of spiritual practice, the sense organs feel a deficiency and an incapacity of an incomparable nature. There is a dark cloud hanging in front of us, and light will not be there in the earlier stages. The reason for the darkness in front of us—the opposition of ugliness and terror at the very outset—is due to a reaction set up by the dissatisfied senses which have not been given their fill by the objects of sense. The poison, therefore, is

created by a circumstance of repulsion between the sense organs and the actual things which exist in the world. That repulsion has to gradually cease by facing it completely. We have to face that condition.

Our attempt at spiritual practice is not a smooth movement as if on a paved road. There is opposition from the world. In the beginning, it will be opposition from human beings only. Afterwards, nature itself will oppose. That is the second stage of opposition, and it is much greater than the problems created by people in this world. When nature itself has a feeling that we are trying to overcome it, it will present a phenomenon which is difficult to describe. First it will be an arena of tremendous temptation, and then an arena of war, threat and terror, in various forms.

This dual feeling which the gods and the demons had when they churned the ocean is actually the churning of life itself; that itself the ocean. Our whole life is like a sea before us whose essence has to be extracted by the churning rod of our own mind in concentration. Within us are the gods as well as the demons—the Jekyll and Hyde, as they are called. They join together and want to have the best of things in the world; they churn life. The opposition from nature is the reason why there is a feeling of discomfiture in the beginning. A poisonous gas comes, as it were, which is all opposition from every source. There is body ache, mental ache, dissatisfaction, a feeling of distress in everything, and finally collapsing because of the power nature has, with which we have not properly acclimatised ourselves during our life in the world.

We have not only to be friendly with human beings, but we also have to be friendly with nature. We cannot oppose it under the impression that everything is well with us.

There are laws of nature which are to be obeyed so that they become harmonised with the structure of our own being. If that has not been done, there is opposition one day or the other. Nature keeps quiet because our opposition to it is not very strong, but when we are bent upon it, it takes up its cudgels—and then we have poison before us.

However, briefly speaking, by this churning of the ocean both by the Devas and the Asuras—the divine forces and the evil forces in us, both the positive and negative—they find not the nectar. At least fourteen gems come up one after the other, each greater than the previous, so that in the attraction for these wonderful gems we may completely forget the very purpose of our churning. As I mentioned, the higher forces are more beautiful, more attractive than the lower ones, and these are actually the gems coming up. Fourteen obstacles from the fourteen levels of creation will come. Both forces want to drink the nectar that finally emerges, and so there is a war going on between the positive and negative forces in our own selves.

Until the end of time, we will find there is opposition between cosmic positivity and cosmic negativity. The grace of God is described here in the form of the descent of Mahavishnu in a form which fed the aspirations of the divine forces, and dispersed the evil forces. Nectar was drunk by the gods, who are the aspirations for the greatness of God in us. This is the allegorical story of the Amrita Manthana in the form of an epic poem described in the Srimad Bhagavata.

This is, of course, connected with our experience in meditation on the Supreme Mahapurusha, in which we have to persist day in and day out. We have to keep the picture of this Mahapurusha before us always. If the mind

cannot visualise this picture, we should at least have a painted picture of the Virat Purusha in front of us. If we go on looking at it every day and concentrate our mind, we will be able to energise our mind to the capacity of concentrating even without a support such as a picture or a framework, and visualise the Cosmic Being Himself as the Great Person ready to bless us with all His glory at any moment of time. Such meditation is the theme of this wondrous description of Maharishi Kapila to Devahuti, who was his own mother.

Discourse 4

THE STORIES OF SIVA AND SATI, AND OF RISHABHADEVA AND BHARATA

The Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana is filled with glorious stories of all the gods and divinities. That is why the Bhagavata is considered as a god by itself. It is a divinity in its own scope. To have the Srimad Bhagavata in one's house is to plant God Himself on the altar of one's residence.

In the Fourth Skandha we have the glorious *katha* of Siva and Sati, which will strike us with wonder and consternation.

When Brahma was about to create the world, from him the four Kumaras—Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana, Sanatkumara—were manifested for the first time. The moment they were born, Brahma told them to assist him in creation.

The Kumaras said, "We would rather concentrate our minds on the Supreme Being than engage ourselves in creation."

Brahma was in a state of discomfiture at the total disregard that they paid to his request. He was annoyed, and anger burst through his forehead. But as these Kumaras were equally powerful due to their centralisation in God Almighty, this anger could not be directed towards them; and since Brahma could not swallow the anger, he released

it. At that moment, a fiercely roaring being arose from his forehead, demanding an immediate abode for itself. It cried out. Then Brahma said, "Oh, Rudra!" Because it cried the moment it was born, it is designated as Rudra—one who makes roaring sounds, and yells and shouts.

Brahma said, "Help me in creation."

Immediately this being created an endless variety of demoniacal creatures which were frightening even to Brahma's eye.

Brahma said, "Please stop your creation!"

"Then what shall I do?" asked Rudra.

"I shall give you an abode. Go there, and keep quiet. Don't do anything at all," replied Brahma.

Then Brahma named him Siva, Rudra, Bhava, and many other names, and also gave him the Shaktis; and Rudra, who is Siva, retired to Kailasa. He did not interfere with anybody.

One day, Brahma was holding his audience, and all the gods, including Siva, were seated there. At that time Daksha, who was also a progeny of Brahma, entered the hall. In honour of his great entrance into the hall, all the gods stood up in obeisance. But Siva did not get up. He remained seated, minding not the coming of Daksha. Incidentally, Sati, the daughter of Daksha, was married to Siva, so Siva was Daksha's son-in-law. But Siva showed utter disregard for his father-in-law and did not rise from his seat when all others stood up offering obeisance.

This enraged Daksha, who stood with uplifted arms and said, "Oh, you gods! Please listen to what I am saying. Here is an idiotic fellow seated in the audience of the gods. Shameless is he. He has no respect for anybody. He wanders about half-naked and lives like a beggar. To him I gave my

daughter; what a mistake I have committed! Shame to all for having him in this audience!"

Daksha went on shouting like this for a long time, and all the gods shut their ears because they could not bear to hear it. Siva also heard all the abuses poured upon him by Daksha, but he did not utter even one word. He just walked out of the palace and returned to his abode in Kailasa, where he lived with Sati.

One day, Sati observed celestials travelling in their aerial cars. She looked up and asked them, "Where are you going?"

"You don't know?" asked one of the gods, "How is it that you do not know? Your own father is performing a glorious *yajna,* to which he has invited all the celestials, and we are all going there. How is it that you, his daughter, do not know?"

Sati was in great chagrin that an invitation had not been extended to Siva. She was disturbed that her father had ignored both her and Siva, but as he was her father, she told Siva, "I want to go to my father's *yajna*."

Lord Siva said, "It is not proper for you to go there."

"Why?" Sati asked.

"Daksha does not like me. He has no regard for me, and therefore, you going there is not proper," replied Siva.

But Sati said, "No, he is my father."

"He may be your father, but he hates me, so you should not go if I am not going. I am not responsible for the consequences," said Siva

"What consequences? I shall take care of myself," Sati told him.

"I am telling you again, it is not good for you to go there. You will not gain anything by it, and this adventure will not

end in anyone's happiness. I advise you not to go," warned Siva.

"No, I must go," Sati insisted.

"I don't think I should send my attendants to take you there. It would be highly improper of me," said Siva.

"I shall go with my own attendants!" said Sati.

Sati collected all her attendants and marched, under the impression that she, being the divine daughter of this great Daksha, will be highly honoured in the midst of all the gods.

With great expectations of glory before her, she went to the *yajna* and stood at the gate. She expected someone to come and receive her, but nobody looked at her. Daksha gave scarce regard for her, and for fear of Daksha, no other god would utter a word. Of course, her mother and associates came and hugged her, but she rejected their greeting, perhaps because her father was not concerned with her. She looked here and there.

"What is happening? How is it that no one is receiving me?" Sati thought. Then she remembered the words of Siva. "I disregarded him, and came here. Now neither can I stand here, nor can I go back to him shamefacedly." She expected somebody to come. Nobody came. Time passed like this, and the *yajna* was going on. The gods turned their backs to her. It was a very serious situation.

Sati stood up, and loudly proclaimed in a ferocious language, "Due to the impropriety of this *yajna* where the great master Siva is not invited, it cannot be called a divine sacrifice when the chief divinity is not present. Fie upon all you gods! Shamelessly you have attended the *yajna* of this irresponsible Daksha, whom I no longer regard as my father. Siva is being disrespected. The two words '*si*' and '*va*' are sufficient to give salvation to people, and such a divinity

is being disregarded here. Is this a divine sacrifice? Are you gods? Have you any sense? Daksha did not invite Lord Siva, and you come and sit here at the feet of this terrible person whom I shamelessly called father. I am very sorry that I was born to him."

Sati sat down, with great sorrow burning her body. She sat in a state of yoga, invoked *agni* from within herself, and the yoga within burnt her. Flames came up and consumed her. All were shocked. What is this that has happened? They had nothing to say either this way or that way. All were wondering what to do. There was nothing that they could do, nothing that they could say. They were shocked, nothing but shocked.

News reached Lord Siva. He could have opened his third eye and burnt everybody if he wanted, but he had something else in his mind. He pulled a hair from his head and struck it on the ground. A fierce giant rose up.

"Order, master!" said the giant.

"Go and destroy the *yajna* of Daksha," said Siva.

With the fierce retinue of Rudra, this giant called Virabhadra rushed to the sacrificial area of Daksha where all were seated, and when this fierce onrush of militant demoniacal forces entered the *yajna*, the *ritviks*, the priests performing the *yajna*, were frightened. They immediately invoked a counterforce from the fire, which rose up by the millions and attacked Rudra's retinue. There was a tussle between the two forces, but suddenly Virabhadra overcame all the opposition and severed the head of Daksha.

Rudra came to know all this. He was mad with rage. He ran, hugging the body of Sati, and rolled all over like a crazy person, as if he was dancing the final *tandava* of destruction before him. The whole world was terrified because nobody

knew what he was going to do. He would not stand in one place. He ran from place to place—over the whole creation, as it were—holding Sati's body, looking as if he was inebriated and had lost his senses. He was conscious only of the dead body of his Sati, and was moving fiercely like a whirlwind, like a tornado, like a tempest.

All the gods were frightened. They went to Lord Vishnu and said, "Please do something. Everything is in danger. He is not going to leave her body; and what he will do finally, nobody knows."

Then Sri Vishnu—Narayana—released his *sudarshana chakra*, which sliced Sati's body into little pieces; and because of the ravaging movement of Siva, the pieces were scattered and fell in seven different places. It is believed that all the spots where parts of Sati's body fell are *shakti sthalas*, and even today they are worshipped in various parts of India.

Then the gods, including Brahma and Vishnu, went to Siva. Vishnu greeted Siva and said, "Calm down. Please pardon this man Daksha. His behaviour was due to ignorance, and you should not punish an ignorant person. Calm down. Bless him. Let him be allowed to continue his *yajna*. After all, he is a foolish person, and are you going to be so enraged at the foolishness of this man?"

Then Lord Siva calmed down. But how could the *yajna* continue when Daksha's head had gone? So a goat's head was brought and fixed on Daksha, and he was enlivened to the person that he was. He immediately realised his mistake and prostrated—*sashtanga namaskaram*—before Lord Siva, and chanted the Rudra mantra, Namakam and Chamakam. Some people humorously say the mantra was made by uttering the sounds *cha me, cha me*, because goats make

that sound. The *yajna* was completed. Brahma, Vishnu and Siva blessed the *yajna*, and everything went on well.

Here, in the tradition of the pantheon of the gods according to the Epics and the Puranas, Lord Siva stands pre-eminent. He is not an ordinary god. It is impossible to describe what kind of person he is. He is a person who wants nothing for himself.

Lord Siva's name also occurs in the Mahabharata. One day, when Arjuna was seated with Bhagavan Sri Krishna at the close of the day's battle, Arjuna queried Krishna, "Master, may I ask you a question?"

"Yes, ask," replied Krishna.

"When I was engaged in battle with Drona and Karna, I saw some vague being moving about, not touching the ground. It was sometimes visible, sometimes not visible. It had ashes on its body, a serpent around its neck, and a trident in its hand. I could not make out what it was. It was an illusion before me. At the time I could not speak about this because I was engaged in war, but I remember this incident now and want to ask you what it was that I was seeing there," said Arjuna

Sri Krishna said, "You are a blessed man to have that vision. It was Bhagavan Sankara himself, invisibly moving in the battlefield to help you. Otherwise, even with all your archery, with all your might and mane, with all your knowledge and power, do you believe that you can face people like Bhishma, Drona and Karna? They are all a hundred times stronger than you. Siva, in his compassion, came uninvited to bless you because of your goodness. He did not engage in battle, and did not come to wage war with the Kurus, but his very presence was enough to paralyse the strength of all the Kurus. The odour emanating from his

body was enough to cow down everybody and make them lose all their strength. Such is the glory of Siva, the great Sankara Bhagavan; and you had his *darshan*. Blessed you are, Arjuna! He is Ashutosh—immediately pleased. Ask, and it is given immediately. You did not call him, but he knew that you required help. Unsolicited, the great master, the great god, came to you. This is Tripurari, Mahadeva, Sankara, Rudra, Siva. He was in the air, moving about without touching the ground. His blessing is upon you."

Here we have the central issue, practically, of the Fourth Skandha of the Srimad Bhagavata—among many other things, into which we will not enter here due to paucity of time.

We turn to the Fifth Skandha, which engages itself in the description of cosmic geography, and describes the denizens of the various planes and existences. It is not the geography that we read in schools and colleges, but the cosmic geography of the planes of existence, all which is given in majestic Sanskrit prose. The whole of the Srimad Bhagavata is in poetry; but here the author, Bhagavan Vyasa, turns his attention to majestic Sanskrit prose, which is a beauty in itself. A hard nut to crack is that style of Sanskrit prose found in the Fifth Skandha of the Srimad Bhagavata.

The highlighting *katha* in this Skandha is the stories of Rishabhadeva and Bharata. Rishabhadeva was a king who abdicated his throne and became an ascetic in the forest. The Jainas consider Rishabhadeva as their first Tirthankara because he lived like an utter renunciate who would not even wear clothes, which is the description of a Tirthankara in Jain literature. Digambara was the behaviour of this Rishabhadeva. Such was his austerity, such was the *tejas* that emanated from his person, such was the energy that

was in his personality, that it is said that wherever he eased himself, that part of the earth would become gold. Wherever he went, people would run after him to find gold, and so he would hide himself. The fragrance of jasmine would emanate from his body, extending to distances of several miles, and wherever people smelled jasmine, they felt that Rishabhadeva was somewhere nearby. Such was his austerity, his yoga, his concentration on God Almighty, his meditation on the Supreme Bhagavan.

He had many sons. One of them was Bharata. Due to Bharata's lethargic attitude, people used to call him Jada Bharata. Bharata was also a king and, like his father, decided to abdicate his throne and go to the forest for meditation. He did years of *tapas* alone in the jungle, meditating on the Mahapurusha, Purushottama, Narayana.

One day an incident occurred. There was the roar of a lion, and all the deer in the forest ran helter-skelter in fear. A pregnant deer jumped across a stream, and due to that frightened jump, she dropped her baby in the water. Bharata saw this, as he had come to take a bath in the stream. It was a little fawn. Anybody who saw it would take pity on it. He took it, tenderly caressed it, and loved it because it was such a tiny, simple, innocent living being. But it so happened that his attention grew more and more towards this little deer. Whenever it was absent or not visible nearby, Bharata would worry about what had happened to it, that some animal may devour it. So often and so intensely did the thought of this little deer occupy him day in and day out that, unfortunately, when he departed from the body, his last thought was of the deer. Due to this concentration on the deer at the time of his death, Bharata was born as a deer.

Yaṁ yaṁ vāpi smaran bhāvaṁ tyajaty ante kalevaram, taṁ tam evaiti kaunteya sadā tadbhāvabhāvitaḥ (B.G. 8.6): Whatever thought one remembers or entertains in the mind at the time of passing, that is the state you will attain in the next birth, says the Bhagavadgita. The body is a concentrated form of the mind itself. It is a condensation of thought. The mind manufactures this body for the purpose of the fulfilment of its desires. The body is necessary for the mind in order that it may contact physical objects through the sense organs. Otherwise, the mind by itself cannot contact physicality. So, as if its only duty is to come in contact with pleasurable objects of sense, it manifests certain avenues of contact, called the sense organs. The desire of the mind in five different ways is the reason for the manifestation of the five different senses. When we look at an object, we want to see it again and again because of its deliciousness and its apparent capacity to fulfil our desires. We want to hear the sound that it makes, we want to smell its odour, we want to touch it, we want to taste it, and for this purpose several sense organs are necessary. This is how the drama of creation goes.

This law operated even on the great ascetic Bharata. As a Sankhya sutra warns us, thinking of anything which is not contributory to spiritual practice, or sadhana, results in bondage, as in the case of Bharata. Attachment sneaks into our mind without our knowledge, like a serpent entering into a hole without our knowing that it has entered. The power of the mind, which is filled with desire, finds all sorts of excuses to see that its longings are fulfilled one way or the other. It is like a thief or a dacoit who knows every way of fulfilling his wish. Hence, because of this law of compensation according to the intensity of thought, Bharata, due to

his attachment to the baby deer, was born as a deer.

But due to the *tapasya* that he performed, in his deer life he remembered what had happened. He was not born ignorant of the past, as in the case of all people. The deer knew that it had become a deer due to some mistake in the operation of its thought. So, the deer was of a peculiar character, and not like other deer. For fear of attachment, the deer would not touch even a leaf of a tree. It carefully moved in the forest, touching not a twig, a leaf or a bush due to fear of becoming attached, as happened in its previous birth. In this detached condition, the *prarabdha* of the deer form ended one day. The deer died, and Bharata was once again born in the family of certain Brahmins. So he took three births in order to finally have his achievement.

Because of the fear of attachment due to the lesson that he had learned, he would not utter a word in this birth. His parents sent him to school, but he would not learn anything, not even the letters of the alphabet. Whatever was told to him fell on deaf ears. They thought that he was an idiot who was shamefully born into a Brahmin family, as Brahmins are very learned in Vedic lore. They tried to teach him again and again, but he was so idle, and never responded to anyone, and would not say anything. They thought he was an idiotic creature, and wondered what to do with him.

They said, "Go! Do some work," but he would not do any work either.

"Okay, at least tend the cattle. Go! Graze the cows," they said.

He took the cattle to graze, and allowed them to go into other people's fields and eat up all their crops. People were annoyed, and wondered what was wrong with him.

Then they said, "Don't do anything. Go and sit there. Idiot! Don't do anything."

But though Bharata would not utter a word, he looked very robust. He was filled with energy, but he did not want to use that energy because of fear of attachment. He had learned his lesson. So he did not want to say anything to anybody, and just kept quiet.

Some dacoits who worshipped Kali—Bhadrakali—were looking for a human being to offer in sacrifice. They searched for a hefty, strong person, and they somehow found Bharata sitting quietly without saying anything.

"Come on," they said.

He did not utter one word, and allowed them to drag him to the temple. They anointed him with *chandanam,* sandalwood paste, and garlanded him, and he still did not utter one word. Then the priest took the sword to behead him. Immediately, thunder struck. A bursting noise arose from the *murti* of Kali that they were worshipping, and a fierce-looking Devi rushed forward, grabbed the priest's sword, and cut him down, and smashed everything. All the dacoits ran helter-skelter. Even all this noise did not disturb Jada Bharata's peace. He kept quiet. Let Kali come, let dacoits come, let anything happen, he did not mind anything. People ran away from that place, and he sat alone there.

One day Rahugana, the king of the country, was passing that way on a palanquin carried by attendants. They wanted one more man to carry it and, seeing Bharata sitting there, said, "Come on. Will you help us?"

Bharata did not say anything.

They got angry and said, "Carry the palanquin!"

Bharata did not utter one word. He had not uttered one word in his entire life, and would not say anything.

Whatever happens, let it happen.

They put the palanquin on his shoulder and said, "Carry! Go!"

He carried it, but he was not interested. He walked slowly, while the others were moving fast.

The king asked the palanquin bearers, "Why are you walking like this? Have you no strength? Move!"

The others replied, "We are not doing anything wrong. We are walking properly. But this new fellow is unable to walk. He is lethargic, and is moving like an ant."

The king said, "Oh, Jada! Have you no sense? I am the king. I will hit you now. Go!"

This is the first time Bharata opened his mouth. Throughout his life he did not say anything, but when the king taunted him and said, "Jada, go! I'll thrash you!" he opened his mouth and said, "What are you saying, King? You uttered the word 'Jada'. Whom are you addressing? Are you addressing the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether? Are you scolding them that constitute the body of all individuals, mine as well as yours? When you say 'Jada, go!' whom are you referring to? Is it the five elements? Or you are addressing the prana which is in all people and is all-pervading, and incidentally happens to be animating this individual body also? Or, are you calling the mind Jada? It is a part of the cosmic mind. Your appellation does not apply to anyone. Are you calling the intellect Jada? It is a part of the cosmic intellect. Are you calling the Atman within Jada? It is a part of the universal Atman. What is the language that you are using? Why did you utter these words? Whatever you said is empty words. Under the impression that you are scolding me, you have done nothing except blabber something in nonsensical words.

Do you understand what you have said?"

When the king heard these words he was surprised, and understood that this was not an ordinary person. He came down from the palanquin, prostrated himself, and said, "O great sadhu! Bless me. I did not know who you are. If I have committed any mistake, please pardon me. Instruct me. Tell me who you are, masquerading as a human being. Perhaps you are some divinity, a god. I do not know who you are. Please tell me. I have made a mistake. Pardon me, again and again, O sadhu! Tell me who you are."

Then the great discourse of Bharata is narrated in the beautiful language of the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana. The whole world is compared to a forest, where animals like human beings are moving in search of their grub. This is a wild jungle. This entire world is compared to a forest where we can find anything anywhere, and also nothing anywhere. Ignorant, animal-like individuals lose their sense of propriety and do not want to know what the purpose of their existence actually is. They move in this forest like prowling tigers, like predators. This is to be properly understood. Do we think that the world is a pleasure garden? It is no such thing. It is full of thorns, a jungle which is to be feared. It is better that we get free of this jungle as early as possible.

Then the Skandha continues with the description of the whole process of creation—how the body of individuals is formed. The whole creation process is, in some ways, similar to the one we studied in the Second and Third Skandhas of the Srimad Bhagavata. The great wisdom of the structure of the universe and the power of the Supreme Being are described in this discourse called the Rahugana-Bharata Samvada in the Fifth Skandha of the Srimad Bhagavata.

There is also a beautiful story, called Puranjana Upakhyana. Puranjana was a king who was attached to the glamours of sense. He was caught up in the lure of maya and everything was beautiful for him, until it was time for him to depart from this world. I am not going into the details of this story now.

Puranjana represents the caught-up individual who is deluded by the Disneyland, as it were, of this world, where we do not know what we are seeing. Everything is shining everywhere. We do not know what we are actually seeing. One thing is here, and the same thing is also somewhere else—like a magic show. There are certain shows where mirrors are positioned in such a way that everything is reflected everywhere. One thing is here, and the same thing is there. Wherever we look, we see only that. And we may hit our head against the mirror, thinking it is a passage.

This world is also like that, where we hit our head against something under the impression that it is another thing altogether. We hug a snake, thinking it is a rose; we drink poison, thinking it is nectar; and we live in this body, thinking it is beautiful—whereas it is the ugliest thing that has been created by the admixture of the five elements. If the skin is removed, we will see the beauty of this body. Everyone will run away from a person who has no skin, and crows will eat the flesh. So, there is a point in saying that beauty is skin deep. Where is the beauty of a person who has no skin? Therefore, beauty is in the skin only. Is it not so? All is chaos.

Such kind of confusion and ignorance pervades the whole world of creation, right from Brahma onwards. Wherever we go, we will find bondage. We will be caught either by this policeman or that policeman. We have no

freedom anywhere. This is the kind of world we live in. Either we will be caught by dazzling things or we will be caught by dreadful things—but either way, we will be caught. It does not matter who catches us.

"Such is the world. Beware of it," said Bharata to King Rahugana. "It is a jungle, not a palace or an empire that you are ruling. You are a fool if you think that you are ruling an empire. You will perish one day, and everything will be lost. Nobody is going to continue to live for a long time in this world. Everything is passing, everything is passing, everything is passing. All is going to perish. Nothing will stay alive for a moment. This is the world in which you are reigning supreme as an emperor. Rahugana, understand what I am saying to you."

Rahugana was enlightened. He again prostrated himself before this mighty master. And Bharata engaged himself in meditation on the Supreme Person, Purushottama, who is the saviour of all, who is the Moksha-data. Disregarding His presence, we move after the sense objects. We see the ensnaring, entangling presentations before our senses, and we get caught in them and have no time to think of the Mahapurusha, the Purushottama. It is His presence which gives light to all these presentations in this world. Minus Him, the world will not exist. He is the Satchidananda Svarupa behind the *nama* and *rupa prapancha*, and all this world. We pursue the shadows, which cannot be cast unless there is a screen behind them. We forget the screen, and we pursue the shadows. That is why we are going to attain nothing worthwhile in this world by the pursuit of external objects. All externality is a shadow cast by Universality. Universality is the True Being which is Satchidananda. When it is cast into the mould of the space-time process, it

looks like objects of sense. They are only appearances. The objects do not really exist, just as the various figures that we see in a magic show do not really exist. It is a magical performance. Mahamaya is pervading everywhere, and the magician is Ishvara Himself, wielding His magic wand in His great art of creating worlds and worlds. We should not get caught. Like Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanatkumara, we should be cautious of the existence of the great Purushottama everywhere. He is the Master of all creation, and knowing Him is our true salvation.

Yadā carmavad ākāśam veṣṭayiṣyanti mānavāḥ, tadā devam avijñaya duḥkhasyānto bhaviṣyati (S.U. 6.20): If you can roll up the whole space like a sheet of leather, then you can have peace of mind without knowledge of God.

Tameva viditva'timṛtyumeti nānyaḥ panthā vidyate' yanāya: The Purusha Sukta concludes by saying there is no way of crossing over this sea of samsara except by knowing Him who is the Purushottama. One crosses the domain of death by knowing Him. Knowing Him is being Him. They are not two different things. The knowledge of God is also the being of God, and therefore, when we know God, we be God, as it were.

Such is the glorious story that we have here in the Rahugana-Bharata Samvada in the Fifth Skandha, and there are incidental stories of this type in the Sixth and the Seventh Skandhas also.

Discourse 5

NARADA INSTRUCTS YUDHISHTHIRA ON ASHRAMA DHARMA

The Sixth and Seventh Skandhas of the Srimad Bhagavata are devoted entirely to the great battle that was waged between Indra and Vritra, and in this context we also have the story of Chitraketu. It is in the Seventh Skandha that we have a more detailed analysis of Ashrama dharma, which Narada recounts to Yudhishthira in the context of his question concerning the birth of Prahlada, ending with Narasimha *avatara* due the activities of Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu, two children born to Kashyapa and Diti under queer circumstances. Narada's instruction to Yudhishthira is especially on the dharmas to be followed in the Ashrama system of life.

From the birth of a child into this world onwards, there is a graduated building up of personality through conservation of energy at different levels of being. Taking for granted that a person will live for one hundred years, the first twenty-five years are supposed to be devoted totally to an ascetic conservation of the energy of the system, which prepares the person for future life. It is very important to know that the way in which we are brought up in early childhood, and the circumstances under which we lived in the family when we were very young, will affect us in old

age. The treasure that we gathered up by the conservation of energy at an early age may keep us in good stead throughout our life; but if, as it happens in modern times, right from the beginning of a person's life there is a tendency to dissipate energy through various channels of sensory agitation such as television, movies, nightclubs, drinking, smoking, and other things, there is a sacrifice of oneself for these so-called enjoyments. It is emphasised in the Manusmriti that life is not meant for enjoyment, it is meant for working vigorously for the attainment of freedom. The freedom that we expect in our life is, again, an achievement through a graduated process.

If we do not believe that our life will continue for one hundred years and think that it may be less, we have to proportionately arrange the pattern of our life accordingly for the fulfilment which life intends. Study and intellectual training, building up of acumen through the gathering of knowledge in a Gurukula under a competent master, and purifying oneself in every way through prayer, meditation, *japa*, *surya namaskara*, and the service of the Guru under whom the student lives during these preparatory years, pave the way for the necessary apparatus required to live life later on.

Many fortunate ones are born in favourable circumstances—in a family of good parents who are examples of good behaviour, good conduct, and who themselves are religiously oriented. We cannot find such parents everywhere. The conditions of life today have changed so much that one has to work hard to wean oneself from the distractions which come to us like an oceanic flood from all sides, in endless waves, through various media of expression. In a way, we may say that we are now living in a very dissipated

atmosphere of the whole world. There is an externalised impulsion of energy for various types of contact which the senses seek in their attempt at enjoyment. It is not that one should not enjoy life or only suffer in life, but there is a period for it, there is a time for it, there is an occasion for it, and there is a way for it. Irrespective of consideration of these factors, if we think that we are born to enjoy from childhood itself, then we will pay the penalty for it by experiencing tragedies in later life.

Good company—the tutelage of good parents, good teachers, good guides, good Gurus—and a thorough study of good scriptures and textbooks that are contributory to increasing one's mental, intellectual and physical energy, are what is required during one's youth. It is called Brahmacharya Ashrama. These days, Brahmacharya Ashrama does not exist at all, due to the trouble into which one is cast right from the beginning itself through the web of problems of life arising from the very inception of one's existence.

But anyone who is interested in the welfare of their own being, and knows what is good for them, has to remember that the pleasant is not always the good. We always like pleasant things, sweet things, and they attract our senses perpetually, so that the senses gather our energies and pour them outwards on the conditions of life outside; and if this is the habit that we form right from the beginning of life, we will have to reap the fruit of this misbehaviour towards the end of our life. It is not necessary that we must be bedridden in old age. That condition is imposed on us by the circumstances into which we are born and which we have introduced into our own selves by the desire for dissipation.

We feel a great joy when we pour ourselves externally in love for power, in love for money, in love for enjoyments of various kinds, not knowing that this is not real pleasure because when the tension that is created in us—when the quantum of energy already existing in us—wells up like an elephant's energy, it does not know what to do. Either it will go vertically or it will go horizontally. Like a river in flood, it can move in any direction. It is necessary that we should prepare a program of our life by which our energy quantum rises vertically, and does not move horizontally. Otherwise, it will be like a dissipated river flooding everywhere and destroying villages and persons. The vertical ascent of energy is the art of the Brahmacharya system. The energy rises gradually through the lower parts of the body to the upper part until the brain becomes brilliant, sharp, and able to catch everything very quickly.

These days, nothing enters students' heads. Even if they are told something a hundred times, they do not remember it. But in earlier days it was not like that. Even fifty or sixty years ago things were much better, and students were very sharp, eager to study, and even though they always wished to stand first in the examination, they would not adopt dishonest means to get a certificate. Cheating was unknown in those days, but that attitude is now diluted.

If we, as students of spiritual life, are to ignore these externalities of dissipation and attraction, we have to somehow prepare ourselves to wade through this ocean of distraction. We cannot complain that this world is very bad, because we have been born into it and we have to pass through it. For whatever reason, we have been born into this world of certain conditions—good or bad, necessary or otherwise—through which we have to wade. This is why,

from an early age through adolescence, there should be no external contact whatsoever, only an aspiration to grow higher and higher.

As I mentioned, the system of dharma does not deny the necessary enjoyments of life. There is a fourfold picture placed before us of the way in which we have to live, which is called dharma, *artha, kama,* ending in moksha. *Artha* and *kama* are not denied; they are part of life. It is not that we deny ourselves everything in life. It is a denial for the purpose of accumulation. The more is the renunciation, the greater is the acquisition.

In the next stage, which is generally called Grihastha, a kind of life is prescribed which is markedly different from the purely ascetic life of Brahmacharya through conservation of energy. Grihastha is the system provided for the utilisation of this energy. During the early years of Brahmacharya, the energy should not be utilised. It has been kept intact, totally conserved so that it keeps one brilliant not only in the brain, but also in the face, and that itself is a satisfaction. In the stage of Grihastha, permission is given for certain types of enjoyment and experience, coupled with duty. There is no duty for a Brahmacharin. The only duty is to study, conserve energy, and offer prayers. But the Grihastha has a double responsibility of the performance of duty, and also the acquisition of values that are permissible under those circumstances.

Now, a Grihastha does not necessarily mean a person with a wife. Even a person without a wife can be a Grihastha, because the peculiar connotation of Grihastha is the expression of an inner need through an external symbol. A wife is only a symbol of a pressure of internal need felt by oneself. As long as the need continues, the presence or absence of

a wife does not matter. It is up to each one to understand what this means. The need for a kind of externalised living felt under given conditions of life leads to what we call the life of marriage, having a husband or wife, though that is not a contract that we have to undertake for the purpose of purely selfish individual expectations, but a joint action taken for the purpose of a parallel movement towards the ultimate freedom of life.

It is immaterial whether we marry or not. It depends upon the need that is felt inside. Even in the Himalayas we may feel that we are a Grihastha because of the pressure that we feel inside. The external things, appurtenances, husband, wife, etc., are only symbols of forms of an inner connotation, a need that is felt inside us. What binds us or liberates us is the need that is felt inside. We are the makers of our destiny; we create our bondage, and we are also responsible for our freedom. No external aid can help us in this matter. But external aids are sometimes necessary, just as we require a pen to write a book, a plate on which to eat our meal, a glass for drinking water, a seat to sit on, and a bed to lie on. These are external forms of requirement necessitated by the needs felt inside, which otherwise cannot be expressed properly. If the need can be sublimated, the external appurtenances are not necessary.

There are duties imposed upon a householder, apart from this justification for enjoyment in a controlled manner. The duty is to be of service to people. Social welfare, which is very much emphasised these days, is part and parcel of the requirement of a Grihastha life. A Grihastha is not a libertine who can do whatever he likes. It is, again, a life of austerity. Inasmuch as the duties control the enjoyments of life, all the experiences in that condition

become spiritualised. Wherever duty controls experience, that particular experience gets spiritualised. Where we have no duty but only rights, there is an adverse effect produced by our experiences. This is a purely psychological secret into which we have to delve for our own welfare.

But it is not that we have to live this kind of life of social work and family existence forever. There is a time in everyone's life when one feels that the world cannot give more than what it has already given. The wisdom of life acquired during the Grihastha period consummates in a maturity of experience which tells us that we have had enough of this world. The sense of having enough cannot arise unless we have passed through this world and experienced all the layers of provision that the Earth can give us, because a rejection of the world cannot give us an idea of the world. The world has to be conquered and made our own. It has to be befriended, and this can be done only by the experience of passing through the conditions of life.

What the world is made of has to be understood; and we have to pass through all these structural essences of the world. Every experience of the world has to be passed through. There are gifts that the world can give, and it can also give sorrows. It is not that everyone is born only to have a cosy life without any kind of difficulty, as the problems, sufferings, sorrows, and the joys of life are the obverse and reverse of the same coin. No one can have only one side. It is not that we have to be always sorrowing throughout our life, nor also that we have to be enjoying throughout our life. One cannot be without the other; they exist as two sides of a single experience.

A time comes when we feel that it is not necessary for us to expect anything from the world. It is not that the world

cannot give anything to us, nor that we cannot take; but it is not necessary to take. We can become so mature that we are contented within ourselves. The contentment has matured into the ripe fruit of permanent experience, and then we live a life of what is generally called retirement. The life of retirement is not an idle life of sleeping; it is a further advanced state above the Grihastha, where the energy conserved and the potency that is inside is totally oriented towards a higher aspiration. The Grihastha does not have time to always sit in meditation, though he has to do that also for a certain prescribed time. But now, in a period where we retire from active life of social existence—contact with people of a social or political nature—we do not just lie down and say we are retired and have no work to do. The retirement is only from the distractions of life, not from the duties of life. That is to say, there is a higher duty than the duty of a Brahmacharin or a Grihastha, and this is traditionally designated as the Vanaprastha stage.

In earlier days, people in the Vanaprastha stage would go to live in the forest, but that is not to be taken literally as a necessity. We have to be completely free from the entanglements of a household life. Here, the preparation starts for the utilisation of the conserved energy for the purpose of direct meditation. There was some kind of activity in the Brahmacharya stage, and more activity in the Grihastha stage, and now the activity that was earlier externally motivated in many ways becomes directed internally, and it becomes a mental energising process only. The Vanaprastha lives in his mind, in his thought, and not in his actions. In earlier stages, actions contributed a lot to the conservation of energy and the fulfilment of the duties of life, but now thought itself is enough; and one contemplates

by gathering up all one's energies on the great aim of life.

Though the final aim of life is kept in mind even in the earlier stages, it is not brought into action directly on account of other circumstances through which one had to pass. But here, it is a direct entry into the consciousness of the higher values of life, where we befriend not merely human society, but we befriend the quarters of heaven—the gods ruling the horizon, the denizens of heaven.

The meditational process that commences in the Vanaprastha stage begins with what is known as *upasana*, which is placing oneself in the juxtaposed context of what is called 'nearness to Reality'. Nearness to Reality is possible not through any physical means, but through the mind only. The mind, when it is charged with the consciousness of the Atman, adjusts itself to the need to keep itself in harmony with not merely the physical Earth or human society, but even with the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether. The Vanaprastha contemplates not merely the world of people but the very elements that control all life. It is a higher meditation which is *upasana* on the whole of creation—God manifest as this world.

It is called *upasana* because there is a devout pouring in of oneself to the objective, which is all creation itself. Various techniques of contemplation on this creational process are described in the Aranyaka portion of the Vedas, and the assiduous practice of *upasana* in this manner has to continue for a long time until the mind is able to concentrate on something still higher.

What is that something that is higher? It will come gradually. In the beginning, we expose ourselves to coming in contact with the whole creation. The Grihastha has no time to do that because he has other duties. The Brahmachari is

not concerned with it at all, as he is concerned only with the accumulation of energy and the study of the Veda, etc. Here is the time when we become a friend of all—*sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ* (B.G. 12.4). We are not merely a friend of people, but even the very elements will bend before us.

Upasana in this form is very difficult because the mind has to expand into the arena of the performance of the five elements. We have to place ourselves in the context of all things in the world, so that we are not only sitting and meditating in one place; the five elements are meditating with us. It is mentioned in the Chhandogya Upanishad that the Earth itself is meditating. The position in the equilibrium and the precision that the elements maintain is itself considered as a meditation. The elements are not acting chaotically; a method is maintained. Whether it is sunrise, moonrise or sunset, or whether it is the ocean, the wind or anything else, everything is maintaining a *maryada,* or a norm of behaviour, so that they maintain the required harmony among themselves—into which the *upasaka* enters because the five elements are also the constituents of one's own body and personality. There is a great cosmic meditation taking place, as described in the Aranyakas. The world itself is the object of our contemplation.

There is no chance of distraction of mind here if we have properly prepared ourselves from an early age, but if we have lived a very dissipated life until fifty or sixty years of age and then attempt this meditation, we will find that our mind will not concentrate at all because we have not given it time to prepare itself through the earlier conditions required during the previous parts of our life. It is necessary to remember that one's whole life is a period of austerity, conservation, duty, and meditation.

Here, in these Aranyakas, the various *upasanas* are prescribed: how the cosmic prana can be meditated upon, how the cosmic mind can be conceived, how Brahma—the Mahat, or the cosmic intellect—can be brought into the focus of our attention, how we can intensely feel the unity of the parts of our physical body with the parts of the physical universe. This is the highest form of *upasana* that we can think of.

There are also various other ways. This is a transcendental technique of the Aranyaka portion of the Vedas, but we have other devotional paths which can also be called *upasana*—such as contemplation/meditation on a form of God, or an *ishta devata*, as it is called, that we think is suitable for us. The *ishta devata* is a chosen deity. It may be the name that we give to our concept of God as a person pervading the whole world, or as a person seated near us as an image on our altar or a *murti* in a temple, as the case may be. In the earlier stages, we may require a physical form of the object of our meditation, and that could be a *yantra*, mantra, *murti*, image, idol, *saligrama*, painted picture or whatever it is, for the purpose of concentration.

The reason is, we have to divert our affection for life to the life of the Total. We love ourselves, we love our own life, but it is good that we love the Total Life which has bequeathed to us this personal life. If the Total Life is ignored, the personal life cannot be guarded. It is the security of the Total Life that gives us security here individually, because the Total controls individual existence, as the whole is inclusive of all the parts. We should not imagine that we can have everything that we want individually, irrespective of our concern for the world that is outside us. The world is not outside us, really speaking; it is ingrained

into the very vitals of our energy. It is actually the warp and woof of our existence. The five elements, including the sun, moon and stars, all superintend our sense organs, mind, intellect, etc. Such meditation is called for through a gradual process.

In order to go on with this meditation, we have to take our *ishta devata* for our contemplation. Our *ishta devata* can be Rama, Krishna, Devi, Bhagavati, Narayana, Siva, Ganesha or whatever the case may be, or if we belong to another religious faith it may be the concept of Allah, Jesus Christ, Father in heaven, etc. Whatever it be, that concept has to be internalised for the purpose of *upasana*. We should think only that and nothing else, and believe in the protection that it can grant us. The *ishta devata* protects us, guides us, and enlightens us. It gives us security, and we feel happy with it. Some devotees hug the image of their *ishta devata*, wear it around their necks, kiss it, and feel that it is their beloved. It is truly that, because it symbolises the divinity that is pervading everywhere. Such kind of *upasanas*, to mention briefly, are the duties of a Vanaprastha.

But there is a still higher stage, called Sannyasa. It does not mean shaving the head, wearing a robe, and saying "I am a Sannyasin". God is not afraid of all these rituals. It is a gradual rise from maturity to maturity. It is not that the Sannyasin is an old man, the Grihastha is youthful, and the Brahmachari is a little boy; these ideas must be cast aside. These stages are all forms of operation of the mind in various degrees of perfection. We rise from perfection to perfection. Every stage is a stage of perfection—only, one is a miniature form of it, another is a wider form of it, and it goes on enlarging its circle until it becomes total perfection.

The Sannyasin is the apex of energy conservation and meditation, and it has nothing to do with shaving one's head or wearing a particular cloth, which are only social requirements that have been imposed upon individuals for keeping abreast with the circumstances of present living. It is to be remembered that we cannot take our Sannyasa cloth to God when we enter Him; we go bare, as a centre of consciousness, without any cloth, without hair, without head, without anything. We know what will go when one emerges from this body, and that is what is important.

The detachment that is associated with the life of Sannyasa is not a keeping oneself away from the things of the world, but a union with them. The union with everything looks like a detachment from them. This is something very curious to understand. When we are one with an object, we have detached ourselves from it at the same time—because we do not want it any more. The detachment, so-called, is nothing but not wanting it; and not wanting it is a condition which arises automatically when we are one with it. Just as we do not feel a desire to possess our finger, we do not want anything else at that time.

So, the life of Sannyasa is a wondrous concept of the perfection of the values of life, which is what Narada tells Yudhishthira in the Seventh Skandha of the Srimad Bhagavata, wherein the *upasana* culminates into actual absorption. In the condition of Sannyasa, the meditation is not an *upasana* in the sense of being near an object of meditation, but becoming the object of meditation itself. That is the point that distinguishes Sannyasa from the Vanaprastha stage. The Sannyasin does not contemplate on something as if it is outside; he himself is that. The universe has entered him, and he himself is contemplating

as the universe: I am what I am. In some Vedanta texts this is called *ahamgraha upasana*. The catching of the true 'I' is called *ahamgraha*. We have not been able to find this '*aham*' because we do not know where this 'I' is really. We are under the impression that the 'I' is in the family, the 'I' is in the money, the 'I' is in the work that we do, the 'I' is in the body, etc.; but it is nowhere. It is in itself only. And that 'I' which, as philosophers call it, is the transcendental unity of apperception, has to be caught. It is the true light—*atma jyoti. Jyotiṣām api taj jyotis tamasaḥ param ucyate, jñānaṁ jñeyaṁ jñānagamyaṁ hṛdi sarvasya viṣṭhitam* (B.G. 13.17): That majesty that you are aspiring for is seated in your own heart, like the twinkling of a star. That star has to become a conflagration.

So, the meditation of a Sannyasin is direct unified experience of consciousness with Reality. This is, finally, the catching of the Universal 'I' by the so-called individual 'I', in its attempt at unification of its 'I'-ness with the Universal 'I'. There are many 'I's in this world. You have an 'I'-ness, I have an 'I'-ness, and everybody is 'I'. But these are empirical 'I's—physical 'I's, as it were, conditioned by physical bodies—and so it appears to us that there are many 'I's everywhere. But these 'I's are drops in the ocean of one single 'I', which is the 'I' of God, of the Universal Being. Catch it! Catch that Supreme 'I' which is inclusive of every 'I', as drops are included in the ocean. This Total 'I' is very difficult to attain or even conceive. Where is this Total 'I'? It is the pure Universal Subjectivity, and is bereft of even a touch of externality. That is the Supreme *ahamgraha upasana*, meditation on the great 'I' of the universe—the Supreme Self, the Supreme Total, the supreme unified consciousness identified with the Supreme Being.

Continuous meditation on That, and living for That, is called *brahmabhyasa* in the scriptures. *Tat chintanaṁ tat kathanaṁ anyonyaṁ tat prabodhanam, eta deka paratvaṁ ca brahmābhyāsaṁ vidur budhāḥ* (Pan. 7.106) is a verse from the Panchadasi, and also from the Yoga Vasishtha. *Tat chintanaṁ*: Think only That. Whatever be the circumstance of your life, wherever you are placed and whatever you may be doing, do not forget this. Think only That, think only That, think only That.

Tat kathanaṁ: If you meet people, speak about That. This is called *satsanga*. Do not talk nonsense, such as "How are you?" "How is the climate?" Or, "It is raining." Instead say, "How are you progressing in spiritual life? What is your meditation technique? Please tell me your method, and what obstacles you have faced. I will also tell my difficulties." This kind of concourse among students of meditation is *satsanga*, truly speaking. *Tat kathanaṁ*: Speaking only about that. *Anyonyaṁ tat prabodhanam*: We enlighten each other. You enlighten me, I enlighten you. We are brothers on the journey, having the same goal, so we ask each other how we are progressing. I will tell you my difficulties, my problems, and you tell me your problems, so that we can find a method to solve them. This kind of *anyo'nya prabodhana* is also a part of great spiritual practice. *Eta deka paratvaṁ ca brahmābhyāsaṁ vidur budhāḥ*: Depending only on That, and depending on nobody else. "You are everything." "Thou art all." Or, as in the *ahamgraha* meditation process, we may say, "I am the all."

This is the duty of a Sannyasin. And a Sannyasin is the benefactor of all people at the same time. The Grihastha is also a benefactor of people; he serves people, gives food to them, does the *pancha tapas* in various forms, feeds guests,

and the *pancha mahayajnas* are his duty. But the Sannyasin, the true meditator, is a spiritual hero who does service to people by the thought arising from his mind. Whatever such a powerful hero thinks, it will materialise. If he thinks, "May there be peace," it shall be there. Why not? Such is the power of the conserved energy that whatever we need will come automatically. We need not say, "Bring it to me." It will come because the mind is identified with that which it requires. Truth triumphs always, and the truth being our identity with this total 'I', it shall triumph always. In the beginning, we may feel we are defeated, that nothing is coming. Like the poison that arose in the beginning of the Amrita Manthana though nectar was expected, we may also have to face this Amrita Manthana experience and swallow the poison, which cannot be avoided. But we should persist and see that the treasures of life are slowly opened up through our own personality.

Aneka-janma saṁsiddhas tato yāti parāṁ gatim (B.G. 6.45): Sometimes many births have to be taken to achieve this goal, or to even have this idea in the mind. Even having an idea of it is to be considered a blessing, as this idea itself cannot arise in a buffalo, a donkey, or a corrupt individual. But you are devotees of Swami Sivananda and are here, hearing these things. These ideas are in your mind; you are accepting them and making them your own, which is itself a great blessing for you. You must have taken many births to come here and listen to these things, and to be devoted to the great ideals of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

Though you have taken many births, and it is possible that many of you will take more births, always expect the best. When you take an exam, do not have the attitude that you will come in second. Aspire for first place, and if you

do not attain it, well and good; it is left to the mercy of God. But ask for first place only. "I want the best and the highest, and I want only that and nothing else." Perhaps your determination will mature and bear fruit. You are the maker of your destiny. You are what you are always, and nobody external will help you.

This is the Ashrama dharma of the totally detached universal being of Sannyasa dharma, all of which is beautifully described with various details and analogies by Narada to Yudhishthira in the Seventh Skandha of the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana.

Discourse 6

SRI KRISHNA'S VRINDAVANA AND DVARKA LILAS

In the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana, the Eighth Skandha is devoted to the detailing of Gajendra Moksha, Amrita Manthana, and Sri Vamana *avatara* of Bhagavan Sri Vishnu, and in the Ninth Skandha we have the long history of the Solar and Lunar dynasties—Rama being a descendant of the Solar dynasty, and Krishna of the Lunar dynasty.

The most important theme, surpassing all other descriptions that we have in the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana, is the principle objective of the whole text—namely, the life of Bhagavan Sri Krishna himself. In a wonderfully touching prayer, Kunti glorifies the great Master, as we have it recorded in the First Skandha of the Bhagavata: *namasye puruṣaṁ tvādyam īśvaraṁ prakṛteḥ param, alakṣyaṁ sarva-bhūtānām antar bahir avasthitam*; *māyā-javanikācchannam ajñādhokṣajam avyayam, na lakṣyase mūḍha-dṛśā naṭo nāṭyadharo yathā* (S.B. 1.8.18-19); *śrī-kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa-sakha vṛṣṇy-ṛṣabhāvani-dhrug-rājanya-vaṁśa-dahanānapavarga-vīrya, govinda go-dvija surārti-harāvatāra yogeśvarākhila-guro bhagavan namaste* (S.B. 1.8.43).

The play of God in the theatre of this world is the life of Bhagavan Sri Krishna. He behaved in the same way as

God would behave in His creation. The *avatara* of Rama is regarded as a *maryada* that he kept in terms of the rules and regulations of human society. Bhagavan Sri Krishna is known not as Maryada Purushottama, but as Lila Purushottama. The demonstration of the perfection of human nature is the subject of the Ramayana, the life of Sri Ramachandra; and the demonstration of the perfection of God as He would operate Himself, independently, free from all accessories, is the theme of the life of Bhagavan Sri Krishna in the Srimad Bhagavata. Everything that Krishna did was the opposite of the world, while everything that Rama did was in consonance with the world.

The evolutionary process that is seen in the various *avataras* of Vishnu—such as Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, etc.—reaches a culmination in Rama and Krishna. From the lower levels of life through which God incarnates, as demonstrated in the earlier *avataras*, human perfection is reached in Rama's *avatara*. But that is not enough. God has to descend into the world in the full force and power of His Completeness. *Ete cāṁśa-kalāḥ puṁsaḥ kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam* (S.B. 1.3.28). As the entire energy of the sun may be concentrated on a lens through which this energy passes, and it has the capacity to work as the sun would work, so is the way in which we have to understand the nature of an incarnation, especially of the type of superman such as Bhagavan Sri Krishna. The universal forces congeal and concentrate themselves in one personality when it becomes *purna avatara*. It is as if the force of the ocean rushes through a single conduit pipe, and we can imagine the energy that is conducted through this pipe when the entire ocean is passing through it.

The Bhagavata also describes God as a threefold manifestation: Brahma, Paramatman and Bhagavan. *Brahmeti paramātmeti bhagavān iti śabdyate* (S.B. 1.2.11). He is the transcendent Supreme Being, the Absolute, which is Brahman; He is the creative operative power, which is Paramatman; He is also the incarnation, which is Bhagavan. Three stages of the operation of God are here portrayed in the description of God being Brahman, Paramatman and Bhagavan.

The *lilas*, or the plays of God in the form of Sri Krishna, have been inscrutable right from the beginning. The very purpose of the play of God is to manifest those realities which are beyond human comprehension—to stultify human thought, paralyse all human action, stun the individual ego, and transform human nature into divine nature. Everything is a miracle right from the beginning of Sri Krishna's life—his birth in a prison, the prison doors opening automatically, the crossing of the Yamuna River, and the various fantastic scenes that are associated with him in the Vrindavana Lila. Boisterous, naughty and uncontrollable is the nature that Sri Krishna demonstrated right from childhood. He was not a simple, obedient, calm and quiet child. He was disobedient, boisterous, rebellious, independent in every way, and if anybody interfered with his independence, he would react with consternation, a wonder which surpasses human understanding.

He would break pots, steal things, and damage all things, which is not the usual behaviour of a child. He would take away everything that one possesses, and make one feel grieved that valuable things have been lost; but at the same time, he would see to it that he endeared himself to everyone. With all the pranks that he played which were contrary

to human expectation, he managed to see to it that he became the most beloved of all the children. Nobody could dislike him, irrespective of his funny behaviour, which was not expected from a little child. So, there was a double behaviour: naughtiness and unpleasantness inflicted upon people and, at the same time, becoming the most beautiful darling of humanity.

God's ways are always a combination of opposites. It is not a stereotyped action, as we think. God can create the world, and He can also destroy the world. He can create human beings, and then flood them with heavy rains which damage crops and wash away villages. Even after having created the Earth as an abode for people, He can cause earthquakes, pestilence, disease, and He can also provide the greatest cures. When Sri Krishna was naughty, his mother, out of exhaustion, tied him to a huge pestle, and he used the pestle to which he was tied to uproot a tree—an unthinkable action. People attributed this kind of event to the operation of a devil, and they poured auspicious mantra-purified water on him to free him from the effects of any kind of adverse forces that they thought were the reason for such catastrophic events such as the falling of a tree for no reason whatsoever, as nobody could imagine that a child could pull out a tree by its roots. He could kick up a row and create a dust storm, and do whatever he liked with his comrades, and yet they loved him immensely.

The contrary nature that is so remarkably seen in Bhagavan Sri Krishna cannot be seen in anyone else. Whatever he did, and whatever he said, had this characteristic of a blending of contrary features which are not easily reconcilable. Even the Bhagavadgita that he taught is of such a nature: it is a winding argument which leads nowhere, if it

is read carelessly. Throughout his life, he played this role of wonderful activity which was justifiable from his point of view, but nobody could understand what he was up to.

The first part of the Tenth Skandha of the Srimad Bhagavata occupies itself with these pranks of the child Krishna, and while every action of his was superhuman, he made it still worse by engaging himself in a dramatic performance called the Rasa Lila, which cannot be seen in the life of any other person in the world. Here again we have a mystery that transcends human reason because there are no men and women before God. The prejudices of the duality of the sexes, and the additional prejudice of attachment to human predilections and rules and regulations, have to be broken down in the Divinity that manifests finally.

Human laws and regulations cannot take us to God. These rules of man can take us only to a human realm, because the constitution of God's government is not a human constitution. It is an inclusiveness to which human nature is not accustomed. All our laws and regulations are partial in their nature and are valid for certain given conditions, but they are not valid for all times. This is the defect in man-made laws: they are good for some times, but they are not good for other times. But the law of God is good for all times. Once the enactment is made, it does not require any amendment. In human parliaments, circumstances change, and therefore, we change the laws; but God has no such circumstances where He has to change the laws. In the Isavasya Upanishad it is said: *yāthātathyato'rthān vyadadhāc chāśvatībhyas samābhyaḥ* (Isa 8). An ordinance was enacted in the parliament of God and it is valid for all time to come, till the end of creation, because it was so perfectly visualised, taking into consideration every

eventuality or possibility in the history of creation.

In a similar manner, the deportment of Sri Krishna multiplying himself into many in this Rasa Dance makes him a person not human in his nature, because no human being can become manifold. Therefore, our judgment of Sri Krishna cannot be based upon human values, as a human being cannot multiply himself. A human being cannot lift a mountain or swallow forest fire—all of which he did, to the consternation of his associates. The superhuman nature of this child, which is seen right from the beginning, frees him from the human association of any kind of limited interpretation of his activities.

The Rasa Lila has many a meaning, as commentators would tell us—namely, it is the dance of the whole cosmos around the central pivot of the Absolute. The whole cosmic dance is demonstrated there. The feminine nature of the Gopis, which is the nature of the components of creation, is comparable to its counterpart, the centrality which is the Absolute. The Absolute Supreme Being does not evolve. It does not dance; it acts as a central nucleus of the entire creation, which dances in all its particulars. To mention again, Sri Krishna was born to demonstrate cosmic perfection, and not to reiterate man-made laws and regulations.

There are no human ethics for God. Though God has His own ethics, they are not comparable to human understanding. God is very just, it is perfectly true, but His justice is different from the nature of justice that we can think in our mind. God can dissolve the whole cosmos. Where is the justice in it? But it is justice. God has a rule and law of His own. God has a parliament of His own, we can say, but He can dissolve the parliament for some purpose. For instance, Sri Krishna broke his promise that he would not take part in

the Mahabharata war; he dissolved this parliament and took up weapons himself when it became necessary.

When love of God reaches its heights, God can break all His laws and endear Himself to the devotee. In the highest reaches of devotion, laws do not operate. Devotion to God is above all laws and regulations, because we cannot love God while tied up by human laws, as that love would be a mortal combination of fettered understanding. That is why the nature of the *bhakta*, or the devotee, cannot be easily understood.

The Rasa Dance that is described in five chapters in incomparable beautiful majesty of lyrical poetry—which otherwise looks like a seductive presentation of human emotions—is considered by Suka Maharishi as a cure for the feelings of sexual passion. That which appears to be a demonstration of that particular emotion is the remedy which causes the cessation of that same emotion. It acts as a catharsis for feelings of any kind which human nature may abhor and yet hug.

Man is basically hypocritical; he disagrees with that which he loves very much. For instance, this particular emotion that is mentioned here is present in every person, and nobody can say it is not. Not only is it present in every human being, it is endearingly hugged by all people as most important in their life. Yet, it is treated as if it is the most abominable thing in the world. The contradictory nature of human laws, and the hypocrisy behind man-made religion and his laws and regulations, can especially be seen in this particular instance. The very thing that we abhor becomes the most desirable thing for us in other contexts. We secretly love a thing, but publicly abhor it. This is how human beings behave. We are one thing in our bedroom, and another

thing in parliament. Can we consider this aspect of human nature to be justifiable finally? Can God pardon us for this behaviour? Can we be real devotees of God if we behave in this manner?

If God wishes us to love Him alone finally, and no one else can come to our rescue, we must love Him as He is required to be loved. Unless we are attuned to His nature, our love is tarnished by human considerations. We carry the dirt of human thought even in our devotion to God, and therefore, it will not materialise. The same attachments of wealth, sex and family are hidden in a potential form even in our love for God. We keep these secrets of our attachments hidden under our armpit or in our bag, and then prostrate ourselves before God. God wants to break this down once and for all, for the welfare of His true devotees. This is also the secret behind the *cheera-harana*, or taking away the Gopis' clothes, making them feel consternated and shame-faced, which is impossible to believe. When our prejudices are broken, we are unable to know what is happening to us, and it looks as though the Earth itself is breaking apart.

The whole life of a human being is prejudice and contortion, and an abominable justification of what cannot be finally justified. Therefore, man as man, woman as woman, cannot reach God. Man has to cease to be a man, and woman has to cease to be a woman, and they must attain the perfection of the unity of spirits—which is actually the dance of Rasa. It is spirit dancing with spirit. The particular souls of the *jivas* dance around the cosmic Universal Soul; and here, the comparison with human characteristics is completely anomalous. Therefore, no unpurified mind should read the Tenth Skandha of the Srimad Bhagavata. Only a purified mind should read it.

Otherwise, how would we appreciate the answer of Suka Maharishi to Parikshit's question, that this is a cure for desire? A thing that would otherwise rouse desire is considered to be a cure for it. This is how God acts. He slaps us from both sides, and we do not know what the intention behind it is. Sri Krishna behaved recklessly with his mother and his comrades, and yet always saved them in their hour of need. He did fantastic things such as eating mud, and then behaved abominably with children; but when he was threatened, he showed the Cosmic Form in his open mouth. But he would not allow his mother to remember this vision that he had shown her, and immediately veiled it from her consciousness. Again she hugged the little child, as if nothing had happened. Look at this contradiction in his behaviour. He showed the Cosmic Form, but would not allow her to keep that consciousness. Then why did he show it to her at all? This is how God acts. He will tantalise us, and yet save us.

This is the intention behind the Rasa Dance. Otherwise, the contradictory nature that is behind this performance is inexplicable to human nature. This is how God works. Are we able to comprehend God's ways, how He can create and then destroy things? God can create floods and wash away villages. Is it justifiable action? He can break the Earth to its very bowels, and cause kingdoms and all humanity to fall into it. Does God create people in order that He may destroy them? Is He playing a joke? Yes, says the Brahmasutra. *Lokavattu lilakaivalyam* (B.S. 2.1.33). The only reason for God's creation is to play jokes with Himself, as a child plays with his reflection. *Reme rameśo vraja-sundarībhir yathārbhakaḥ sva-pratibimba vibhramaḥ* (S.B. 10.33.16). Sri Krishna did not play with little children, he did not play

with women; he played with his own reflections, as a child dances in ecstasy by seeing its own image in mirrors kept everywhere. His Gopis were only mirrors through which he himself was reflected and, therefore, they got transformed into a spirit which was not human—not man, not woman.

Krishna was not a man, and the Gopis were not women; they were something transcendent. Therefore, the description of the Rasa Lila is a cure for the maladies of human nature, says Suka Maharishi. Normally this meaning cannot be understood, and it is simply bypassed. We do *parayana*—we read the Bhagavata in seven days—but we do not grasp its meaning. We do not know what we have read. It seems to be all contradiction and trouble. Somehow we finish the reading, a *havan* is performed and the matter is over, but we have gained nothing by the Bhagavata-saptaha. This is what happens.

Here again we are hypocrites. Our religion is a bundle of contradictions and meaningless performances which cannot take us anywhere, finally. We must be honest to our own selves if we are really lovers of God. Who can love God? It is impossible. We can love only man, woman, children, wealth, egoism and power. What else can we love? Have we ever conceived the possibility of thinking of such a Perfection, which is the very meaning of the demonstrations of Bhagavan Sri Krishna?

Sri Krishna had a reason to behave in the way that is described in the first part of the Tenth Skandha of the Srimad Bhagavata, and he behaved in a different way altogether in the Uttarardha, or the second part of the Tenth Skandha. Bala Lila is the predominant theme of the first part of the Tenth Skandha. The maturity of a world-wise householder is depicted in his Dvarka Lila. Sri Krishna's

whole life can be classified into three parts: the Vrindavana Lila, which is also called the Mathura Lila, the Dvarka Lila, and the Kurukshetra Lila.

In the Vrindavana Lila, Sri Krishna was a child, though he may be naughty, beautiful, enchanting, incomparably gracious, the sweetest, and the dearest of all. But in his Dvarka Lila, he became a mature gentleman of the world, and a statesman to some extent. After Krishna killed Kamsa, Kamsa's two queens, Asti and Prapti, repaired to their father's house in grief, and complained to him of the cause of their widowhood. Jarasandha, their father, was enraged, and attacked Mathura seventeen times, all of which were repelled by the forces of the Yadus. But it was too much for the residents of Mathura, and Sri Krishna thought it better to leave that place. He did not want to end Jarasandha, because he had many things to do through him. Balarama would have caught him and killed him on the spot, but Sri Krishna prevented him. He said, "Let him bring more forces. We will see to it later on." So, Jarasandha was allowed to live, and he was not destroyed.

Then Krishna and Balarama scaled the mountain Gir, as it is known today, and crossed over it to Dvarka on the shore of the ocean and, through Visvakarma, built a fort that was so great it was humanly inconceivable. It is said that Sri Krishna's palace was practically ninety miles long, consisting of many, many palaces for everyone—every one of his queens and his relatives. It extended ninety miles along the coast, right from Dvarka to Prabhas and Somnath. That entire area—you can imagine the length—was covered by Sri Krishna's palace. Sri Krishna lived wonderfully in all the palaces. He received guests, meticulously following the rules and regulations laid down for a Grihastha. He would

get up in the early morning, offer prayers to the sun, take a bath, touch the cow, give charity, feed people, and then receive people as a majestic well-wisher of all.

Sri Krishna had innumerable associations, and we are told that he had multiple queens. Again, the divinity in him manifested itself, which contradicted his having many wives—namely, his being present with many people simultaneously. He had so many consorts, and he was as many forms. When Narada went to see how Sri Krishna could manage having so many queens, he went to one palace and found Sri Krishna was taking bath, and his queen was there.

"Oh, Narada! How are you? How did you come?" Krishna asked.

"My Lord! I am just grateful to you. I came for your *darshan*," replied Narada.

Narada was inquisitive as to what was happening with the other queens, and went to their palaces. Sri Krishna was there as well. In one palace he was taking his meal, in another he was receiving guests, in another he was performing a *havan*, and so on. Narada could not understand how Sri Krishna had appeared at all these places. Sri Krishna was present everywhere. How can this behaviour be explained? Is it human behaviour? Did Sri Krishna have queens, really speaking? Was he a man? Was he a human being? Can we consider him to be a person? Again the same sloka comes to our memory: *yathārbhakaḥ sva-pratibimba vibhramaḥ*. He saw himself in all his consorts. Otherwise, he could not become so many.

Janaka, the king, invited Sri Krishna for lunch one day, and it so happened that, at the same time, another respectable person, a Brahmana, also invited him. How is it possible to accept two invitations and be in two different places at

the same time? Sri Krishna accepted both invitations, and had lunch at both places simultaneously. Each host thought that he was entertaining Sri Krishna, and did not know that he was present in the other place also.

It is impossible to recount the many *lilas* in the Uttarardha in a few minutes. When the Kamsa Vadham was over, Sri Krishna sent Akrura to Dhritarashtra to enquire about the welfare of the Pandavas. He had not forgotten them. Sri Krishna had not seen either the Pandava brothers or the Kurus even once until the idea came to him to enquire about their fate, because he heard that they were about to be burnt in the *lakshagraha*.

So Akrura went there, and he advised Dhritarashtra, "Your Highness! You must be very impartial to the sons of Pandu also."

Dhritarashtra pleaded his inability. "I am glad that Krishna has sent a message. Whatever you have said is perfectly right, I agree. But my sons are dear to me, and they are pressurising me to behave like this. I cannot follow Krishna's advice because of love for my children."

Hearing all this, Akrura felt it was useless to talk to Dhritarashtra. He left, and conveyed the news to Bhagavan Sri Krishna.

If we read every verse of this Tenth Skandha of the Srimad Bhagavata with an impartial eye, we will find everything is superhuman, and no human element can be found anywhere. Towards the end of the Dvarka Lila, there is Rukmini-harana. Sri Krishna marries Rukmini, and there also he played a *lila*, as recorded in the Bhagavata.

Sri Krishna completed one phase of his life entirely before he entered another phase. He entirely finished all the *lilas* of childhood before he entered into the householder life of Dvarka. The majestic good man and gentleman who

was the ruler of Dvarka was altogether different from the little child in Vrindavana. But he had something else to do. His work was not over merely with the Vrindavana Lila and Dvarka Lila, where he lived a calm and quiet life of a householder, meeting people, blessing them, and helping them in any manner whatsoever. In this connection we are reminded of the blessing that he bestowed upon one of his old schoolmates, called Sudama.

The story of Sudama is touching indeed. He was utterly poor to the core, and was in rags. On the insistence of his wife, he trudged from Avanti, near Indore, through the deserts of Rajasthan to Sri Krishna's palace in Dvarka. The gatekeepers would not allow him in because of his ragged appearance, but when Sudama insisted that he was a classmate of Sri Krishna, they went and told Sri Krishna, "Somebody is standing at the gate like a beggar, and he says he is your classmate."

"Oh, I see!" said Sri Krishna. He ran and hugged Sudama and, to the horror of all, brought him into the palace and washed his feet.

"Ah! What have you brought me?" asked Sri Krishna.

Sudama, poor man, had brought nothing. He was ashamed to say anything. His wife had nothing to give him to offer when he went to have *darshan* of Sri Krishna, so she begged for a little beaten rice—*chura*—from neighbours, and tied it in a dirty old cloth, which he kept under his armpit. But he would not show it to Sri Krishna because he was dazzled by the glory of the palace and the wonderment of the entire atmosphere, so he hugged it tightly and said, "I have nothing."

"No, you must have brought something," said Sri Krishna.

He pulled out the small bundle, and it fell on a large plate. The little handful of beaten rice became a large heap that overflowed from the plate. Sri Krishna took one morsel, then a second, and was about to take a third when Rukmini held his hand, saying "With one morsel you have given him the glory of this whole world, with the second morsel you have given him heaven. Now you are about to take a third morsel. Do you want me to go as a servant of this man?"

Then there was a beautiful conversation between Sri Krishna and Sudama.

Sri Krishna enquired, "How are you? I am seeing you after a long time. Is everything going on well with you?"

"Ah! Yes. Everything is well," replied Sudama.

He would not say why he had come. He was ashamed. He thought that Sri Krishna would know that it was due to his poverty. But Sri Krishna did not say anything about it. He did not ask, "Why you have come? Do you want anything? Can I give you something, or do anything for you?" He would not utter one word. Sudama was in a state of chagrin. "How is it that he doesn't utter one word? I cannot ask. I am ashamed. I am so wretched in the presence of this great man." After giving Sudama a cosy bed to sleep in, Sri Krishna bid him farewell, giving nothing to him, not even a little gift as a memento, a token. Nothing was given.

Barehanded, helpless, the poor man had to walk back. Mentally he was cursing himself. "Why did I come here? He never asked me anything. I am not able to understand. Now what shall I tell my wife when I return? I am ashamed that I have come at all. He could have at least asked me what I want. Even that he did not ask." But then he reconciled himself. "I understand very well why he did not talk to me on this matter. It is because he knows what the true welfare

is for a person. Wealth is very bad. It binds a person, and he will get attached to it, and will never attain salvation. He knows that it is good for me not to have anything. Oh! He has blessed me. I should not complain. Very good. I am very glad that he is so wise that he has understood what my welfare is. Money is not my welfare. Wealth is a cause of attachment. He has done a very wise thing. He has made me free from all attachment. Blessed be Sri Krishna! I am going as I came."

When Sudama returned home, he could not find his hut. In its place there was a huge palace, lustrous like the sun, and a queen dressed in shining robes was standing in front. He did not understand. He thought he had missed his way and had entered the palace of some king.

"Mother!" he addressed that lady, "Do you know where that hut of Sudama lies, in what direction?"

She immediately said, "Oh, my dear! You don't recognise me? I am your own wife. In one night, the whole thing transformed itself into this gorgeous palatial empyrean that you are seeing now. It is all the Lord's greatness."

Can we imagine a person building a palace in one night, by thought itself? Do we call it a superhuman feat, a divine feat, or a human action? Who, which human being, can do that? Can we consider Sri Krishna as a man at all? Was he a human being? No—it was the *purna avatara*, the Full Perfection that was manifest.

The story of Krishna is not complete without recounting his deeds in the Kurukshetra Lila—what the Kurukshetra Lila is, how Sri Krishna became a statesman who saved the country, and what wondrous message he gave us in the role that he played in the Mahabharata war. We shall take this up next.

Discourse 7

SRI KRISHNA'S KURUKSHETRA LILA

The life of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, as mentioned, is divided into three stages, known as Vrindavana Lila, Dvarka Lila, and Kurukshetra Lila. The last phase is the great epic of his association with the Pandavas and Kauravas. Although very soon after the Kamsa episode Sri Krishna sent Akrura to Dhritarashtra in order to ascertain the condition of the Pandavas who were in great trouble, and Akrura did not receive any reasonable response from Dhritarashtra, he had not yet seen the Pandavas personally.

Sri Krishna met the Pandavas for the first time during the *svayamvara* ceremony of Draupadi at the court of King Drupada. He was an uninvited guest, and silently witnessed the ceremony. After they had won Draupadi, the Pandavas returned to their abode disguised as Brahmin pundits. No one knew who they were. Everyone thought some Brahmins had won Draupadi; no one knew the truth that they were the Pandavas. Sri Krishna alone knew that, and when the Pandava brothers returned home with Draupadi, he followed them with all his retinue and lots of presents—elephants and horses, gold and silver, and so many other things—and offered these gifts to Yudhishthira. Yudhishthira was surprised.

"How did you recognise us?" he asked.

Sri Krishna replied, "Fire cannot be hidden even if it is covered by a bushel or smothered by ashes. Your greatness can be seen by your demeanour, though you are dressed as Brahmins."

After replying thus and receiving the gratitude and respect of the disguised Pandava brothers, Sri Krishna returned to Dvarka without saying anything further on that occasion.

The next important association of Sri Krishna with the Pandavas was when Dhritarashtra grudgingly granted a rocky, stony piece of land to the Pandava brothers for their residence—called Pandavaprastha, which is now called Indraprastha. Again, Sri Krishna came and assisted the Pandavas, especially Arjuna, in making the land fertile and beautiful with the help of angelic associates such as Maya Danava, who built a great, unsurpassed, glittering palace for the Pandavas. With that, his particular function was over. He went back to Dvarka once again, and never returned.

The only incident which is associated with Sri Krishna's invisible presence was the cry of Draupadi, as described to us in the Sabha Parva of the Mahabharata, during the unfortunate incident through which she had to pass in the midst of the Kurus after the Pandava brothers were defeated in the play of dice. Her condition was worse than wretched. There was no one to help her, not even her husbands or veterans such as Bhishma and Drona who were seated there. She had only one support.

He krishna dvarka vasin: kauravaih paribhutam mam kim na janasi keshava: "Insulted and humiliated by the Kurus, I am standing here unbefriended. Are you aware of this tragedy in which I am today?"

For whatever reason, mysterious being Sri Krishna's way of working, he did not physically respond. Nobody knows the reason why. It was not impossible for him to come, but he did not. God can come before us just now, but he does not want to. Interpreters of the situation say the reason why Sri Krishna did not come is because Draupadi was lifting one hand, crying loudly, while her other hand was holding her sari tightly. Cruel as it may look, subtle are the ways of God. He took her literally: If you have some strength, show it; My presence is not necessary. When Draupadi found that she had no strength whatsoever and uplifted both her arms, a miracle took place. We are told that Sri Krishna discharged the Sudarshana Chakra, which became an endless sari for her. Others feel that he manifested himself as an infinitely long divine sari for her. The drama ended with that. Nobody knew what happened. It was all a miracle and a surprise, and nobody knew what happened finally. Having blessed Draupadi with this immense gift of grace, Sri Krishna's goodness and greatness was such that he never mentioned this incident again, even when he met her later on. He could have asked: Did you receive the sari that I sent? The blessings of the greatest of people come to us unknown, undiscovered, and undemonstrated.

The next meeting of Sri Krishna with the Pandavas was when they were in the forest, having been defeated in a dice game a second time. He did not send any messenger. He himself went with all his retinue, sat before the Pandavas, and asked about their welfare. The Pandavas wept. It is told to us in the Mahabharata that Sri Krishna sat without uttering a word, and in his personality a gesture appeared to manifest as if it would burn everybody.

Then Arjuna offered prayers to Krishna: "Great Master, if you get angry, the Earth cannot stand. Come down. Come down. Come down."

Satyaki, who was the associate and relative of Sri Krishna, said, "Why keep quiet? We shall face the Kurus, fight with them, throw them out, and hand over all the land to the Pandavas. Why not do this?"

Sri Krishna could have done that, but he said, "No. This will not be appreciated by Yudhishthira. He is a Kshatriya who does not receive gifts. He always gives. So, your adventurous spirit of facing the Kurus and handing over the kingdom to Yudhishthira would be finally a very unpleasant gesture, ending in nothing good. He will not accept it. I know the mind of Yudhishthira."

With these words and blessing, after having a very cordial talk with the brothers in that unfortunate condition, he returned to Dvarka.

The next occasion when Sri Krishna met the Pandavas was when they were living incognito in the court of King Virat, during the thirteenth year of their exile. After the thirteen years of exile were over and the condition imposed on them ended, they removed their disguises and declared themselves to be the Pandavas, to the great consternation of King Virat, who did not know that for one year the Pandavas and Draupadi were living in disguise in his own court. Sri Krishna came with his retinue once again and summoned an audience, giving instructions regarding the necessary steps that should be taken in the matter of handing back to the Pandavas their share of the kingdom. Having conducted this audience, he sent a Brahmin as a messenger to the Kurus. The Kurus sent Sanjaya in response who, on behalf of the Kurus, came and talked about peace and the

unworthiness of having war between the two cousins. But this talk of peace projected by the Kurus was rejected by the Pandavas and Sri Krishna himself, and they were asked to prepare for war.

Then Sri Krishna again returned to Dvarka. Everybody knew the greatness of Krishna as a military genius, and everybody wanted his help in the war which was to ensue, as it was decided that there was no other alternative than to wage war. Both Duryodhana on behalf of the Kurus and Arjuna on behalf of the Pandavas went to Dvarka to plead to Sri Krishna, the great Yadava hero, for assistance in the oncoming war.

Sri Krishna was lying down, resting, when Duryodhana and Arjuna arrived. Duryodhana entered first, and sat near the head of Sri Krishna. He grabbed a chair and reclined. Arjuna did not sit on a chair. He stood with folded hands at the feet of Sri Krishna. After a while, Sri Krishna opened his eyes, and first, naturally, he could see only what was near his feet, not his head.

"Arjuna, how come you are here at this moment?" said Sri Krishna.

"No sir! I have come first," said Duryodhana from behind.

"Oh! You have also come," said Krishna.

Students of the Mahabharata tell us that Krishna's sideward glance at Duryodhana was enough to seal Duryodhana's fate at that moment. It is believed that it is very inauspicious for a person to be looked at askance by anybody; and that is what happened.

Sri Krishna said, "You have come first, but I saw Arjuna first. Also, he is younger, you are the elder. Don't you think it is proper for me to speak to the younger one first,

especially as I saw him first?"

Then turning to Arjuna, Sri Krishna asked, "What made you come here?"

Arjuna replied, "Great Master, you know what is going to happen. War has become inevitable. We all want your help."

Sri Krishna said, "What can I give you? I have two things. I have a large army called Narayani Sena; if you want it, you can take it. Otherwise I am here, but unarmed, doing nothing. I will merely sit and discuss with you. I will not take part in the war. If you want such a man as I am, take me. Or if you think this is not going to be of any utility to you, take the large army which will help you, as it is almost invincible."

"I want you only, Master," replied Arjuna.

Immediately Duryodhana retorted, "I want the army."

"Take it," said Sri Krishna.

Duryodhana left the place hurriedly, and declared to the Kuru family that he had already won victory in the war, that his victory was certain because of the invincible forces that he had received from Sri Krishna.

When Duryodhana left the place, Sri Krishna accosted Arjuna and said, "What a foolish person you are! Why did you not ask for the army? What good is it if I sit idle without doing anything for you? Why have you made this wrong choice? The other man took the good forces, and you are asking for me, who is as good as nothing."

Arjuna replied, "Thou art all for me, Great Master. I know you very well. Don't try to deceive me by this query as to why I have chosen you."

"Oh! You want to vie with me. Okay, all right. Do that," said Krishna.

Then they both left.

After that, Sri Krishna's role in the Mahabharata was only when it became necessary as a policy of political science to plead for peace with the Kurus. The policy of Sri Krishna is called *simha nyaya*, the attitude of a lion. If a lion is lying down and we walk by it, it will not give any regard to us because it knows its strength. Even if we throw a stone at a lion that is lying down, it may not wake up. But if it wakes up, no one can face it.

In the Artha Shastra, which was the political science of the day, there are four ways prescribed to approach a contending party: *sama, dana, bheda* and *danda*. We do not suddenly attack the enemy, even if we despise them. We always try to pacify and calm them, and plead for proper sense to prevail in the mind of the enemy, saying that it is not good to have war—neither is it good for them, nor it is good for us, because it will end in mutual destruction.

From that point of view, Sri Krishna told the Pandavas' Yudhishthira, "The earlier messengers that you sent have not brought any good results. It was only an exchange of ideas from both sides, but nothing materialised. A proper person, with a good knowledge of politics and capable of expressing himself, should go and speak to the Kurus, saying that your share is due."

Yudhishthira replied, "I do not know who I'll send."

Sri Krishna said, "Why you are worrying? I am here at your service. I will go."

"No Master! I will not send you. No! This is not possible. You are our beloved. You are our heart. You are our soul. You are our everything! Will I send you to the land of wolves, risking your life?" cried Yudhishthira.

"You need not worry about that. I think I may be able to guard myself and protect myself if the Kurus intend anything untoward towards me. You need not be afraid for my safety. I shall take care of myself," replied Sri Krishna.

"As you say, Master. I am not fit to talk to you," said Yudhishthira.

While this talk of peace was taking place between the Pandava brothers and Sri Krishna, Draupadi, who was inside, came out in great anger.

"Who is talking of peace? I heard the word 'peace'. Who is saying this? These cowardly husbands of mine, are they talking of peace? Or Sri Krishna, are you also talking of peace?" Draupadi shouted.

She gestured to her untied hair, and cried loudly, "Oh! Krishna, you also deserted me when I was in trouble. You never came to help me. You, being my friend and well-wisher, what help can you give me? Now you are talking of peace? No, please go and tell the Kurus I want war. Tell them I have come to wage war. If you do not say that, if you are intent on peace, okay, work for peace. I have my children. They will gather an army and fight the Kurus. Only then shall I be satisfied. I don't want peace. I want war."

Sri Krishna consoled her. "My dear sister, don't be annoyed. I promise you I shall speak the truth to you. Let the oceans dry up and the Himalayas get plucked from their roots, but my words cannot become false. Within eighteen days, you will see yourself crowned as queen of this land. I am going to the Kurus only to follow a political policy. Otherwise the public will censure us, saying that we declared war without even trying for peace. Why should we have this tarnishing attitude of people on us? Let me try.

I know very well they will not listen to me. But anyhow, I should do my duty. Let me go now."

Getting up, Krishna told Sarathi, "Let us go. Harness the horses to the chariot."

When Dhritarashtra heard that something was happening, he called Sanjaya and said, "I hear that Krishna is coming. Who is Krishna? Please tell me. Why is he coming? I do not know much about him. I would like to know how to properly receive him."

Sanjaya said, "I am very glad, Your Highness, that you ask who Krishna is. I will tell you who he is. You cannot even see him, as you are wedded to the sense organs, and he is the master of the senses. One who is the master of the sense organs cannot be beheld by anyone who is a slave of the sense organs; and you want to see him, and you ask me why he is coming. He knows very well the injustice that you have done to the Pandavas by your love for your foolish children. Do you know why he is coming? His intention is to burn the Kurus. He will reduce you all to ashes."

Dhritarashtra was frightened, "Receive him well. Let the streets be cleaned, let there be festoons, music, a band, and dancing. Receive him gracefully. Let him not be annoyed with us. Receive him well, treat him well."

All this was arranged, and a wonderful reception was awaiting Sri Krishna.

Duryodhana greeted him and said, "Great Master, you are welcome. A separate palace has been reserved for your stay here. You will rest in the palace today and have dinner with us."

Sri Krishna said, "Well, I am grateful for your offer. You see, one accepts dinner or lunch, whatever it is, when one is hungry or when food is offered with love even if one is not

hungry. But you know very well that I am not hungry, and you do not offer it with love."

Duryodhana said, "Krishna, you should not speak like this. It is highly uncharitable on your part to speak to me in this stern manner at the very outset, when I am ready to receive you with all affection. What harm have I done to you?"

"You have done everything that you could do. I shall see you tomorrow morning," replied Krishna.

Sri Krishna went to Vidura's hut, and was received by him.

"Oh, what a surprise! How is the great Master coming to my hut! What has happened?" Vidura thought. He lost himself completely. He did not know how to receive Sri Krishna. He ran here and there, and brought some bananas. In the joy and ecstasy of merging his soul in Krishna's presence, he forgot himself completely; he peeled the bananas mechanically, and not knowing what he was doing, gave the peels to Sri Krishna, and threw away the fruit. Sri Krishna went on eating the peels without uttering one word.

Vidura's wife suddenly came inside and said, "Hey! What are you doing? You are giving the peels to Sri Krishna."

"Oh!" Vidura wept, and said, "Very great mistake! I lost myself. Here, have the bananas."

Krishna said, "No, the peels are sweeter than the bananas, because your soul offered the peels and your person is offering the bananas. I am satisfied. I don't want any dinner or anything. I have only come to see how you are. I want to rest here. Tomorrow morning I am going back to the Kuru assembly."

"You are going to the Kuru assembly? They are very dangerous people. No, this is not good," said Vidura.

"Don't worry about that. I shall take care of myself. I have the means to protect myself. I will go," said Sri Krishna.

The next morning Sri Krishna took leave of Vidura, and on the way he saw rishis, saints and sages standing on the roadside. He was surprised that they were all standing there.

Sri Krishna got down from the chariot, prostrated himself before them, and inquired, "Why are you great masters standing here?"

"We heard that you are going to give a discourse on dharma in the assembly of the Kurus, and we want to listen to it, so we are also going."

Sri Krishna laughed and said, "Thank you. Bless me," and he returned to his chariot and went directly to the palace.

Sri Krishna was received with great grandeur by Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Duryodhana, Kripa, and everyone. He entered the hall. At that time, he saw the rishis already standing there, and instructed that they be seated first. Then Bhishma ordered thousands of seats to be brought, and all the rishis were seated. After everyone sat, Sri Krishna sat humbly, without uttering a word. Nobody spoke one word. It was all dead silence. Each one thought the other would speak first. When nobody spoke, and time was passing in utter silence without anyone knowing what was going to happen, Bhishma stood up and broke the silence.

"It is a great blessing to this assembly of the Kurus that we have the great Yadava hero among us. His greatness surpasses the magnificence of the whole world. The great luminary that he is, he is radiating his presence in this august assembly of the Kurus. May we have the permission

to ask him for his message, which we shall follow readily as he would ask us to follow. We would like the great Master to speak, and tell us what our duty is," said Bhishma.

Sri Krishna stood up and spoke, "What am I going to tell you? Everyone knows why I have come here. The suffering of the Pandavas is actually intolerable. The mischievous way in which the Kurus have treated the Pandavas is intolerable. These Kurus tried to poison Bhima, they wanted to burn the Pandavas alive in the *lakshagrah*, they tried every way to destroy them, and played crooked dice through which means they humiliated them and threw them into the wilderness where they underwent thirteen years of suffering. Now, after having undergone that sorrow of thirteen years of life in the wilderness, they have come to ask for their share. I have come to plead before you great people that the share due to the Pandavas be given."

Duryodhana struck his thigh and said, "No! I don't want to hear anything of this kind."

Krishna said, "How is this young man speaking to me like that, when I spoke a few words on behalf of the poor Pandavas? Sages and saints, elders in the assembly! Is it proper behaviour that this young man rebuts me in one minute even before listening to me?"

Bhishma stood up and said, "I agree with whatever Sri Krishna has said. Their share is due to them."

Drona, Kripa, and everybody said, "Wonderful! Wonderful!"

Duryodhana said, "I shall not agree. War is the only solution."

"Oh! You want war?" said Sri Krishna. "You shall have it."

After a long lecture, Sri Krishna in rage said to Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and the whole audience, "This is a shame to the audience. How do you allow this wretched fellow in the assembly of the Kurus? Is he a human being? If only you permit me, I will bind him up just now and throw him at the feet of Yudhishthira. Will you permit me to do that?"

When Sri Krishna uttered these words, Duryodhana hissed like a snake in anger, got up from his seat and returned to his house, where he connived, with the help of Karna, Duhshasana and Sakuni, his henchmen: "This man wants to bind me and imprison me. We shall imprison him first. When Krishna is imprisoned, the Pandavas will be paralysed automatically."

This news of conniving a tragic approach towards Sri Krishna was somehow or other known to Satyaki. He immediately ran to Krishna and said, "Master! They want to imprison you. Shall I bring the army?"

"Keep quiet," Sri Krishna said. "I do not want any army."

"No, Master. We'll take care of it. I shall call the forces," said Satyaki.

"No. Sit quiet," replied Sri Krishna.

Then Sri Krishna stood up and said, "Bhishma, Drona, and others, great heroes seated here, I think Duryodhana is asking for trouble. He wants to bind me. Let him. Let all the people come."

Gandhari, who was also there, wept. "Oh! How is this possible that my son is talking like that?"

She summoned him, and at the behest of his mother, Duryodhana, in great anger, came to the audience. Reprimanding him, she said, "Have you any shame? Idiot! You talk of binding this ambassador. Are ambassadors

bound? You must respect them. Keep quiet. Don't talk. Have you any sense?"

When she said that and everybody kept quiet, Sri Krishna stood up and uttered the last word to Duryodhana. "Young man, are you under the impression that I am alone here and you can bind me? This is a false notion in your mind. I am not alone here. All the gods and all the uplifted weapons are here just now. The Pandavas, with all the army, are inside here. Look at me."

Immediately Sri Krishna showed his Cosmic Form. Brahma was sitting on his head, Rudra on his chest, and all the angels started shining like tiny rays of lustre emanating from every pore of his body. The Earth shook, it is said, and the oceans rose with ferocious waves. No one knew what was happening.

Everybody said, "Hail! Hail! Wonder! Wonder!"

Dhritarashtra, who was blind, heard people cry, "Wonder! Wonder!" and said, "What is this wonder? I cannot see anything. May I see? May I have sight?"

Sri Krishna blessed him with sight for a minute, and Dhritarashtra saw this miracle. Then he prayed to the great Master, "After having seen this, I do not want to see anything else. Make me blind once again."

Sri Krishna withdrew himself and, uttering not a word, left the audience and returned to the Pandavas.

War took place. Without going into detail of the further events, we can sum up by saying that Sri Krishna was even ready to break his promise of not taking up weapons in the war when he found that Arjuna had a subtle inner respect for Bhishma as his grandfather and would not actually face him with the strength that he could have exercised at that moment. Arjuna was going a little slow, as if he was

not eager to fight, and Bhishma was destroying everybody. Bhishma was raging like fire, and thousands and thousands of Pandava forces were dying.

Sri Krishna jumped from the chariot and said, "You are not able to do anything! I shall myself do everything. I shall destroy Bhishma just now."

When Sri Krishna rushed forward with his Sudarshana Chakra, Arjuna ran after him and pulled him back. Weeping, he said, "Master, I shall do whatever you say. Don't break your promise. Come back."

Then Bhishma threw down his weapons and prayed, "Great Master, if you come and destroy me today, I shall be blessed. I shall have entry into your body, and attain moksha just now. Please come."

Finally the war ended. Bhishma, Drona, Karna and Duryodhana were all completely felled by various methods of warfare, and the Pandavas won victory. Yudhishthira was declared king, Draupadi was anointed queen, and all went well. Sri Krishna went back to Dvarka, as his mission was over. He again returned to the Pandavas during the *asvamedha yajna* that Yudhishthira performed.

I have omitted one incident, which is the *rajasuya* of Yudhishthira where Sisupala expressed his outrage and was destroyed. Due to the limited time available, I cannot go into the entire story of the Mahabharata. Here we have the Tenth Skandha of the Srimad Bhagavata and the Mahabharata combined.

In the Eleventh Skandha there is the conversation of Sri Krishna with Uddhava as the last message, where Sri Krishna gives to everybody, through the mouthpiece of Uddhava, a large, very elaborate lecture on dharma, *artha, kama* and moksha, emphasising that devotion to God is the

only way to attain Him. *Bhakti* is final.

Thus, Sri Krishna completed his great mission of Divinity incarnate on Earth, and withdrew himself into the very form of Narayana that he himself originally was.

In the Twelfth Skandha, Parikshit attains salvation, moksha. The last message of Suka is given, wherein he asks Parikshit to consider himself as a soul which is identical with the Universal Soul. *Aham brahma param dhāma, brahmāham paramam padam* (S.B. 12.5.11): "On that may you meditate. Forget the idea that you are Parikshit, and when the snake comes and bites, let it bite the body. After hearing this whole Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana *katha*, and the glory of Bhagavan Sri Krishna and the glory of Narayana, have no doubt in your mind that you will attain moksha. King Khatvanga attained moksha in forty-five minutes, and you had seven days to listen to this glorious lecture, which is a great meditation on God Himself. You had this blessed opportunity. Be happy."

Suka blessed Parikshit, and Parikshit sat in deep meditation; and unaware of the snake coming and biting him, he left his body, and his soul reached the Almighty Lord's feet and attained moksha, the final aim of existence. This is the story of the Srimad Bhagavata, the Mahabharata, and the great message of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, God incarnate on Earth.

Concluding Message

THE STAGES OF ASCENT TO MOKSHA

Sadhana is the way to moksha. It has no other significance. Moksha is freedom from bondage. But it is necessary for everyone to know whether one is really in bondage or is really free. If we are free, then there is nothing to do. Let us be happy in this world.

Does anyone recognise that he or she is in bondage? If this question is put before anyone, they will be surprised. "What kind of bondage is there in me? I seem to be perfectly all right in my life. I can go about anywhere I like. I have all the necessary amenities for a comfortable existence. I am really happy. I require nothing. God has given me everything." If this is the case, you are really a free person, and there is no need to strive for further freedom because of the conviction that you are already free.

The impossibility to even recognise that one is in bondage is a worse form of bondage. To know that one is bound is a great virtue. But to think one is free even while one is bound, and not being able to recognise the kind of bondage in which one is—there are no words to describe this most idiotic condition of human nature.

The beginning of sadhana is the consciousness of suffering. We must be immensely aware that we are in a state of agony. The bondage that we are referring to here is not an

ordinary insufficiency that we have in our workaday life. It is a malady that has crept into our very existence.

Our total life is free movement on our part. But there is a root within us that is weeping because of this bondage, due to which the soul itself suffers. This is the bondage of the existence itself. To believe that we are really existing is ignorance on our part. The fact is that we are on a process of movement. We have moved continuously from previous lives to the present life, and we shall move from this present life to future lives. The movement is such that it is continuous, like the flow of a river. Buddha's wisdom recognised that bondage is the imagination that one truly exists in a state of stability. We are pushed forward by the requirements of our future incarnation, and also pushed from behind by the actions that we performed in our previous lives. We are propelled from both sides. The previous life's consequences urge us to move onward, and the possibilities of a future life pull us from the front.

This fact is not known to us. Ignorance is sometimes bliss, as it is well said. Total ignorance looks like total bliss. That we are caught up in a whirlpool of evolutionary process and we are helplessly driven in a direction of which we have no knowledge at all, that we cannot even lift a finger of our own accord unless forces outside us cooperate with us—we cannot breathe, we cannot think, and we cannot sleep, the heart cannot beat, the lungs cannot perform their functions unless forces transcendent to our personality operate—is not known to us.

The consciousness of the nature of one's bondage is the beginning of sadhana. This is what is told to us in the Yoga Vasishtha, in its description of the stages of awakening. "Something is very wrong with me right from the

beginning. I do not know my past, I do not know my future, and even today, just at this moment, I cannot understand what circumstances I am passing through." This is the beginning of wisdom, and is called *subecha* in the language of the Yoga Vasishtha—wanting to know what is good. Though the nature of the good is not actually known, there is at least a desire to know it. *Subheccha* is the first stage of sadhana. We do not want to be bad; we want to be good.

The next stage of sadhana is an effort to find out what is good. It is not enough if we merely want the good; we must know where the good lies, and strive for it. This is self-analysis. *Satsanga*, study, attending discourses of mahatmas, worship, *japa* sadhana, are all helpful in investigating into the nature of the problem and then deciphering the nature of the ultimate truth. These first two stages, *subheccha* and *vicharana*, are mostly the preliminary stages of spiritual practice, and yet they are difficult enough for a person who is not acquainted with this way of thinking, just as a person who does not know cycling cannot sit on a bicycle even for a moment until he learns it.

By such kind of continuous, assiduous investigation into one's own bondage and what is good for oneself, the mind which is fattened by being fed through sensory life becomes thinner and thinner, and that which was once opaque due to the desire for enjoyment of the objects of the world—due to which, the light of the Self within could not be reflected, as sunlight cannot pass through a brick and can pass only through a clean glass—becomes thinned. In the earlier stages, due to the thickened form of the mental process, the very idea of there being something called the Atman within may not be possible, but after assiduous practice in this manner, the mind becomes thin. That condition is called

tanumanasi, a threadlike condition of the mind where it is transparent and reflects the true nature of everything.

According to the Yoga Vasishtha, these are the first three stages of actual sadhana, spiritual practice. By continuing this practice for a long, long time throughout one's life, the *sattva*, or the purity in one's person, flashes forth, and the sun of knowledge begins to dazzle through this mirror-like clean mind that has been attenuated through the absence of desires. This is a pure *sattvic* transparent condition of the mind, free from any kind of distraction or lethargy, i.e., *rajas* and *tamas*. This in itself is a great achievement that we have flashes of insight in our sadhana. This state is called *sattvapatti*.

Because of the bliss that we enjoy by the experience of this light of the Self emanating from within one's own self through the mind that is so transparent, we do not feel a desire for anything that is outside, and we feel that we are sufficient in ourselves. Our very being is a joy to us, and we do not want assistance from any other thing. Detachment automatically, spontaneously takes place in this stage. This is the stage of *asamsakti*, non-attachment. It is not the non-attachment that has been inflicted by deliberate austerity, but a spontaneous event that is taking place on account of the knowledge arising spontaneously in the *sadhaka—asamsa*. We have to take several births, normally speaking, to attain this state of *asamsakti,* or *sattvapatti.*

Total detachment is unknown to mankind. We always cling to something, either in the mind or socially, physically, materially. Total satisfaction in one's own self, free from having any desire to contact outside oneself, is something unimaginable for the common man. But such a state is reached by the intense practice of

self-investigation—*asamsakti*, as it is called.

Then comes the higher state, called *padarthabhavana*. We do not recognise that the world is really material. It is no more an object. All the things in the world appear as a congealed form of universal power. It is as if the ocean of universal force gets concentrated into little knots here and there in space and time, to which we give an appellation of objects, persons, things, etc. There are no persons, no things, no objects, ultimately. They are concentrated pressure-points of universal force. We will never see anything material afterwards. It is all one inundating force permeating all things, looking like objects, persons and things. This is *padarthabhavana*.

When such a state of universal recognition of a pervading force is attained, the only one thing that remains for a person—who is really not a person but is a centre of force—is to identify one's own localised point of existence with this universal force so that what exists is not a perceived *sadhaka* of a universal power, because this *sadhaka* has gone into the very bosom of the sea of power. It is cosmic prana, cosmic mind, cosmic intellect, cosmic consciousness—whatever we may call it. This state of immersion of one's own being into the pervading presence of universal force is true liberation. In that condition, whether we exist in this body or do not exist in this body, it makes no difference. While we exist in the physical body even with this realisation, we may be called a *jivanmukta purusha* in the language of the scriptures. The mind is not concentrated on the body; it is concentrated on that to which this body belongs.

It is then said to be salvation where even this little appendage of the body born through past karma drops completely, and the pure existence, the soul as it is, merges

into the Universal Soul. This is called moksha, for which sadhana is practised. We do not live in this world for any other purpose.

The consciousness of the aim of existence is a primary modification of any kind of spiritual aspiration. Routine activity, doing the same thing every day, chanting the same mantra without knowing its implications, and actually in practical life getting immersed in the oblivion of one's relationship with this universal force, is not sadhana. There must be an actual awakening to this great fact of one's vital relationship to the all-pervading power, the immersion of oneself with it, the communion of oneself with it, the self-identification of oneself with it, *being it*, and having an experience of only one existence. This is moksha, for which purpose we are striving. May God bless you!