

# THE TEACHINGS OF THE BHAGAVADGITA



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## **PUBLISHERS' NOTE**

'The Teachings of the Bhagavadgita' is a series of ten discourses given by His Holiness Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj to the students of the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy, Basic Course-9 during the months of May and June, 1982.

In these profound expositions, Sri Swamiji Maharaj takes the students of the Academy and all readers of this series step by step through the profound depths of the Bhagavadgita. These talks are a more condensed version of the much larger series of talks given earlier, which was published in 1980 under the title 'The Philosophy of the Bhagavadgita'. Though there are similarities in the layout of both presentations, there is a sense of uniqueness expressed in these talks with the emphasis on instructional teachings, which all seekers of the truth will find very useful and a most wonderful compliment to the earlier published work.

Every attempt has been taken to keep the words as close as possible to the transcription of the audio recordings in an attempt to place the reader back in time, in the presence of its delivery in 1982. Each discourse is linked to the audio file.

## **Chapter 1**

### **THIS DRAMA OF LIFE**

When you come to a place like this, you have to re-orientate your minds, to a large extent, to an appreciable extent. There is a specific purpose for which you have come here to this Academy, to this Divine Life Society Ashram. To some of you, the purpose of your coming here and attending these classes may be clear; to some, it may be nebulous – not wholly perspicuous. There is something which this Academy is endeavouring to cater to the minds of people like you. This ‘something’ which this Ashram, this Academy, is trying to furnish you with, is perhaps what you actually need in life. You may be under the impression that there are thousands of things that you need in life. This is a thorough misconception which has to be removed from the mind – you are not in need of one thousand things in this world. And the difficulties that you face in life are also not caused by one thousand things.

There is a little error in the very way of our thinking into which we have been born, right from our babyhood. Conditions of society, circumstances of family, and the weaknesses of personality, combined together, prevent us from undergoing the necessary educational discipline which is essential for you to know where you really stand in this world. We take generally things for granted – we are sons and daughters of somebody, we are nationals of a particular country, we are working in some office; we have this problem and that difficulty. This is a natural human way of thinking, but a human way of thinking itself is not a remedy for human problems. A human way of thinking, is not a remedy for human problems – is a sentence we ought to underline – because human problems can be tackled only by a power of understanding which is superior to the ordinary human way of thinking. A medicine which is of the same character as an illness may not be able to set right the illness one suffers from. There is a specific influence which the medicine administered into your body exerts upon you, due to which you seem to be recovering from your illness. A friend of the illness that have cannot be a remedy for the illness. The medical treatment cannot be an associate of the disease; it is a rectifying factor and, therefore, it differs in the function and constitution from the illness you suffer from. The problems of human life are a sort of illness, which cannot be rectified by a purely human way of understanding, as this human way of thinking itself is the cause of human problems. So there is a necessity to lift yourself up from this so-called ‘human outlook of life’ and visualise the whole of life from a viewpoint or standpoint which is, in a way, superior to what you call ‘the human way of thinking’. This art, this science, this system of living is, very very unfortunately, not known to many people in the world because of the fact that most people are sunk in this routine of ordinary thinking, which you usually call ‘the human way of thinking’, and you know what the human way of thinking is.

Swami Sivananda, the founder of this institution, had a specific mission to hold aloft in life before mankind, which was not merely to teach you what anybody else has taught you, but to awaken you – not merely to sermon, or give a

gospel. A sleeping man has to be woken up before anything is taught to him. There is no use of giving you a sermon when you are asleep. The first thing is to awaken you from the dream or the sleep in which you are. When you are able to see things in a better way, you may be told what is essential for you; if you are asleep there is no use of speaking to you. So the role which great men of stature, like Swami Sivananda, played in life seems to be the function of awakening man rather than teaching man in the ordinary sense of the term; and you know very well the importance of waking a person from sleep – it is not in any way less important than giving him a sermon or giving him a teaching of any kind. If you are awake, perhaps you know where things stand and where you are.

So goes this little introduction that I place before you which may brush and burnish your brains. You are here with a deconditioned mind, and not a conditioned mind with which you must have come. You carry your own minds and brains when you come from distant places; that mind, that brain, should now be able to think and organise itself in a new way altogether. This is the humble effort of this academy. It is humble because it is not possible to sweeten the whole ocean with any amount of sugar that we have in this world. However, some sugar can be added into the ocean – that is a great satisfaction. Even a hundred bags of sugar will not sweeten the ocean; a thousand bags, no! However, there is a satisfaction of having performed a duty. One way or the other, the saltwaters may become sweet. So, this saltwater of human life has to be sweetened with the new outlook which is superhuman. Unless you are able to aspire at least for a superhuman level of existence – though you may not be able to place yourself in that condition at once – unless there is at least this longing for that condition which is larger than and deeper than the human level, you will not be able to have peace of mind in this world. The judgment of things is possible only by a person who is superior to the things judged, for which purpose you have to be a little more than an ordinary man.

In this context of the great learning of the art of living, I have been requested by the organisation of this Academy to speak to you something about the most interesting and stimulating message given by the Bhagavadgita, a term which you are all very much familiar with – a great scripture of yoga. You are having many other lessons also on yoga; you have Patanjali's yoga, you have Bhakti yoga, and you have many other sidelights thrown on this great, eluding thing called yoga. This specific theme which I am supposed to place before you is not an easy thing to understand – but it is not impossible to understand. It requires a little exercise of your mind with a discipline of concentration. The Bhagavadgita is a holy text which everybody reads, like the New Testament or the Bible, or the Tripitakas. We have a habit, again which is human to which I alluded just now, of revering, adoring holy texts as deities, worshipping them on our altars, and carrying them on our heads but understanding nothing of what they say. The holy texts are not to be carried on the head merely as deities of worship, though they may be also deities. They are medicines, which you do not merely keep in a cupboard and adore as a holy stuff. It is something which is to be taken in, absorbed into your

system and made part and parcel of your very biological, psychological, and rational system of living.

The Bhagavadgita is the great gospel which Bhagavan Sri Krishna spoke. Historically speaking, many many years ago, under a special context of the Mahabharata, the great epic which, as you perhaps already know, is an epic of life as a whole. The question which this great text tries to solve and answer is the question of life of man. Your life in this world is a great question mark before you. What are you? Who are you? What is it that is expected of you and what is it that you expect from this world? These are questions before us and we may not be able to answer these questions off-hand. Where are we seated now? We have a simple glib answer which may not be the correct answer. I will tell you how even very small things may not be the things we actually bring into action in our life – like the location of yours, here, at this present moment, to give you only one simple, concrete, gross example. Where are you sitting now, at this present moment? You can have many answers to this question. You are sitting in the hall of a library of the Sivananda Ashram, in the campus of The Divine Life Society. This is a very correct answer, and nobody can say that you are wrong in saying that just now, “I am seated in the hall of the library of this Ashram.” But you can also say, “I am living in the state of Uttar Pradesh. I come from Madras, Maharashtra, Punjab or the United States, etc. I am now in India.” This is also a correct answer – you are now sitting in India, and not merely in this little hall. Though it may be true that you are in a hall, it is not untrue that you are in India. Perhaps you are likely to be more free and liberated in your psychological operations when you feel that you are in India, rather than feel that you are in a little hall. You yourself will know the difference between these two ways of thinking – “I am in India, not in a little hall.” You may also say that, “I am on the surface of the earth”; this is also true. You are sitting on the earth, on the surface. You are not sitting in a hall, which is only a concept in your mind. You are on a spaceship. Do you know what a spaceship is? You know very well what it is; and the earth is a spaceship. To move in space and rattle through space, you need not go to the moon or some other planet – you are just in that condition even now. This is a little planet, the earth, on which you are seated, and it is moving with such rapidity in space that to be in the moon or the earth – it makes no difference to you. When you go to the moon you will find yourself in the same condition as you are now finding yourself when seated on the earth. Just as you do not know that the earth is moving now, you will not know that the moon is moving if you are sitting there. So goes the way in which the mind thinks.

You are also in a solar system, a large electromagnetic field which runs vitally from one planet to the centre of the sun. You are not in a library hall, sitting here. You are in a terribly powerful magnetic field operating between the sun and this earth. There is no empty space between the sun and this earth; it is electricity operating, and we are terribly influenced by every planet, every thing that is between us and every other planet. The sun and the whole solar system is conditioned by another system called the ‘Nebular Organisation’, the Milky Way, etc. which contains thousands and thousands of solar systems like us. We are

now in the Milky Way, a part of it. We will not be able to think with our minds the way in which we are accustomed to, if the mind is to be lifted like this – higher and higher into wider regions of location. We are not sitting in a little hall, we are not even on the earth. We are in a vast spatial and temporal expanse which is influencing us from moment to moment, so that we may say that we are living in this vast universe, not in a library hall. And each one of you will be able to appreciate the difference that it will make to you if you are able to think that you are living in a vast expanse of this astronomical universe than this little thinking that you are in a small room in the academy campus. You are right in thinking that you are in the academy campus in a small room, but you can also be right in a more intensive manner if you know that you are in a larger dimension of the whole set-up of this terrible creation before you, and you are in that.

The Bhagavadgita, thus, does not take any one standpoint in answering questions of life. It takes every standpoint. Otherwise, the study of human life – or any life for the matter of that – may not be complete. A very expert physician takes into consideration every aspect of the possibility of illness of a person, and doesn't treat only one aspect. Otherwise, there will be reaction from that aspect which is ignored or neglected in observation. A total answer is given to a total question in the Bhagavadgita. There is only a single question before us, and a single answer will come from every corner of the world. The question is single because we are involved in a single, uniform manner with the large environment in which we are living, and the answer also has to be a complete answer. As is this human organism a complete system of operation, so is our relationship to the whole environment of ours – a complete involvement. All of our involvements are complete and total to the core. Hence, any educational endeavour has to be a thoroughgoing and incisive, in-depth inquiry into the structure of all things.

This occasion arose at a moment when the Mahabharata war was to take place – a question that arose in the mind of Arjuna, who in a way represents mankind in general. That personality called 'Arjuna' represents man as such. He stands for me, you, and everybody else. As a member in a parliament may stand for a particular constituency and represent the voice of those people there from where he is elected, Arjuna may represent man as such, everybody included. The question that arose in his mind is the question that may arise in every one of our minds. What is this question? In the earlier stages, this so-called Arjuna representing man, thought like anybody else in the world – "I shall do this, and I shall see that I succeed in my endeavour." We are also saying the same thing, "I will do this; I have to go there." And, naturally you are not going to get defeated in your attempt. You don't embark upon a project to get repelled – you go there for a success in your enterprise. This is how we think, and like that Arjuna also thought. But, things were not so easy when he had to confront that which he could not avoid in the fulfilment of enterprise or the project he was engaging himself in. Even when you want to build a house, you are not going to think merely of brick, cement and iron; this is not the only thing that is involved in the construction of a house. There are larger things, such as the occupation of the land, the ownership, the title deed, the legal association, the architectural plan

and the budget involved in it, and your financial status – hundreds of things come into the picture, apart from merely the question of their being the necessity for brick and mortar etc. Many other things also are there, other than what I mentioned as instances. The war in which a person like Arjuna was engaged was not a simple encounter. You do not start anything unless you know everything about it. Otherwise, as the poet said, you would be like a fool who tries to tread where even angels will not like to move.

Arjuna, the representative of man, who thought as any one of us thinks, found himself in a difficulty when he had to confront life's problems. The word 'confrontation' is very unpalatable. It implies a kind of opposition you are trying to face – which war is, battle is, and perhaps any encounter or enterprise is. Any enterprise in life is an opposition you are facing. Any activity of any kind is the effort on your part, to solve a question arisen on account of an opposition that is in front of you; if there is no opposition of any kind, no activity would be essential in life. You need not do anything – you can be just there, where you are – but life is a battle, inwardly as well as outwardly. It is a battle because there is conflict everywhere. You will never find a very smooth movement of anything without a rattling of conflicting elements, which movement of any kind is.

Our very personal existence as a human body is a phenomenon of battle going on in what you call the biological system, which is not a static, concrete, unmoving entity – it is a tremendous movement. You have grown into the stature of your present maturity of body due to a transmutation process which has been going on ever since your birth, and transmutation or transformation is nothing but a process of being born and dying at the same time. An earlier stage dies, and a new stage is born in every evolutionary process. That which 'was' has gone and that which 'is not' is to arrive. The arriving of a new thing is the birth, so-called, and the going away of that which is now, and giving way to that which is not, is the death of the earlier one. Birth and death, the coming and the going of things, is the drama of existence. A Nataka, a drama, a performance in a theatre is a terrible movement – it is not a static action, it is not the mere existing of people on a stage. There is a movement, which is involved in the coming and going of people – some role comes in and some role has an exit. Otherwise, you would have all the dramatis personae standing there before you and not saying anything; there will not be a play. A play involves the coming and going of various actors; and the coming and going of various actors is what you call the scenes in the drama or the enactment – the play. In this sense we may say the life of this world is a great enactment of many people, coming in and going and playing the role in some way, and then having their exit, not being seen again. "The world is a large stage." This is what Shakespeare mentions in a beautiful passage in his *As You Like It*, perhaps. We are all actors in the large play.

Now, when you take up a particular part in an enactment or a drama, you know very well that there are other actors also, and you are not the sole actor in that performance. Your relationship to other people in that particular performance is the vital thing you have to understand. There may be friends and enemies, which are the roles you may have to play – maybe you are enacting the



Ramayana or the Mahabharata or some such thing. Every actor performs a particular duty. And in the sense of that particularisation of the duty, one is different from the other. There is no vital connection between one actor and another, inasmuch as one actor is concerned only with his or her role, and not with the role played by other people in the drama. In that sense every one of us is independent – you have no connection with me, I am not concerned with you. I do what I am expected to do in the little circumference or the circumscribed area of my life, and so on is the case with you also. But, there is a unity of structure in the whole play; otherwise it would not be a play at all. In spite of the individuality and the isolated performances of the different actors, maybe hundreds in number, there is a unity of purpose, an aim and objective with which the drama is played - the objective being in the mind of the director who knows which actor will play which role and what unity there can be between the performance of one and the performance of another. It is not merely the director as an individual that is supposed to know the unity of purpose. Even the individuals will be aware of it, without which knowledge there would not be a harmonious element in respect of other elements, notwithstanding the fact for the purpose of their performance they are individuals.

Here is a little hint that I place before you as to the structure of our social life itself. We are, outwardly speaking, independent persons. Each one is a free bird – we can fly in any way we like - but we are not so free as we may imagine, under the pressure of an error of thinking. In a democratic set-up of a government, each person is free; that is the very meaning of democracy. You are not a shackled person; you are not limited in the operation of your daily performance – you are a free man. That is democracy. But you are not a hundred percent free; a hundred percent freedom given to every person would end in a destruction of the very system of democracy, because two hundred percents are unknown – like two infinities. There will be a clash of persons in one second. In spite of the independence and freedom given to individuals in this free set-up of things, there is a restraint exerted upon each individual which you call the operation of law; you may call it the government if you like. So, there is a restraint that you have to exercise on your part, together with the freedom that you are exercising in life. So restraint and freedom are not opposites, though they are opposites from the point of view of a dictionary meaning of these words. How can restraint and freedom be the same thing? They are two different things, but they are not contradictories. Do you know that in the exercise of your freedom as a citizen of a democratic nation, you are also restraining yourself from interfering with the freedom of other people? Is it not restraint? Do you say that the restraint is in any way opposed to the freedom that you are endowed with? So, freedom and discipline are not opposites, and perhaps the one cannot be there without the other.

But, the human mind being very weak for obvious reasons, is not always able to think in this disciplined manner. Most of us are undisciplined, indisciplined persons. We have a desire for license to do anything. This is not merely not a superhuman way of thinking, it is not even a decent human way of thinking.

“Each one for himself and devil take the hindmost” is not democracy. It is a duty that each one feels, not only in regard to oneself but also in regard to others. Many of us are not meant for a pure democratic living, since we are unable to think in such a large way which is essential for this charitable way of existence you call democracy. In one way at least, you may say the universe is like a large democratic organisation, though it is not merely that; it is something else also, to which we shall refer later on. Everyone has a duty in this world, not only to one’s self but also to others. You know this very well – a simple truth. You have a duty towards yourself, and in the performance of this duty in regard to yourself you are free; nobody obstructs the performance of the duty you owe to your own self. But, in the duty that you owe to others, you are under the impulsion of a law that operates transcendent to your individuality – transcendent because it is wider than your personality, it is comprehensive of all other people also, in whose relationship you as an individual are involved.

The law of a country is larger than the person or the individual who is free. Every person in a nation is free, yet the law is superior to every person. Unless it is superior it cannot exercise a control over others. One individual cannot restrain another individual, because both are on par, as far as they are individuals. A control can be exercised only by a superior power which is super-individualistic, and thus is law. Every disciplined law system rule is super-individualistic. If it is confined to the individual only, it cannot operate in respect of other people outside, external to the individual. So there is a law operating in the world which gives you freedom to act, and at the same time restrains you in a powerful manner. So I come to the point again, that restraint and freedom are not opposites – they are co-relatives. They co-exist, they are co-extensive, co-eternal, and one cannot be without the other. An ordinary weak mind, not properly tutored or educated, will not be able to think in this manner. Arjuna was not able to think always like this. He was the son of so-and-so, he was a Kshatriya, he had a right over some land for which he was to fight – that was all that seems to have been in his mind, and he was not wholly educated, perhaps, in the art of thinking in a manner which is required by the existence of things which are not always visible to the eyes.

This transcendent principle which is called law, which operates in a country and operates in the world, operates everywhere, is not always a pleasant thing for a person who seeks a hundred percent freedom to one’s own self. Nobody likes the word ‘law’; it is a hateful word. We do not like the word ‘discipline’ – we resent it. It is very bitter to hear these terms because we are not prepared to allow that amount of freedom to others which we like to allow to our own selves, which requires a slight impersonality on our part, above and transcendent to our individual way of thinking which, given a long rope, will be the centre of selfishness. Selfishness, is the affirmation of yourself as the whole reality and an unpreparedness to accept that others also exist around you. You are not prepared even to acquiesce in the existence of other people. You alone are and, “Nobody else can be in front of me.” This is selfishness, this is tyranny, this is a dictator gone amuck. “Let me alone exist and others be not.” This is the height of

selfishness. But it can present itself in a milder form when we stick to our own guns and would not be prepared to be charitable enough to accept the viewpoints of other people also, much less give them the freedom that they would like to enjoy as we ourselves would like. The world is not made in the way in which we are thinking it to be constituted – things are not what they seem. The law I refer to is not outside you. We do not like the operation of law because we are under the impression that it is outside us – somebody is harassing us from outside by saying that there is a law. Law is not an external existence – it is something in which you yourself are involved. In this sense, you are involved in the world also. So in this sense again, the world is not outside you, as the law is not outside. The relationship that obtains between you and the world is what is called law. It is not made by man; it exists, as the law of gravitation exists if man is not to be at all.

This is a new education into which we have to be introduced, if we have to enjoy a peaceful existence in this world. One who violates law cannot be protected by law, and therefore he cannot have any peace. And if we are insistent on considering others as totally externals – the world is unrelated to us, which we are merely to exploit in some way or the other – then the law will catch hold of us. If you are not prepared to accept a law which accepts the existence of other people, you will be unhappy in this world. You may say that we are all unhappy because of the violation of a law - not necessarily the law that man has made in a parliament, but a law which conditions even the laws made in the parliament. Why do you violate such laws? Because you are not sufficiently educated. That was the condition in which Arjuna found himself when he saw a huge army of friends, relations, etc., in that context of the Mahabharata battle. It is a fear to face relations, friends, and related objects. That roused up a question of what one has to do in this large set-up of things. It was not a question of Arjuna, but a question of man as such. It is not a question concerning the Mahabharata battle; it is a question concerning the struggle for existence itself. This question has to be answered, and here is the Bhagavadgita.

## Chapter 2

### THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE SPIRITUAL SEEKER

Spiritual life is the greatest of adventures. In that way we can compare it to a battle. It involves careful preparation, as in a war. And, when you engage yourself in a war you do not go there merely to get defeated and thrown out; the intention is to win victory. So the practice of yoga, which is the greatest project that a person can embark upon in life, is in a way comparable to a battle or an encounter, for the purpose of which one has to make an almost infinite set of preparations – for days and months and years perhaps – as a culmination of one's existence here, as the fruit of the tree of one's whole life in this world. Hence, great care and caution has to be exercised. In a hurry, in a bustle and in a state of emotional enthusiasm, we are not supposed to enter into this field called 'life spiritual'. It is not an entering into a new way of life; rather it is an embracing of all life together in your own life. You are not going to live an isolated, queer type of cave life psychologically, but you are going to broaden your outlook and your vision of things, so that all life is included in your own life and your life becomes commensurate with every other kind of living.

You have heard that yoga is a union with something. It is a union no doubt, but with what? There are endless answers to this question. With what are you going to unite yourself in that you call yoga? The difficulty in answering this question arises due to a misrepresentation of facts by our senses, which indoctrinate us into the belief that we are independent contents of this world – each person is independent and perhaps one has nothing to do with the other, finally. I have touched upon this theme to some extent yesterday. But the truth is that you are not so independent as you imagine yourself to be. You have a freedom which is constrained by the operation of a universal law. A kind of violation of this universal principle is perpetrated every day in our life when we cling to things as externals, either in love or in hatred. Whether you like a thing or dislike a thing, your attitude towards the thing is almost identical from the point of view of pure psychology. Like and dislike are two aspects of a single attitude which is totally erroneous. Life is a continuity and is not constituted of bits or shreds, with no connection with one another. It is impossible to define life, because it is itself a definition of itself. There are certain things which cannot be defined in words other than the ones we use to designate them or indicate them – 'life', 'consciousness', even 'mind' are indefinable peculiarities.

When we take to the path of the spirit, tread the way of yoga or in the true sense of the term we become religious, we do not shrink, but expand; we do not lose, but gain; we do not become disassociated but get more and more associated in a vital, true manner. Religion has many a time, through the process of history, been described as a passage to the other world, so that this world has no connection with religion, yoga, spirituality, or even God Himself. This interpretation of the religious outlook as an 'other-worldly affair' has insinuated itself into the blood of people, to such an extent that it has not left us even till this moment. There is always a tendency to look up to the skies when we pray to God

as disassociated from our brethren around us and unconnected with the footstool of the earth. Why we are made to think in this manner is a question which takes us to psychology, perhaps psychoanalysis. We are born and bred in an atmosphere which, perhaps, we carry through many lives that we have passed through; and in addition to the atmospheric influence of society, the type of life of the parents, the kind of education we are imparted – in addition to all these, we also carry certain impressions of previous lives when we are born into this world. All these put together, errors piled over errors, prevent us from freeing ourselves from this common notion that the creator is an extra-cosmic existence and therefore life – spiritual, religious, or of yoga – has also to be extra-cosmic. This error is to be rooted out, and the Bhagavadgita has no other purpose to achieve. It is a recipe, like a medical prescription, and it is not merely a holy book that you have simply to worship every day. You do not simply worship a medical prescription – it has to be taken into action for the purpose it is intended for.

The yoga of the Bhagavadgita is a complete prescription for the maladies of life. It is a total panacea that we are provided with by means of a vision which we can best describe as cosmic. The one who imparted this knowledge and the one who received this knowledge were *en rapport* with each other; and the Guru-disciple relationship is precisely this much. It is the capacity of the receiver to raise himself to the level of the height from which this knowledge descends, or oftentimes the other way around – the Guru may have to come down to the level of the receptive capacity of the disciple, as it becomes necessary in the process of teaching in schools and colleges. You cannot always be on a high pedestal and look down upon the student, because the student will receive nothing when you are speaking from a higher level. So, the relationship between Guru and disciple is a mysterious one. We cannot easily say whether the Guru comes down or the disciple goes up. It is a miracle that is taking place. The Guru is a miracle, the disciple also is a miracle, who is able to receive this knowledge, and the process of this communication also is a wonder. *Āścaryavat paśyati kaścīd enam āścaryavad vadati tathaiva cānyaḥ* (Gita 2.29) – says the Bhagavadgita. It is all a miracle! All great things in the world are wonders. They are not equations that you can solve almost instantaneously by calculus. Anything that you try to know deeply and carry it to the logical limits of its understanding – anything of this sort will elude your grasp because all our endowments of grasping are empirical, sensory, and even what we call logical understanding is conditioned by sensory operations.

Thus, Arjuna was confounded, as any one of us can be. In this adventure of spiritual life, which is metaphorically presented before us in the form of the Mahabharata, we are likely to be faced with certain doubts and difficulties. While in the earlier stages it may appear that the whole sky is very clear, when you move onwards you'll find that heavy, thick clouds are hanging above your heads, and there is darkness in the front. This is the darkness of the spiritual aspiration. The first chapter of the Bhagavadgita is a chapter of sorrow of the seeker – *Arjuna Vishada Yoga*. It is the weeping of the seeking individual. However, you will be surprised to note that the colophon or the concluding line of the first

chapter is designated *Arjuna Vishada Yoga*. It is a yoga, and not merely a weeping after a bereavement or a loss. A crying and a weeping, despondency and a melancholy mood cannot be called yoga in any sense of the term. A confounding of the mind is not yoga; but the Bhagavadgita ends with this term 'yoga' even in regard to the first chapter, which is nothing but the weeping of Arjuna and a presentation of various kinds of doubts and difficulties which seem to harass his mind. Why is it called yoga? Why is such a sanctified name attached to this melancholy chapter, the first one in the Bhagavadgita? This is something which is important for us to understand. You know medical men give vaccination to prevent you from having an illness, and you are in a state of temporary illness after the vaccination. If you are given an anti-illness injection, that injection itself will produce a sort of illness. Notwithstanding the fact that the inoculation or the vaccination produces a sort of sure temperature or illness in your body, it has to be considered a process of cure and it is not to be considered an illness really in the true sense of the term – otherwise, you would have had a real illness which would have been more devastating.

The complacency of a happy person in this world is really a danger to the individual. This was the complacency of Arjuna and the foolhardy heroism that he manifested before he entered the battlefield. A person who may be appearing to be healthy and very pleasant in his life may be attacked by an epidemic tomorrow, and this possibility cannot be prevented merely by a precedent happiness a day earlier. The tentative illness that you seem to be in, psychologically, when you tread the path of yoga is the one in which many of us find ourselves – a sense of having lost oneself and a feeling that one does not know where one is standing, which feeling you would not have had before you took to the spiritual way of living or the path of yoga. People are happy in this world. They are travelling all directions and eat well, sleep well, they go to clubs – there is no trouble with anybody in the world. But the trouble arises the moment you turn to the spirit and take to a religious life or what you call yoga. You are confounded in a new manner altogether, a confusion which might not have presented itself before you when you were a happy bird in the free world outside. Why is this? How are you going to explain this new difficulty that you are facing when you are moving in the direction of God, even if you are to be honest in this pursuit? Every spiritual seeker may be said to be uniformly in this condition of difficulty – a kind of reaction that is set up by the very idea of taking to yoga.

The first chapter, which is a yoga no doubt, is yoga in a very, very specific sense. Difficulties and doubts of the type expressed in the first chapter are not likely to arise in the minds of people who are normally happy in the work-a-day world. When you investigate deeply, philosophically, into the structure of things, you'll have doubts which would not have occurred to your mind normally. Nobody bothers about how the world came in, why the sun is rising always in the east, and where does it go in the night. These questions do not arise in the minds of anybody; everything is taken for granted. But when you start probing into these difficulties, mysteries – why the planets are going round the sun, and what

is it that is happening when we have seasons and when we are feeling heat in summer and cold in winter – though these questions are never put by anybody and they are all taken for granted, yet when you put these questions you have to scratch your head three times before you answer them. “What is happening? Why is it cold in one place and hot in another place even in the same season?” etc., etc. These are to give you only some gross instances of problems that you may have to face when you question anything; otherwise, everything is fine.

Without going into large details, since we have not much time before us, I sum up this principle of a problem arising before a spiritual seeker as put forth by Arjuna in his own words in the first chapter. When you take to the path of yoga, certain difficulties will arise in your mind. Some questions will arise. One: “Is it really going to be a successful adventure on my side? Am I really going to get anything, or am I a fool?” This question will not arise in the beginning. These questions will arise after some time, after years of practice, because you will find that you have achieved nothing, for some obvious reasons. Then the question will arise, “Is this a profitable adventure or is it merely a will-o’-the-wisp that I am pursuing? There is no surety that I’m going to succeed when I’ve achieved nothing for the last many years. If for the last twenty years I have achieved nothing, what is the certainty that I’m going to achieve anything in the future, tomorrow onwards?” This question arose in the mind of Arjuna: “Is it certain that I will win victory, or will the other side win victory? Am I going to conquer the world, or will the world conquer me? Is it wisdom on my part to face this world, or will I return shamefaced?” This is a question which will harass your minds. The other question is, “What will be the consequence of my having achieved a success in this adventure – even if it be a success? If I attain to the heights of spirituality, what happens afterwards? What is the consequence? What for is this pursuit? If the pursuit of yoga implies a disassociation from sense contact, an involvement in things of the world, and a restraint upon the usual social attitude of the mind – namely, like and dislike, etc. – when I restrain myself in this manner, by the senses as well as by the mind, I may lose all the values and the pleasures of this world. I will have no connection with anything, which is tantamount to saying that I have lost everything. What is the use of going to the kingdom of heaven, even if it be a possibility, by losing all the wonders and the beauties and the pleasures of life? What am I going to eat in the kingdom of heaven, if all things that we have here are to be abandoned in the name of God? If all the army of the Kauravas is going to be destroyed, and all my kith and kin are not to be here, what for is this success even if I am going to win victory in this battle? If everybody dies in the name of justice, what for is this justice – for whose purpose?”

These questions are justifiable questions that may arise in the minds of every seeker. “What happens to this world when I reach God?” Even the most intelligent person cannot answer this question. Not even the best exponent will be able to express himself in answering this pose, “What happens to the world when you go to God? What happens to your bank balance?” It’s a terror to hear that you lose it, and you will get nothing to eat, nothing to drink, and nothing to

possess – ‘pauper of the first water’ when you enter the kingdom of God. This doubt may harass us, “Is it going to be like this?” Even sincere seekers feel many a time, “What am I supposed to do after reaching God? I go on looking at Him for eternity, by eating nothing, sleeping nowhere, and having nothing to do. What a drab kind of life!” This is also a very serious point that may arise even in the best of us, what to talk about novitiates, because the thing you call God is not so easy to understand. It is not supposed to be understood at all under the circumstances we are placed, rationally or psychologically.

Hence, now comes a very important conclusion. “Under these circumstances of a doubtful background of my very idea of taking to this path, I think I have to think thrice before taking a step in this direction. I shall do nothing; it is enough,” said Arjuna and he threw his weapon down, giving up all effort whatsoever in the direction of doing what he was expected to do. Now the question arises: What is it that you are expected to do, which frightens you so much, as it frightened Arjuna? The battle that we speak of in the epic is only a metaphor; it is an insignia of the conditions of life as a whole. Every question is a battle; you have to face it in order to answer it. Every moment of our life there is a question before us: What am I to do, and in what manner have I to do, and for what purpose have I to do, etc.? There was a great thinker in the West who wrote a large thesis in answer to three questions: What can we know, what are we to do, and what can we hope for in this world? These are three questions before us, and the great thinker wrote three books in answer to these three questions. What can we know finally in this world, which also implies what we cannot know? What are we supposed to do here? What can we expect finally here in this world? These are philosophical questions – you may say spiritual questions – because what you have to do as a duty is connected with what you can know, and if your knowledge is tarnished by the error of a contamination of sense activity, to that extent your knowledge of what you have to do in this world also will be contaminated. Your idea of duty will be inadequate to the extent of your inadequacy of the understanding of life itself. So Arjuna did not know what he was supposed to do, as he had decided in a wrong manner not to do, since to do would mean a great suffering to himself as well as to others. To reach God, to enter the kingdom of heaven is a suffering to you in one way, and also is a suffering to others with whom you are related in this world; and you know very well why it is and why it should be so.

This difficulty arises on account of a lack of sufficient understanding, and understanding is called *samkhya* in the language of the Bhagavadgita. “Arjuna, you have no *samkhya-buddhi*,” says Sri Krishna. “You are unable to discriminate between the real and the unreal, the true and the false, which means to say you have no right understanding, and *samkhya* is right understanding.” The word ‘*samkhya*’ is used in the Bhagavadgita in a different sense from the way you are likely to understand it in the schools of thought. Here the *samkhya* word does not necessarily mean the jargon of the traditional school which goes by the name of Samkhya, propounded by a sage called Kapila, as one of the six systems of thought in India. Though it has some connection with what the Bhagavadgita is



telling us, it is not identical with the meaning of the word '*samkhya*' as it is used in the Bhagavadgita. In a general way we may say that *samkhya* means right knowledge. It is not easy to have right knowledge when we are not having sufficient information regarding things, and the information conveyed to us by the senses is not ultimately reliable. We cannot wholly rely upon what the senses are telling us. Therefore, the knowledge which is based on these reports of the senses may not be entirely reliable. Hence, our understanding of the world may not be regarded as adequate to the purpose. Thus it follows that we cannot know what we are supposed to do in this world. One cannot know what one's duty is because knowledge of things is based on understanding, which we lack, since we are sensorily conditioned and not so very rational, purely, as we may sometimes imagine ourselves to be. So *samkhya* was not there in the mind of Arjuna; right understanding was not coming forth. I am now slowly entering into the second chapter of the Bhagavadgita which is called *Samkhya Yoga*. The difficulty, the melancholy, the despondency, the fear which was the subject of the first chapter arises on account of a lack of *samkhya*. What is *samkhya*? What is knowledge? What is right understanding? Before I touch upon the core of the meaning of the term '*samkhya*' as used in the Bhagavadgita, I would give, in a few words, the way in which the cosmological principles are described in the school going by the name of Samkhya, under the authorship of Kapila. As I mentioned, though it has no direct relevance to the Bhagavadgita, it would be profitable for you to know what it actually means, and how it differs from the *samkhya* of the Bhagavadgita.

The whole of the Samkhya philosophy is a system of cosmology; it is a description of the way in which things evolve from the Ultimate Reality. Now I am speaking to you the classical Samkhya of Kapila, which is in some respects acceptable to the other schools of thought also, though not entirely. I will tell you in what way they are acceptable and in what way they are not acceptable. The Supreme Being is called *purusha* in the Samkhya. The essential nature of this *purusha* is pure consciousness, awareness, brilliance, light, intelligence, self-awareness. The *purusha* is an Infinite Being, and not something that is in some place; it is not an individual person. Creation takes place by the coming in contact, in a novel way, of this pure spirit, *purusha*, consciousness, with cosmic matter, called *prakriti*. So, there are two realities: consciousness and matter – the subject and the object, as you sometimes call them. When the subject comes in contact with the object, there is knowledge of the object. So knowledge is a product. Knowledge in the sense of knowledge of objects is a product of the coming together of consciousness with this principal material-stuff called *prakriti*. It is an indeterminate, all-pervasive principle called *prakriti*; actually the word *prakriti* in Sanskrit means 'the origin of materiality'. The original ethereal form of matter, the finest condition of matter, is called *prakriti*. The natural state of affairs is *prakriti*. When this Infinite Consciousness, *purusha*, comes in contact with the infinite *prakriti*, there is a consciousness of one's being there as an "I am that I am". There is no consciousness of an individual object outside, because it has not yet been manifested – it is to take place further on. There is a universal feeling of "I am" – so, the feeling "I am", even in universal sense, is a step down in

the process of creation, while the pure *purusha* is not even an “I am”. It is something more than that – indescribable ‘That Which Is’. This cosmic “I am” is, in its general form, called *mahat*; and in a more particularised, emphasised form is called *ahamkara*. So, we have *purusha*, *prakriti*, *mahat*, and *ahamkara*. These are cosmical levels.

Now, you have to listen to me more carefully, because something happens – the real creation starts now onwards. This concretised, universal self-consciousness, known as *ahamkara*, is split into the objective side and the subjective side by some miracle of the creative will. Thus it is that we are seeing a world outside, as if it is totally external. Space and time introduce themselves. So, the first conceivable form of the world may be said to be what you call ‘space and time’, or in modern language you may say ‘space-time complex’. It is a condition of further creation. There cannot be creation unless there is space-time; it is an antecedent to every concept of evolution in any manner whatsoever. When space-time is manifest or evolved by the will, as you may say of this cosmic self-consciousness, *ahamkara*, there is a further condensation into greater grossness, into more concrete vibrations which you call sensations of sound, of touch, of colour, of taste, and of smell. These principles which are behind these five sensations are called *tanmatras* in the Sanskrit language. A word used in Sanskrit, *tanmatra*, means the fundamental characteristic of all things in this world. Basically they are only sensations, which is what modern science also is telling us finally – the whole world is nothing but a huge bundle of sensations. The solidity is not the truth of things.

Now, there is a further condensation by a mixing up of these cosmical principles called *tanmatras* in certain proportions, and as a mixture is produced by an apothecary or a doctor by combining chemical products in some proportion and it becomes a medical mixture; in such a way or in some such manner these principles, these *tanmatras*, got combined and became gross elements in what are called ether, air, fire, water, and earth. These five gross elements are the whole world. In this world you will see nothing except these five elements – ether, air, fire, water, earth. Even this physical body of ours and everything that is physical and material in this world, all these are constituted of these five elements only. Here is the objective world before us, according to the Samkhya cosmological evolutionary process.

Subjectively, we are individuals looking at the world. We – not merely humans, everything that is capable of visualising the world as an external something – is a subject, even if it be subhuman or even superhuman. As this cosmical outward world is constituted in this manner described, the individual also is constituted in some way. The physical body of organic as well as inorganic beings is made up of the same five elements – earth, water, fire, air, and ether. But inside the body there are other things, deeper layers, internal and more pervasive, more ethereal – like electric energy you may say – than the physical body outside. We have the *pranas* inside. A *prana* is a vibratory motion of an energy which sustains us, and due to which we feel strength in our system. Internal to the *pranas* is the mind, which thinks. The senses – hearing, seeing, etc.

- are intermediary operations between the *prana* and the mind. They are connecting links between the *prana* and the mind; they can be associated with the *prana* or associated with the mind as you like, or perhaps both. But internal to the mind is understanding or the intellect, the reason which does not merely think in an indeterminate manner but determinately decides, judges, understands, and comes to a conclusion; that is reason - intellect. These layers mentioned are called, in Sanskrit, the *koshas*. *Kosha* means a cover, an investiture, an encasement. The physical body is called *annamaya kosha* because it is actually made up of the stuff of food that is taken inside. The *pranas* are called the *pranamaya kosha*. Internally we have got the *manomaya kosha* or the mind, then the *vijnanamaya kosha* or the intellect. Then there is a fifth one which is a causal condition, you call sometimes the unconscious level in psychology. It is something more than what you call the unconscious in ordinary psychology - it is the repository of all the conditions necessary for further reincarnations, into which you descend in deep sleep. Beyond that is the Atman, the pure spirit which is illuminating everything, whose reflection it is that is enabling the intellect to understand. So this is the subjective side, we may say - the subjective world.

The operation of this subjective world through the instrument of the mind, the intellect, and the senses, in contact with the objective world described, is what we call human experience as far as we are concerned. All of our experiences, desirable or undesirable, are the outcome of a peculiar coming in contact of the subjective world with the objective world. The reason behind this contact, and the nature of this contact was not clear to the mind of Arjuna, and is not clear to the mind of any one of us. This knowledge is called *samkhya* - right understanding.

### Chapter 3

#### SAMKHYA – RIGHT UNDERSTANDING

The second chapter of the Bhagavadgita deals with what is known as Samkhya Yoga, which is the yoga of understanding – an understanding which was not adequately present in the mind of Arjuna at the time when he was very much confused as to the duty to which he was obliged under the circumstance in which he was placed.

One cannot know what one has to do unless one's position in this world is known to one's self. Your duty, your attitude, the functions that you have to perform – all these are determined by the location of your personality in a given atmosphere. Thus, the concept of duty may be regarded as something relative, and not absolute. You cannot prescribe one particular function as the duty of a person forever and ever till eternity. The person we are speaking of, or referring to, is to a large extent identical with what we would call the 'individual' – the so-called 'me', 'you', etc. Our duty in this world, what the world expects from us, is dependent upon what we are, what we know, what we are capable of – and again, all these things depend upon where we are placed.

Last time, I tried to state briefly the outline of the cosmological process described in the Samkhya philosophy, to which reference is made in the Bhagavadgita. The study of cosmology is an important part of philosophical studies, because there are levels of understanding, and, at least from the point of view of one level in which the understanding operates, there seems to be a gradational relationship obtaining between the individual and his environment. I am using the word 'environment' purposely, suggesting that it is what you consider to be around you, though there may be other things around you whose existence may not be known to you, of which you may not be aware, though they may be there. People complain of the atmosphere, environment, etc., sometimes by limiting the concept of this environment to sociological or social conditions in life mostly, though the environment in which we are living is not necessarily restricted to human society. We are living in human society no doubt, but we are living also in a larger atmosphere than can be covered or even conceived by human society.

One of the problems that arose in the mind of Arjuna was the limiting of his notions to his social relations, which means to say, the relations with other people. Mostly, perhaps always, we are likely to think only in terms of other people in this world, which is called 'sociological thinking'. It appears from this limited view of thinking that the world consists of nothing but human beings; there is nothing anywhere in all creation except men and women – human beings. If it is true that we are mostly concerned with human affairs, and perhaps we are not concerned with any other affair anywhere, this was a question which troubled the mind of Arjuna and troubles the mind of everybody, even this moment here. But the 'world', using this word in a very, very large, expanded form of its meaning, is not exhausted by humanity only. Science, which is mostly physical, chemical and biological, has tried to lift the conceptualisations of

mankind beyond mere political and sociological thinking, and demonstrated before man that there are laws and powers and systems of operation which cannot be exhausted by politics and sociology. The life on earth is not completely decided by what other people are thinking, or all people are thinking. The life of the earth, or life in general, is vaster than the concept you call political, social, communal – or, in any sense of the term, social. But there is a defect which infects human nature and infects every species you may say, dragging it to the level of that species only, and it cannot think in terms of any other species of existence – neither we are bothered about subhuman existences, nor superhuman levels of being. Let anything happen in the angel's kingdom, we are not bothered; we are also not worried about what happened in jungles, or in areas where humanity does not reside.

This is not a charitable way of thinking, to put it very politely. Even to be a little good, and charitable in our feelings, we must be considerate enough to accept that the world contains more things than man. However, the effect or the impact of human relationship upon the human mind is such that it will not permit the operation of higher laws in the present state of human thinking. This was the point made out by Bhagavan Sri Krishna when he said, “Arjuna, you lack *samkhya* – right understanding.” From the point of view of a philosopher of history or a metaphysician of the process of human history, a pure political reading of human affairs may look merely puerile and almost childish. The process of human history is not the coming and going of kings and queens, or the wars that are waged, the births and deaths of people – this is not human history, from the point of view of a deeper study of the very process that underlies the current you call ‘human evolution through history’. Likewise, from the point of view of an astronomer and a physicist, or even a scientist of any nature, political thinking will look very poor. It is not to the point, because the world is guided by forces which are not necessarily political or sociological.

Now, we are lifted to a higher level of thinking when the word ‘*samkhya*’ is used in the second chapter of the Bhagavadgita, meaning thereby an understanding of the true relationship that obtains between you and everything that is around you, and not merely that which appears to be around you. Though it may appear that there is nothing around you except people to whom you are concerned positively or negatively, by means of like and dislike, etc., there are more important things that condition our existence than the existence of other people like us. This was revealed to us to some extent by our study of the cosmology of the Samkhya. The very existence of human beings as individuals or isolated personalities is due to an event that has perhaps taken place in the process of the creational or the evolutionary activity of the whole structure of the universe.

You may have to remember what I told you last time; I need not repeat it once again. The individuality, the so-called ‘me’, is the subjective side that has arisen as a result of the split of the cosmic *ahamkara* – these terms you may remember for purpose of understanding what is going to follow further on. A cosmic self-consciousness is called *ahamkara* – not the *ahamkara* or the ego of man, but an

impersonal metaphysical reality, which is the “I Am What I Am” of mysticism and religion that manifested itself, as it were, as the objective universe of perception and the subjective individuality which are the *jivas*, in the Sanskrit language. That which beholds the world as something outside is the *jiva* or the individual; it may be human or even superhuman, or otherwise. That which looks at the world as an external something is called the *jiva*. This *jiva*, this individual, is constituted of certain building bricks, which I narrated last time as the bodily structure of five elements: earth, water, fire, air, ether; and the internal components: the *pranas*, the senses, the mind, the intellect and the large reservoir of what we call the ‘unconscious’ in the English language, but something larger than what the psychologists call ‘unconscious’ – the potentiality of every future eventuality, and even rebirth, that is there at the root of our individuality. Transcendent to all these layers of our individuality is the ‘Light Supernal’ which is the Absolute peeping through our reason, through our mind and even the senses, and animating every cell of our body, making us feel “We are”, “I am”, etc.

Now, the second chapter and the third chapter have some sort of relationship from the point of view of the theme discussed. It is merely pointed out in the second chapter that right understanding is necessary, and only an introductory remark is made as to what *samkhya* means, so far as the second chapter goes. Right from the beginning till the end of the second chapter, the word *samkhya* is used in many, many places, suggesting that *samkhya* is the knowledge of the harmony that is there among all things – *samatva* – the equanimous, organisational, cooperative feature operating between one and another, thus cementing all particularities or individuals into a sort of cosmic organisation or universal society. This is the suggestion of the second chapter when it says: *Samatvam yoga ucyate* (Gita 2.48): Equanimity is yoga, balance is yoga, harmony is yoga, cooperation is yoga – not competition, not battle, not war, not exploitation, not animosity, not hatred. Also, a very subtle and potent, meaningful word is used in the very same chapter, connecting this principle of harmony or equanimity operating in all creation with the duties of man in the world, when it says *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam* (2.50): Yoga is expertness in action. This is a very pithy statement; no commentary is given here. We are not told as to what this expertness means, though we may impliedly take it to mean that harmony or balance of attitude should be the pre-condition of any kind of adventure or project in life. Every activity should be conditioned by a poised nature of the mind. You should not enter into activity of any kind with disturbed emotions or an axe to grind; there should be no selfishness. The words ‘*samatva*’ and ‘*kausala*’, used in the second chapter of the Gita, exhaust, perhaps, what the Gita intends to tell us. But they are so difficult to understand because the word used is very subtle in its connotation, though we can extract lot of meaning from it by going into the context in which it is used. The necessity for maintaining a balanced attitude in mind, in our general attitude, while we perform works expertly, arises because of the fact of our location in this universe, which will devolve automatically from your knowledge of the very nature of our individuality in the light of the cosmological process described.

The world is not disassociated from us, because originally we were all united in the Cosmic Self – the universal *ahamkara*. The world is not an object of the senses, truly speaking. Thus, the reports of the senses may not be considered as a final, reliable information given to us. There is an error sometimes involved mostly in sense perception, because there is an insistence on the part of the senses to consider the world as a total foreigner, without which concept we cannot deal with things in the way we are doing now in our daily life. We are suspicious of the world. Here is the root of all our troubles. We are afraid of the world, and our loves and hatreds for things of the world, including persons, are explainable only on the basis of our erroneous concept that the world is not vitally connected with us. It is not possible to hug onto, or crave for any object which is vitally, organically related to me, nor can I hate it for the same reason. Loves and hatreds in life seem to be out of point, totally, in the light of an understanding of our position, as we know, from a study of the cosmological process. There is lot of teaching in the religions of the world that love and hatred are not good things. Desire is not right – it is an improper attitude of the mind. Everyone says this, in all religions and philosophies. But why is desire bad? Why are loves and hatreds not considered as proper on our part? Because this attitude of like and dislike, love and hatred, implies a total misconception of our connection with the world. So, in a way we may say that our political philosophies, as they are working today at least, though they may not be always so, and our social concepts are totally misplaced, which perhaps explains the turmoil we are passing through in our lives, and the troubles of our psyche, the sorrows of our existence, and the insecurities we are facing from moment to moment. This was troubling Arjuna, and we are the same Arjuna seated here today, in the field of the Mahabharata of this world where Sri Krishna has to come to guide us – which is nothing but the Light of God, the Light of the World.

Now, without going in large details of everything that is told us in the second chapter, I will take your mind to the true meaning of this *samkhya*, which perhaps was in the mind of Sri Krishna when he used this word for rectifying the erroneous thinking of Arjuna. “What do you mean by this right understanding? I cannot know what you are speaking,” cried out Arjuna at the beginning of the third chapter. “You have confused me completely by telling so many things, nothing of which is clear to me.” Here is a troubled mind speaking once again, at the very beginning of the commencement of the third chapter. “Is my relationship to the world a total unity, in which case I have to do nothing? Or, is it total separation, in which case also I have to do nothing? The question of duty does not arise in this world if I have a relationship which is totally organic or totally isolated. So my mind is confused about what you are speaking. Be more explicit, please,” so speaks Arjuna. “What is it that you are expecting me to do by asking me to have *samkhya*, right understanding, poised mind, calm attitude, expertness in action? I cannot understand the meaning behind these terms you are using.”

The third chapter is a very important section of the Bhagavadgita. It is perhaps the whole gospel of human action. There are certain chapters which sum up the very principles of the entire teaching of the Bhagavadgita, one of them

being the third chapter. There is no necessity for me to dilate upon this theme in a very large measure inasmuch as I endeavoured to explain this theme of the third chapter in some detail in an earlier discourse I gave, and which has been printed fortunately, and it is available for you in the text called *The Philosophy of the Bhagavadgita*. It is a larger series of lectures than the one I am giving you now, so I don't think you will be at a loss if I am a little brief in my discourses here, especially as we have to conclude by next month, and also because there is already something that I have told on this theme in the form of a ready textbook. The third chapter of the Bhagavadgita is called *Karma Yoga* – the yoga of right action, or action as such in the light of correct understanding.

Now, again I come to the point of cosmology, which explains our relationship with the world with everything that is around us. From this narration of the story of the descent of man from the higher realms, right from *mahat* and *ahamkara*, we learn that our personality – this individuality – is constitutionally not separate from the structure of the world or the universe outside. The substance out of which our individuality is made is not different from the substance of which the world outside is made. Bring back to your memories these principles of descent I mentioned to you – I will repeat it once again if you have not been able to note down these. There is the *mulaprakriti*, the original material out of which the whole cosmos was formed, something like the space-time of modern physics – or something subtler even than that – from which descended the *tanmatras*: *sabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa*, *gandha* – the principles of sound, touch, colour, taste and smell, which concretised themselves into a greater density of substance by a sort of permutation and combination, and became the solid substances you see here as the five elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether. These things are the building bricks of the cosmos, physically speaking – everything material is nothing but a formation of the five elements: earth, water, fire, air, ether – this body, this building, this tree, this everything.

Now, here is an introduction given to right understanding. The *mulaprakriti* that I mentioned is constituted of three forces called *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. We have heard in modern science words like 'statics' and 'kinetics', 'inertia' and 'action'. What you call 'statics' is something like inertia; we may equate it with *tamas*, non-action – and kinetics is *rajas*, movement, distraction, etc. But there is no such thing as *sattva* in the scientific language of modern times. There is either statics or kinetics – there is nothing else. But there is a third thing which is the balancing of the two. That is called *sattva* in the language of Indian philosophy; the condition of true being is called *sattva*. In Sanskrit, '*sat*' means existence, being; and the condition of being is called *sattva*. The characteristic of being is *sattva*, and the characteristic of being is equanimity – not isolation, distraction and separation.

So, the nature of reality or true being is neither inert existence and loss or absence of consciousness, nor is it activity in the sense of distraction. Pure being, *sattvaguna*, is not *rajas*; it is not also *tamas*. This *sattva* is a power that connects the two extremes of inertia and activity – *rajas* and *tamas*; and the whole of the world is nothing but this threefold activity of nature – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* –



which is the structure, the constitution, the basic substance of the *tanmatras*, the five elements, this body, and all things in the world. This means that our body, this *prana*, the senses, the mind, the intellect, etc. are all somehow or the other manufactured, in some way, by an admixture of these forces – *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* in some proportion – and by another admixture, in another way, the world outside is made. We are made as the final substance, as subjects, as individuals perceiving the world, identical with the substance of the world outside. When the senses perceive the world, the *gunas* move among *gunas*, *prakriti* contacts *prakriti* – it is the right hand touching the left hand, as it were, of the same body, perhaps more intimately and vitally than merely a contact of one limb of the body with another limb of the body. In the third chapter, this point is brought out. In all perception, the individual is not contacting a foreign element like the world outside, but ‘one’s own mother’ is embraced by the child – not an ordinary embrace but a longing for union with ‘That’ from which it has been isolated, from which it has fallen. So, in all sense-perception there is an internal craving to unite with things on account of the fact being that the substance of the perceiver is the same as the substance of that which is perceived – so there is a philosophy behind desire, and there is also an error involved in the desire.

The justification and the philosophical implication of the manifestation or the working of human desire in the form of sense activity and perception is that we are basically one with all things. This is the reason we are impetuously pulled in the direction of the things of the world. The error of our desires is that they insist on convincing themselves that the world is a foreigner, it is outside. There is a double activity going on in our mind in every perception. On the one hand, a love for things is impossible unless we are united with things. You cannot desire a thing which is totally isolated from you. All desire implies a basic unity with all things, and also at the same time, all desire implies that the world is outside of oneself. Thus every desire is a contradiction, a psychic schizophrenia in a philosophical sense at least. There is a morbidity, there is an un-justification finally, an inscrutability in the activity of every desire which acts on one side as an indication of the basic unity of things, and on the other side performs the opposite function of insisting on the duality, the separation, and the isolation of the subject from the object. So we are living in a world of contradiction, psychologically speaking, and every desire is a psychic contradiction. This is the reason why great questions of life cannot be answered by an intellect which is subservient to the emotions, which again work in the light of the knowledge received through the senses, which, to repeat again, are not reliable for reasons already mentioned.

## Chapter 4

### DUTY – AN EMPIRICAL MANIFESTATION OF TRUE BEING

The study that has been conducted up to this time concerning the teaching of the Bhagavadgita would have revealed to us that we are born with a duty, and we can never be free from some duty or the other. It also implies that we have no rights; we have only duties, contrary to what one would expect from the point of view of common human nature. The fight for rights is out of point in a world of duties, which is inescapable under the set-up of things. The duty that we owe to ourselves, as well as anything that is around us, is a necessary conclusion that follows from the nature of our relationship with things in general. The connection that obtains between us and the world at large is such that there is a mutual obligation, as it were, between ourselves and the world. This obligation is not a compulsion, but a necessary conclusion automatically following from the essential character of Being itself. Thus duty is an empirical manifestation of true being. Here is the sum and substance of the great gospel.

Our organic relationship with things is the reason behind the duty that we owe to things, and this also is the reason why we need not expect any fruit from the duty that we perform in respect of anyone or anything. To expect a fruit is a mistake. *Mā phaleṣu kadācana, mā karmaphalahetur bhūr mā te saṅgo'stvakarmani* (Gita 2.47): You have a duty, you have an obligation to do, but you have no right to expect a particular consequence or result or fruit to follow from what you do. This is a very difficult, pithy enunciation in the Bhagavadgita – that we have duties but we cannot expect any fruits from the duties that we perform.

This may look very odd and unpleasant to the selfish individual, but as I have tried to mention earlier, the law of the universe is not necessarily a pleasant dish that is served to the ego of man; it is a principle that operates, and it is neither pleasant nor unpleasant. Its reactions, under given conditions of personality, appear to be pleasant or otherwise. The duty that we owe to anyone or anything is the homage that we pay to the vastness of the atmosphere in which we are placed, and the grandeur of the relationship that is there between us and the whole of creation. There is a majesty ruling the whole cosmos; and it is this superabundance of magnificence, which is the law of the universe, that inexorably operates and impartially dispenses justice without any favour or disfavour in regard to any person or thing.

It is difficult to understand what all this means if we study this theme merely as an abstract science of logical philosophy. Perhaps I may place before you an analogy or a comparison that is more concrete and visible to our eyes than this pure abstract principle we are discussing in this context. We owe a duty to the body in which we are enshrined, and every part of the body owes a duty to every other part of the body, but no part of the body has a right over another part. This is something very novel that we see in the physiological organism of our own personality. Every limb of our body has a duty which it automatically performs without compulsion or impulsion, without any mandate or governmental

enactment; yet, it does not expect anything from that particular limb to which cooperation is extended. If the stomach eats the food, the teeth, which have merely munched it and got nothing out of it, do not complain; and so on, with every other part of the body, there is an excessively friendly cooperation. 'Friendliness' is a poor word we are using to describe this immense unity of purpose that obtains between the limbs of our body. It is oneness in the midst of diversity of the organisational set-up. There is no expectation on the part of a limb of the body in respect of another limb, because the fruit that it might expect automatically follows from the duty that it performs. The privilege that you expect in this world, the right that you are craving for after performing a duty, is something which you need not expect – it will follow. When the sun rises, there will be light. Likewise whatever you need, which is called your expectation or the fruit so-called, will follow spontaneously from the very fact of your having performed your duty. You need not ask for the fruits; they shall drop from the skies, even without your asking for them. And we will be told sometime later in the Bhagavadgita that when one is united with the purpose of the whole creation, he shall be taken care of by the very law of the universe, and need not cry, "Let it come." *Ananyāś cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate, teṣāṃ nityābhiyuktānām yogakṣemam vahāmyaham* (Gita 9.22) – is a great pendent hanging in the garland of the verses of the Bhagavadgita as a central gospel. God, the universe, the law, whatever you may call it, shall protect you and take care of you more than a mother can do – provided you have that affection which you expect from the world.

Thus it is that we cannot expect any fruit of our actions, because our actions are duties that we owe and are not something grudgingly that we do under compulsion from outside. There is no 'outside' in this world. You have to listen to every sentence that I uttered last time and earlier; otherwise, I may not be able to repeat the same thing again and again because we have to cover a large area of study within a short time. The debts that we owe to things, if we would like to call them debts, are the same as the duties that we have to perform. It is the acceptance of an organic connection between ourselves and all things. It is the cooperation that follows from the very structure of creation. There is no competition possible; it is a word which has no sense under the sun – there is no such thing as that. There is only cooperation; there cannot be competition in this world. One cannot vie with the other, because there is no 'other' in this world. This will be made more clear as we move further on from the chapters of the Bhagavadgita, how there is no other. Your neighbour is an extended form of your own self – so the service that you render to your neighbour, which is the whole world outside you, is a service that you finally render to your own larger existence. This you will know further as you go deeper. This much about the verse: *karmanyevādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana* (Gita 2.47) – Don't expect fruits.

Secondly, while you have to perform duty, the nature of the consequence that follows from the performance of duty is not clear to your mind. So to expect a particular result to follow from a particular action would be like a blind man

groping in the dark and catching hold of what he does not know is there. While under the given circumstance of your existence you have an obligation towards things, which has to be clear to your mind, you cannot clearly perceive the result that will follow from that action because results are conditioned by infinite factors, not necessarily the thing that you do from the point of view of your limited understanding. There are other factors which condition things. Again, we shall revert to this theme as we go further towards the chapters that are to come.

You can sow the seed in a field and expect a harvest. In a way, you may be justified in expecting a large harvest to follow the fact of your sowing a seed, putting the manure, watering it, fencing it, guarding it. But do you believe that this is the only thing that determines the harvest? There are other conditions necessary for the harvest to be reaped apart from your tending it, and apart from all that you have done for it – the rainfall, the seasons, and the other natural conditions necessary may be greater conditioning factors than your need to sow the seed and pour manure and water into it; and many other invisible factors also are involved. Because we are not omniscient, we cannot know all the things in the world, we cannot know what result will follow from what action. Hence, it is not proper on the part of the person to expect a particular fruit from any action because the fruit is not in your hands, while the duty is your obligation. You can present a case before a court, but you cannot decide the case yourself – that has to be done by the judge. If you already decided the case, there is no need of presenting the case at all. So, the performance of duty is something like presenting a case, and the judgment is not in your hands, so don't expect the fruits.

“Knowing all this, how is that we seem to be sorrowful, bereaved, and not satisfied? Why is it, O Krishna?” Thus, the question is raised by Arjuna. “I understand what you say, but still I am very unhappy. Man is driven to the wrong, he always performs what is not good for him – he perpetrates error. Even though one can understand what you are saying, what is the reason?” *Kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajoguṇa samudbhavaḥ, mahāśano mahāpāpmā viddhyenam iha vairiṇam* (Gita 3.37): The enemy of man is his own inner instinctive impulsions. There are instincts that are emotional in nature, impulsions which are sometimes overwhelming and impetuous in their action. They can even confound the intellect and the reason of man. When a passion preponderates, reason subsides; the intellect will not work when the emotions are too strong. A man perpetuates offences though he knows that there is a law which will not permit the perpetration of this act. A person who does wrong under normal conditions knows that such an action is wrong. But when a person is in height of passion, he is not a normal person – the normalcy is absent there. He becomes a temporary ‘out of gear individual’ who has lost the common sense that is required of a normal human individual. Like a flood that can devastate villages and destroy people, emotions can rise under given conditions. Then law does not operate, because one cannot be even aware that such a thing as law exists. A person may be hanged for an acute offence due to the operation of a law. It does not mean that the person is unaware of the existence of such a law, but at that particular

moment he becomes unaware of it because reason fails. So, while the reason is a great guide indeed, perhaps the only guide that you have, it can get deflected out of its normal course by the vehemence of the flood of emotion which is the impulsion behind the feelings, which can gain an upper hand. These feelings, which are purely personal, selfish and would not take into consideration even the existence of other people, these emotions are called *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*.

*Kama* is a very wide word, with a meaning which is capable of covering every form of longing. When desire intensifies itself, we call it passion. In Sanskrit we have many words indicating the same meaning: *raga*, *kama*, etc. An intense longing for something, an intense craving to do something, a yearning to possess something in an overwhelmingly powerful manner, is a passion – a *kama*, a *raga*. Any obstacle in the direction of the fulfilment of this passion becomes the target of anger of that person. *Krodha* follows therefore, as a brother of *kama* – and when one is, the other one also is. These impulsions are the products or the results of a very active manifestation of *rajoguna* – *rajas* – that is present in human personality, and no one can subdue them, normally speaking. A higher meditative technique may have to be employed, and there is no other recipe for this illness of man. The meditational technique that is very, very precisely stated in only a few words towards the end of the third chapter is to be dilated upon further on when we go to the fourth, fifth and sixth chapters, indicating thereby the lower can be controlled only by resort to the higher. You cannot employ lower means to restrain these lower impulses. Only a greater force can control a lower force. The reason has to be trained, for a long time, in carrying on correct judgment of things, so that the emotions may not preponderate and take advantage of the position when the reason is out of guard sometimes.

The Bhagavadgita will tell us in a half-sentence, as it were, towards the end of the third chapter, that the final panacea for this great illness of man is only refuge to the great *Atman* or the Self that transcends even the reason of man. This is like a theorem that is being stated, whose explanations have to be provided for a little later. Yet, man seems to be helpless. There is a subtle feeling in every one of us that in spite of this glorious teaching, we seem to be somehow helpless, in some mysterious manner, and we cannot entirely be confident that we can be successful in this great adventure of the putting into daily action of this philosophical principle.

There is a subtle weakness in man which speaks in its own language, and whispers in a tone which is distressing at moments. “After all, you puny fellow, you cannot achieve this glorious, cosmical success. Though it may be true that there is some heritage in you, at the present moment all this is like a phantasm, and you should not be under the impression that you have the strength in you to face the storm that the world may kick up when you actually tread the path of the spirit.” And each one knows one’s own weaknesses; each one knows to what extent one can understand things; each one knows one’s own strength, capacity – but, each one knows also one’s own weaknesses. Oftentimes, the weaknesses may outbalance our strengths. This is a suspicion that may be in our minds, and “Doubts are our traitors,” says the poet. The traitor in us is the doubt that we are

incapable of achieving this perhaps – there is perhaps something due to which we cannot achieve success in this path. Though we may not know what is the reason behind this feeling, that feeling is there, and the feeling has a reason of its own which reason cannot know. “Whatever you may say, I have something to say, finally, and this is this.” This is very unfortunate. This doubt may arise in the mind of Arjuna that, “After all, I think I’m not for this.” Many seekers, ardent students of yoga, may receive a setback in their practice, and receive such a blow from outward society and nature and even the physical personality of one’s own, by illness or other conditions, that one may be disappointed to the core and throw the bow and arrow down – “This is not for me,” as Arjuna did. All these tools and implements that you have gathered for the practice of yoga psychologically will be cast aside. “I’m fed up. I’ve done so much, but I’ve achieved nothing.” Let this doubt not enter your mind! “O, ye of little faith,” says Christ, “if you have faith as much as the size of a mustard seed, tell this mountain to move and it shall be cast into the ocean, but have faith at least as the size of a mustard seed.” This is the great solacing message of Christ; and Krishna said the same thing many, many centuries back, before Christ was born. This was told us that confidence is that which will pave the way to success. Never say that “I am unfit.” Why should you not be fit? “What one has achieved others also can achieve,” is a sentence often repeated by Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. If one Shankaracharya could have achieved that, why not you? In what way are you less? “If there was one successful adept, why should I not be successful? If he has succeeded, why I should not succeed? If he could overcome all the obstacles, why should I not?”

This solacing message of hope, and not of despondency, is accentuated and re-enforced at the commencement of the fourth chapter, where the Lord declares Himself as ready to help anyone, at any moment of time, by an incarnation that He will take, into which He will descend instantaneously, because God is instantaneous existence and He does not take time to incarnate Himself. What can be more solacing to us than this message – that God can be at your beck and call; if you call Him just now, He is there. “Do you think that God cannot send an army of angels to protect me, if only I ask,” said Christ, when Peter cut the ear of a priest who was all ready to arrest Jesus Christ. “If I ask merely, an army of angels will descend to protect me, do you know? But I don’t ask,” said Christ.

In the same manner, even without your asking perhaps, angels are ready to protect you. The Yoga Vasishtha says in one place, “The gods shall take care of you, as they are protecting the corners of the world, if only you are friendly with them. It is the duty of the angels and the celestials in heaven to guard you from moment to moment and they shall do it, without fail, in the same manner as the planets are moving around the sun, the world is being taken care of – why not you? Look at the lilies in the fields and the sparrows that fly who are taken care of by God. Are you less than they?” These are great solaces to man, indeed. *Yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata abhyutthānam adharmasya tadātmānam sṛjāmyaham* (Gita 4.7). These words are to be written in golden script in the history of the spiritual adventure of man. Why should you weep and

cry? Is God dead? He can never die! He is an omnipresent succour! He is alive and awake with infinite eyes! There should be no occasion for grief on the part of man! "Here I am to render service to you, and shall take care of you ever!" The protecting hands of God are moving more powerfully than all the evils that can be conceived in this world. All the mountains of error, blunder, corruption and sin that you can think of in this world can be set at naught by the power of God's majesty, and when the sun rises, the thickest darkness cannot stand before it. Such is the power of the Almighty. So, this is another reinforcing factor behind the message that man is bound to succeed in the end. "He is heir apparent to the throne of immortality," to put it in the language of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. You are all heirs apparent to the throne of immortality, and heir apparent cannot lose his heritage. A prince is to be a king one day or the other. This is very comforting. We feel healed-up at once – our wounds are no more there. The cuts have been healed and our sorrows seem to be departing gradually, as the night recedes when the sun rises.

Now I revert for a few minutes to what I told you a little earlier – that we are born with a duty, perhaps we die with a duty. We need not be frightened about the word 'duty', as we might be, due to a mistaken understanding of the meaning of the word 'duty'. This is the reason why we are asking for privileges and rights rather than be willing to do our obligation to others, or do our duties. We have created a feeling in our minds that a duty is something imposed up on us by others. "This is something which I will not do if I am entirely free." But you cannot be entirely free until you do your duty – here is the answer to your question. Don't say, "I shall not do anything if I am totally free." That freedom cannot be bestowed upon you; it is unthinkable if you are not to do your duty. Duty and freedom go together – I have mentioned it already, sometime back.

Now, the duty that you are expected to perform in the world is not something imposed upon you by a government, or a social mandate from outside. It is the law of your own nature expecting you to do what is necessary, under the very structure of your own individuality, or *jivatva* – your personality. I go back to the analogy of the limbs of the body. You cannot even exist unless there is cooperation among the limbs of the body; there will be dismembering of your body, there will be a complete dislocation of the limbs, and there will be total destruction and an end of your existence itself. *Na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarmakṛt, kāryate hy avaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛtijair guṇaiḥ* (Gita 3.5): No one exists without doing something. The world is active, perpetually – every atom is active. You will not see anything static in the world – not one cell of the body, not one electron – everything is vibrating terribly. Why should they move in this manner? The evolution of the universe is the answer. The world is active without remission of effort, for the achievement of a goal which is self-realisation of the cosmos. It is the universe attempting to be aware of its own majestic existence. What you call 'evolution' is only the process of the ascent, of the lower degrees of reality in the direction of the higher degrees. Unless the 'Absolute Reality' is contacted and made one's own, evolution cannot cease.

The activities, the duties so-called, fulfil themselves in the realisation of the Absolute – God-realisation. Then there is no expectation on your part, and nobody expects you to do anything; the universe frees you from its clutches, and no law operates there because your being and the law become one. The will of the cosmos and the will of the individual get united, and actually, what you call ‘democracy’ is nothing but the union of the individual will with the national will. If there is no such unity, there is no democracy. Likewise, when the Universal Will and the individual will seem to be working in harmony, *karma* yoga is being performed by you – every action becomes yoga, because it is a perpetual union of your being with the Being of the Universe. *Karma* yoga is action transmuted into the yoga of meditation. A meditation is the precedent of every right action. Ideas precede activities – thought comes first, action afterwards. Yoga is the union that is anterior to the action that follows from this union. You meditate first, think first, place yourself in an orderly position in respect of the universe, and then act, and then it becomes Yoga. So *karma* yoga is action which is yoga, and yoga is action – action is Yoga – they mean the same thing. All life becomes yoga. Even your breathing becomes yoga, provided you can connect this activity of your existence and your performance with the purpose of the cosmos, with the intention of God. This union of your will with the Cosmic Will is a *yajna* that you are performing – a sacrifice, a glorious performance which is also yoga. Yoga is sacrifice, sacrifice is yoga – *yajna* is yoga. This is the theme of some of the portions of the fourth chapter.



## Chapter 5

### LIFE AS A YAJNA OR SACRIFICE

In the middle of the fourth chapter of the Gita, certain instructions are given on the performance of different kinds of sacrifice, known as *yajnas*. The word '*yajna*' is a very significant one throughout the Bhagavadgita, perhaps through most of the scriptures in India, indicating that the principle of life consists in sacrifice of some sort or the other. The philosophy of India may, in a way, be summed up by the word '*yajna*' – sacrifice. Every moment of our life is a sacrifice that we perform in the direction of a higher fulfillment, and a sacrifice is therefore a gain and not a loss. In ordinary language we praise a person who has performed a sacrifice, thinking that sacrifice involves a sharing of one's joy with others, in a sense a sort of loss which one has voluntarily incurred for the welfare of other people. "Oh, what a sacrifice he has done," thus we ejaculate. This is our point of view – whenever we give something, we feel we lose something. Sacrifice, no doubt, means giving something, but it does not mean losing something. In giving, we do not lose. Give and it shall be given back hundredfold. It is difficult to understand the meaning of sacrifice, and a knowledge of it is absolutely necessary to understand the teachings of the Bhagavadgita. The whole of *karma* yoga, or any yoga for the matter of that, is centred round this principle governing all life and existence – the principle of *yajna*, sacrifice.

In the fourth chapter, indications are given of the possibility of performing different kinds of sacrifice. A purely philosophical and spiritual touch is given to this description of the different forms of sacrifice here, because the Bhagavadgita is pre-eminently a spiritual gospel, a gospel of all life, and thus very comprehensive in its treatment of the basic values of life. *Dravyayajna*, *yogoyajna*, *tapoyajna*, *jnanayajna* are some of the terms used in this connection. Without going into the verbal or linguistic meaning of these terms, and without confusing you too much with the academic interpretations of these enunciations of the forms of sacrifice, I can clinch the whole matter by bringing you back to the process of cosmology, evolution – a thing we can never afford to forget throughout our studies because the story of creation or the procession of the cosmological event also suggests acutely the position we occupy in this world, our status in this universe, without which we can do nothing correctly, nor can we know anything properly. *Yajna* – sacrifice – whatever be the form it may take, is a summoning of the higher power into one's own self, and a consequent surrender of the lower self for the higher dimension of one's own being, known as the superior Self.

It is also not easy to understand what this higher Self means; nor can we know what the lower self is. Though we may repeat these words again and again, and to some extent know their literal meanings, their practical suggestiveness is hard for the mind to grasp. The higher Self is not a spatially located, ascending series, but a more intensely inclusive and pervasive nature of our own self – something like the superiority of the waking consciousness over the dream consciousness. The waking mind is not kept over the dreaming mind, as one thing kept over

another thing. The superiority, the transcendence of one thing over the other, or one thing being higher than the other, should not and does not suggest a spatial distance, but a logical superiority which is to be distinguished from spatial transcendence as someone sitting over another person's head. The cosmological scheme, to which we have made reference earlier, enlightens us into the fact that we as individuals or human beings are basically inseparable from the whole of creation, the five elements: earth, water, fire, air, ether; the five *tanmatras*: *sabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa*, *gandha*; and the whole of space-time itself. We are not outside this large complex of the expanse of the universe. Though this may be the fact, this also seems to be the conclusion that we are driven to by a study of the cosmological process.

We, in our daily life, seem to be totally ignoring this fact; and by a complete violation of this principle, asserting our individuality, seem to be totally disconnected from everything else as if we have nothing to do with anybody else. We have various types of selfishness – attachment to one's own body is the grossest form of it, and it has subtler forms of egoism, such as psychological self-assertiveness. Attachment to anything that is connected to one's self also comes under the purview and the gamut of selfishness. Anything that would not accept the basic organic relations of one's self with what is external to one's self, should be considered as a form of selfishness, whatever be the height it has reached; it may be a national egoism, or even an international one, but it is nothing short of it. One cannot easily escape this predicament because of the perception of the world by the senses. The *yajnas* or the sacrifices mentioned here in the Bhagavadgita in the fourth chapter are, to some extent, gradational attempts on the part of the seeker to overcome selfishness and increase their dimension of one's self by attuning one's self to the larger Self, which is nothing but the establishment of an *en rapport* with a wider area of our relationship than the one to which we are limited at the present moment, due to our sensory outlook. Physically, psychologically, and even intellectually, we are somehow connected to other people and even the five elements, the *tanmatras*, the *ahamkara*, the *mahat* and the other things we have mentioned in the Samkhya cosmological scheme. So sacrifice, *yajna*, should therefore mean an inward transmutation of our consciousness in its apprehension of relationship with these layers or levels of cosmological descent and ascent; and there are, perhaps, as many types of sacrifice as we would recognise layers in the cosmological scheme. If we say there are infinite series, there can be infinite types of sacrifice. It depends upon our understanding of what the universe is and how the creation process has taken place.

Again, I wish to bring to your memories our earlier studies concerning the structure of our personality and its connection with the outer world – namely, that internal to the body we have other types of apparatus like the sense organs, the *pranas*, the mind and the intellect, which have a tendency to affirm the physical individuality of the person, and affirm also all the attachments and aversions consequent upon this affirmation in respect of the outer world of persons and things. So, one kind of *yajna* or sacrifice would imply self-control, a

restraining of the movement of the senses of the mind and the intellect, because an unrestrained set of senses, uncontrolled mind, and unsubdued intellect would mean a personality that is engulfed in a desire for spatial contact with persons and things outside, while really, persons and things are not outside. The reason for self-control arises because of the fact that the usual perceptions of the senses are erroneous perceptions, because the senses have no other work to do than to din into our minds the externality of the world, the outsideness of things, and the isolation of our self from other people. There is a continuous brainwashing process going on in our relationship to the senses; and we have no other relationship in the world, unfortunately. We are totally sense-ridden, and the world that we live in is a sense world. Our thinking process and our intellection also is conditioned by the knowledge provided to us by means of sense perception. There is a total misfortune descended upon us, as it were, considering the state of affairs in which we are now – socially, physically and psychologically. Socially we are in a misfortune because of a wrong understanding of our connection with other people, and psychologically so, because of our dependence, inwardly also, upon what we know by means of the senses, which is erroneous. So, self-control, which includes sense-control, is also mind-control, intellect-control, reason-control – the total control of one’s own self. The control of one’s self is the essence of yoga. Here a word of explanation may be necessary as to what is meant by control of one’s self. What do we do with ourselves when we try to restrain our selves? For that we may need to know what we are.

This again brings us to the point of the cosmological scheme. We can know, to some extent, what we are, by placing ourselves in the cosmological scheme, and we do not require instruction of any kind in this context, because the moment we know how we have come, we can also know where we are sitting. Our duties become explicit and perspicacious the moment we know our condition and the atmosphere in which we are living. The control of one’s self – sense-restraint, self-control – is the restraint of consciousness, finally; it has little to do with our physical limbs. It is not tightening the legs, plugging the ears or closing the eyes physically speaking, because our joys and sorrows are the outcome of a movement of a consciousness in a particular way. Thoughts are joys and sorrows; so joys and sorrows are nothing but thought processes, which is another way of saying the whirling of consciousness in a particular manner. Our individualised consciousness, for the purpose of easy understanding – we may identify it with our mind in a more generalised sense – this individualised consciousness is the principle of the affirmation of individuality. The ego, the intellect, the reason, and what we think we are at the present moment – all these are inseparable from this type of activity of consciousness. Thus, self-control would mean a bringing back of the surging individual consciousness in the direction of external things, and enabling it to settle in its own self. This is the whole yoga of Patanjali, for instance, which summarises in two *sutras* – *yogaś citta vṛtti nirodhaḥ* and *tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe avasthānam* (Y.S. 1.2-3): “The restraint of the mind is yoga, and

then there is establishment of self in its own self.” Here is the whole of yoga in two sentences.

Now, the establishment of consciousness in its own self is simultaneous with and inseparable from the restraint of consciousness from its movement in the direction of objects; and vice-versa – the restraint of consciousness in its movement in this form would be a movement in the other direction, for establishment in its own self. Every perception involves a degree of loss of self-consciousness. Whether we love a thing or hate a thing, we have lost ourselves in that measure and to that degree. An amount of ourselves, a quantum of our personality, moves out of itself towards that which we like or hate, and to that extent we are weakened. One who loves or hates is a weak person, because of the fact that some part of one’s self is borne in the direction of that which is liked or hated. So to strengthen one’s mind for the purpose of higher concentration, to free one’s self from this weakness that has arisen on account of love and hatred, one has to bring the mind or consciousness back from that centre, which is the source of its like or dislike, and then there is a rejuvenation of ourselves. We feel an inner strength arising from a source unknown, due to the mere fact of our coming back to our own selves. Mostly, we are not in our own selves – we are other than what we are. This being other than what we are is the malady of life – we are always conscious of somebody else. There is no other work for us except to be aware that others *are* and to deal with others – with other people and other things. This so-called ‘otherness’ harasses us so much that we seem to be living in a world of destruction, death – *mrityuloka* as it is called – and nothing can be worse than this condition of ours. To be brooding over what is not there, and to be totally oblivious of what is there, seems to be the great business of this world. That things are not totally outside us is obliterated from our consciousness by the vehemence of this surge of ourselves in the direction of things. *Yajna* or sacrifice as yoga or self-control implies therefore an inner training, a sort of educational activity going on inside, enlightenment as it is, by which we become filled with strength with our inward bond with things – not as the senses tell us, but as things really stand.

The world of sense-perception is conditioned by space-time and the various categories of the psychological process; while the thing, the person, the being, the substance as it is in itself, is behind this curtain of space-time. Our real being also is behind this curtain of the psycho-physical individuality. Thus we are living in a phenomenal world, both subjectively and objectively. The thing-in-itself, as they say, the substance as such, eludes the grasp of this phenomenal process – thus no man can see God, and the intellect of man is not fit enough to contact reality. Unless we develop a mechanism within our own selves to go deeper into this large area of phenomenality – subjectively as well as objectively – the plumbing into one’s own self is also the plumbing through space and time. Modern science says the inward, subjective, subatomic philosophy of quantum theory is identical with the spatio-temporal theory of relativity – *Tat tvam asi*: That is this and this is That. The inward depth is also the outward plumbing of the abyss of space and time. The deeper we go inwardly, simultaneously there is a going deep into the

outer cosmos – and vice-versa, the plumbing into the cosmos objectively would also imply a going deep into one's own self. Knowledge of the self is the knowledge of the universe, and the knowledge of the universe is the knowledge of the self. Atman is Brahman.

This is a profound philosophy that is hidden behind performance of sacrifice, self-control, practice of yoga, the control of senses, the restraint of the mind and the stabilising of the intellect and the reason. We have to perform a double process – sometimes mentioned in the Bhagavadgita and also in Patanjali – of *vairagya* and *abhyasa*, a dual action of withdrawal and union. The performance of this dual function may be said to be a simultaneous action taking place, as recovering from illness is also the regaining of health and the going away of night is the coming in of day. There is no temporal successiveness in these processes; they happen to be a simultaneous occurrence. Thus, the *vairagya* that we speak of in yoga, the dissociation of consciousness from erroneous thinking and contact, is simultaneously a concentration of consciousness on that which lies above itself – the lower self concentrates itself on the higher.

Now I am coming to that point as to what the lower self is and what the higher Self is. The lower self is that state of consciousness which is conditioned by the urge in the direction of objects. The higher Self is that which is the condition of freedom, attained by even a single step taken by this involved consciousness in the direction of disentanglement with objects. Thus every ascent is a regaining of one's Self, and an asset on the side of strengthening of one's personality. *Vairagya* and *abhyasa* mean detachment and communion. Here, many people may get misguided due to the difficulty in understanding the true meaning of these terms, *vairagya* and *abhyasa* – renunciation, abrogation, detachment or non-attachment, going together with concentration, meditation, etc. We have to correctly understand what detachment means in order to know what communion is; and the whole of yoga is this much. If we commit an initial error, then we would be piling error over error in our subsequent actions or performances. Thus, we have to be vigilant at the very beginning.

Detachment is a success that we achieve in freeing our consciousness from involvement in any kind of objectivity – whether it is the form of intense liking or intense dislike, or finally even in the complacency that things really are outside. The initial step or stage in self-control would require us to free ourselves from emotional involvements, either in the form of intense like or intense dislike. But even if we are emotionally free and there is no great passion for things either positively or negatively, we may yet be unfit for the higher requirements in yoga. A mere good man need not necessarily be a fit person for yoga, because while goodness is a great thing indeed, a highly valued thing, it is itself not sufficient because yoga is super-ethical – it goes beyond the morality of mankind. It is not merely goodness, charitableness and a humanitarian feeling, though all these things are wonderful in themselves. So, when there is a freedom achieved to some extent from emotional involvements in the form of love and hatred, we might have attained a great thing indeed – it is a very important success – but yoga is something deeper and more difficult to grasp because, as we make a

distinction between abnormal psychology and general psychology or rather, the psychoanalytical process and the study of ordinary psychological functions, we may have to make a distinction between two types of involvement of the mind in objectivity – the one emotional and the other perceptual.

Emotional involvements are studied in psychoanalysis, sometimes known as 'abnormal psychology'. By a deep understanding of our own self, we may be a healthy person psychically, and psychoanalytically we are perfectly hale and robust. But from the point of view of yoga, we may still be an abnormal person – because abnormality does not necessarily mean being a psychoanalytic patient. There can be a 'metaphysical error' as philosophers would put it, apart from a mere social, political or emotional mistake that we commit. Here it is that yoga goes beyond mere human ways of thinking, much less social and political ways. It is a cosmic way of envisaging everything, which will inject a sort of shock into us. We may begin to shudder even to think of the possibility of there being such a way of encounter with things, and this is the reason why sometimes we feel tremor in the body when we go deep into meditation – a shock which the *pranas* receive by the impact of the mind upon them, due to the intensity of our concentration on a supernormal level, which goes beyond ordinary human thinking.

So even if we are emotionally free and a good individual indeed, well adored and respected in humanity, we may not be prepared for yoga; because yoga is a preparation to embrace a reality, which is not necessarily a human world. This is also touched upon, pithily, in some of the aphorisms of Patanjali, which is not my subject at present – I am concerned with the Bhagavadgita. So, coming to the point of *yajna*, sacrifice, self-control, we seem to conclude that every sacrifice which is true to its spirit involves a metaphysical injection that we give to the psychological process of the mind, a spiritual adventure more than any other kind of human activity or a religious routine. We ascend into a supernormal degree of comprehension in our adventure of *vairagya* and *abhyasa* – withdrawal and union. From what do we withdraw ourselves, and with what do we commune ourselves? The withdrawal, as I mentioned, is not from the substance of the persons and things or the five elements, but from the way, the manner in which they are perceived by the senses, the mind and the intellect. Our opinion about things is what is important, rather than the things themselves. Our understanding is what is our concern, and not what we are understanding – the thing as such. The world, physically speaking, is not so much our concern in yoga as the way in which we are understanding it, and the manner in which we react to it.

Thus the process of *vairagya*, or detachment, is more a psychological activity rather than a physical performance. It is something that is happening inside in the mind. So we can detach ourselves from things even in the midst of things. Even in the thick of the bustle of people and the noises of the world, we can be detached, because the bustle and the haste, the movement and the noise are not the things that trouble us; the trouble arises from our reaction to them. The world is what it was, and perhaps it will be what it was – nobody can change it, and perhaps there is no need to change it; but there is necessity to change our

understanding of it. It is possible to be free from concern with the external events in the world by a modification or an amendment of our outlook or perspective in life, even in the midst of thick activity. Here is the principle of *karma* yoga coming again: in the midst of intense activity one can be in a state of deep communion with the Ultimate Reality because of the fact that the mind is in the state of *vairagya* – completely withdrawn from erroneous associations with the events taking place with persons, with things, with activities. On the other hand, one may be in the top of Mount Everest, yet one may be involved in the world process. The thick of the jungle is not necessarily a safe place for the practice of yoga, because the absence of the presence of things, though it is an important thing indeed, is secondary considering our attitude to them. A deeply involved person may be involved even in the thickest forest – and an inwardly detached person may be detached even in the thick street of a large city. If we are honestly intent upon achieving true success in what is called ‘yoga’, we should not merely pat ourselves on the back and imagine that we are in a state of yoga or religious activity merely because it appears to be so, and people also say so. People may say anything – the saying of the people is no matter with us; it is another thing altogether that worries us and perhaps is our concern.

So, the yoga, the sacrifice – which is control of the senses, restraint of the mind, and the stabilising of the reasoning process, which is the *yajna*, the various types of *yajna* mentioned in the fourth chapter: *prana*, *manas*, *indriya* etc. mentioned there – all these suggest a single action on the part of our consciousness, namely an awakening into a higher Self. We may wonder why we should go on using the word ‘Self’ again and again, as if there is nothing else and no other word will connote what is our intention. The word ‘Self’ is a very important thing, because it suggests the true nature of things. We are not likely to understand the meaning of it because we are accustomed to identify self with our personality: ‘yourself’, ‘myself’, ‘himself’, ‘herself’, ‘itself’. These grammatical words that we use suggest a wrong meaning of the term ‘Self’. Self does not mean a person or a thing, though it is associated with a description of persons and things, yourself and others. The word ‘Self’ actually means the non-objective status occupied by everything in the world. Here is a sentence on which we have to bestow deep thought. *A non-objective status which everyone enjoys and everything enjoys* – this is called the Self. The Self is that which cannot be externalised, cannot be objectified, cannot become other than what it is; it cannot know itself as an ‘other’. It is not an ‘other’ – it is just what it is. The real ‘you’ or the ‘I’ is what we call the ‘Self’. This ‘I’ cannot become a ‘you’, a ‘he’, ‘she’, ‘it’ – it is just what it is. Inasmuch as this is the condition of everyone and everything, in a way we may say the whole universe is just the Self. The whole universe is a Self, only to be understood in its proper significance. If the whole universe is a Self and it cannot be objectified, because a Self is a non-objectified status, it would mean the universe is an intense self-consciousness; actually, what you call God is nothing but this. It is a highly enhanced condition of universal self-consciousness. This Self, which is principally and primarily a universal being, gets conditioned, by degrees, into lower forms of experience, until it descends into our personality-

consciousness of the so-called physical 'I', the physical 'you', the physical 'it'. Thus it is self-control – I am coming to the point again – self-control means the restraining of the lower experience of the self by uniting it with the higher experience of its own Self. It is not a communion with somebody else. You are communing with your own self only in a larger, pervasive form than the condition in which you are at present. Your connectedness with things ascends in a series of larger pervasiveness until it reaches the apex of this pervasiveness in God-consciousness or Universal-realisation.

So, self-control begins with a little action of restraining the senses, and then becomes wider and wider, by degrees. These are the *samapattis* or *samadhis* mentioned in the *sutras* of Patanjali. These are the seven stages of knowledge. These are the communes attained with the levels of being, the realms of consciousness, the planes, etc. – these are the forms of Self. Gradually we get united with them until we become wider and wider, deeper and deeper, heavier and heavier, more and more comprises us, and nearer and nearer to our own self than we are now. Now we are far away from us. What a pity, we are far from our own selves. In the sense we are not this self we are thinking ourselves to be, as conditioned by this body; there is a larger kingdom in which we are residing, even now, from which we are apparently exiled into this grossness of the prison-house of this body consciousness. These are the fundamentals, and this is the background of all forms of self-control, which is the final meaning of any form of sacrifice – *yajna*.



## Chapter 6

### SELF-RESTRAINT AND THE NATURE OF THE SELF

Chapters four, five and six of the Bhagavadgita in a way dilate upon the discipline that is required in the practise of yoga. Some aspect of it I touched upon yesterday, and the study we made already is the foundational character of spiritual discipline, in a sense. Spiritual discipline, which may be considered to be almost the same as what you regard as self-control, is a many-sided, spiritual effort. The whole of yoga is self-restraint and a simultaneous self-recovery. It is dying to live, as Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to say many a time. The process of *vairagya* and *abhyasa* constitutes a sort of dying, for the sake of a living in a higher sense. This dying is not a loss – you will bring back to your memories what I told you yesterday – it is a gaining of the originality of things by awakening from one's involvement in the phenomenality of things. Thus, a rising of the spirit from this world involvement is not a loss of contact or relationship with the world; it is a rising to the consciousness of the true nature of things.

It is hard for the common person, common individual, the lay mind, to appreciate the meaning of this self-recovery or self-establishment, inasmuch as the human mind is so much engrossed in relational contact with objects of sense that the objects and the body of one's own personality have become more real than what you consider as the originality of things which, to our present state of understanding, appear as mere abstractions. Realities look like concepts – while, when we go deep into the matter by a thorough analysis of the circumstances of life, we will realise our experience of this world is a conceptual involvement, a phenomenal association, a contrivance, a makeshift, a tentative adjustment which cannot be regarded as a permanent state of affairs. The transitional character of the world, so much spoken of, is the outcome of a necessity felt in every corner of creation to effect moment-to-moment adjustments between subject and object, on account of it being impossible for any condition to be perpetually in that condition only. The urge of the finite in the direction of the Infinite is a perennial call from the Infinite. It is an incessant movement of the finite towards the Infinite, a flow which is continuous like the movement of waters in a river. Our life may be considered to be such a movement, a flow, an analogy with which we are not very unfamiliar. Life is like the flow of a river, or the burning of the flame of a lamp which appears to maintain a substantiality and a solidity for all perceptual purposes, but is in fact a process rather than an existence.

Thus, the reality of the world seems to be a process rather than being as such. So we are many a time told that man needs to *be* – he never *is*; we are to *be* yet. This is a slant given to the conditions of life in certain discourses of the Buddha, a point made out in Buddhist philosophy concerning the transient nature of things – which has been given a metaphysical touch by certain modern thinkers like the well-known Alfred North Whitehead, a physicist-turned-philosopher, who speaks like Buddha and speaks like Acharya Shankara, speaks like Hegel, speaks like Einstein, and speaks like Plato, from many angles of vision. What we learn from all these discussions and analyses is that this world we live in is not a permanent

home of any person. We are located in a particular condition of a process, which is incessantly active, which never rests, and which moves without sleep because of the fact that the relationship of the finite to the Infinite is an indescribable impulse of the whole phenomenal nature in the direction of the heart of all things, the core of all existence, which is a consciousness of an infinite centre operating at the back of all phenomenal diversities.

So, when we enter into the path of yoga, we gradually discover and come to know that in this arduous adventure of ours, we are tending to become more and more non-individual in our perspective, in our needs, and in our operations, so that the practise of yoga ceases to be a purely individual affair – it has relationships with many other things and perhaps all things of which this vast universe may consist. As threads are involved in a widespread fabric, our so-called individuality is involved in this network of creational process. Though due to the hardness of the ego – the intensity of our psychophysical affirmation – we may not be cognisant of our larger involvement in the set-up of things and may grow complacent that we are merely this hard-body individuality, when we analyse our involvement psychologically and we become more philosophical in our thinking, we would be compelled to shed this complacency, and we will be face-to-face with a new vista of things wherein and whereby we discover our involvement in a larger set-up of the nature of the universe. This is a great solace which will be administered into us by the Bhagavadgita as we proceed further and further through the chapters, until we reach an apotheosis of this analysis and the truth is unveiled in a sort of apocalypse – the Vishvarupa to be described in the eleventh chapter.

I try to continue the thread from where I left yesterday concerning the relationship between the lower self and the higher self, to which a reference will be made in the fifth and the sixth chapters particularly. The essence of yoga practice may be said to be summed up in two verses towards the end of the fifth chapter, to be detailed further on in the sixth, and these two verses are concise and pithy: *sparśān kṛtvā bahir bāhyāmś cakṣuś caivāntare bhruvoḥ, prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā nāsābhyantaracāriṇau; yatendriyamanobuddhir munir mokṣaparāyaṇaḥ; vigatecchābhayakrodho yaḥ sadā mukta eva saḥ* (Gita 5.27-28). These two verses sow the seed for the elaboration in the sixth chapter on *dhyana* yoga or meditation – the integration of personality.

The senses are to be withdrawn from their contact with the objects. The objects are to be shut-out from their relationship with the senses: *sparśān kṛtvā bahir bāhyām*. Here, there is something interesting for us to know. The necessity to sever sensory contact with external objects arises on account of a basic error involved in this contact. All contacts are wombs of pain, says the Gita in another place: *ye hi saṁsparśajā bhogā duḥkhayonaya eva te ādyantavantaḥ* (Gita 5.22). The desire of the mind to come in contact with objects through the senses arises on account of the mistaken notion that pleasure rises from the objects. As milk is oozed out from the udder of the cow, it appears that objects ooze out satisfaction, joy – nectar seems to be milked-out of the objects by the senses through their contact. This is a gross mistake; there is no such thing taking place. The joys of

life arise on account of a circumstance quite different from what we imagine in our minds, out of point altogether from the connection of the senses with physical objects.

Firstly, a real contact with objects is not possible, due to the operation of a differentiating factor which cuts off the subjects from the objects – space and time. This screen, which is hanging in front of our eyes, space-time as you call it, prevents a real communion of the subject with the object; and all contact is finally a desire for such a communion which is never attained. Thus the desire is never fulfilled, finally, because the contact, which is the objective behind the manifestation of a desire, is never really attained. There is only a tantalising phenomenon taking place, misleading the mind and completely defeating the senses of their purpose. The objects repel the senses because of the impossibility of coming in contact with the objects.

The desire for an object, as I mentioned, is a desire for union with the object, possession of the object, enjoyment of the object – by an entry into it, if it were possible, and the bringing the object so close to one's self that the distinction between one's self and the object is abolished in a space-transcending experience; but this is not possible in this world of space and time. We can never really come in contact with anything in this world; we cannot possess anything in this world because of this difficulty. The externality principle which is space-time, or you may call it by any other name – is so vehemently active that it will not permit the coming in contact of one thing with another in the manner of a communion or an entry of one thing into another. 'A' can never become 'B'. 'A' is 'A', 'B' is 'B', subject is subject, and object is object. Thus everyone gets defeated in this world, and no one goes from here with the satisfaction that the objectives of life craved for have been really fulfilled or attained. This is one of the reasons why the desire for contact with objects of senses is futile, finally. *Pariñāma tāpa samskāra* (Y.S. 2.15) are some of the points mentioned in a *sutra* of Patanjali as factors which should dissuade anyone from enshrining in one's heart an inordinate longing for anything in this world. The consequence of the fulfilment of a desire is an increase of the desire, and not a fulfilment of the desire. Desire flames up like raging fire which is fed with clarified butter when it is attempted to be fulfilled, and desire is never extinguished by its being fed with the fuel of sense objects. The reason is that every enjoyment, every sensory contact effecting this imagined satisfaction, acts as a medium to confirm this error – that joy arises from the objects. There is a reinforcement of the error – that joy is embedded in the objects – so one goes more and more towards the objects, and does not learn a lesson that a mistake had been involved in this craving of the senses for objects. Thus the consequence of the fulfilment of a desire is an increased impetuosity of the desire, not the fulfilment. A desire is never fulfilled; it only gets increased.

Secondly, there is anxiety attending upon the desire to enjoy or possess the objects of sense. There is restlessness of mind before one comes in contact with the object of one's longing, distress regarding the possibility or otherwise of one's success in obtaining one's objective: "Will I succeed, or will I not succeed?"

This is the agony and the anguish that attends upon the desire to come in contact with an object. But once the contact is established and there is a conviction that the object is under one's possession, there is another anxiety – namely, "How long will it be with me? I may be dispossessed of it." Because subconsciously we know that no object can be possessed by us for a long time, much less forever, there is a subtle, distressing feeling at the root of our personality, even during the process of the so-called enjoyment of the object of sense. So there is no unadulterated happiness even when we are apparently enjoying the so-called imagined happiness by contact of the sense of sensory objects. There is sorrow at the root of all things, even at the base of this apparent, momentary satisfaction. Such a joy is compared sometimes in our scriptures to the cool shadow that we may enjoy under the hood of the cobra. It is cool no doubt, and we also know many other things about it; such is this world. There is anxiety before, and anxiety during the so-called possession of the object, and we need not mention our condition after we are dispossessed of the object; we are in hell. "Oh, there is bereavement, there is loss and there is destruction. I am done for!" So, we were not happy earlier, we are not happy in the middle, and we are not happy afterwards. So in past, in present and future, desire keeps us in tender-hooks, though there is no joy in this world. *Ye hi saṁsparśajā bhogā duḥkhaḥ eva te ādyantavantaḥ.*

There is also *samskara-dukha*, mentioned by Patanjali in one of the *sutras*. The impressions created by the fulfilment of a desire will be enough to cast us, hurl into rebirth, because the *samskaras*, *vasanas*, or the grooves formed in the mind by the erroneous notion that joy is in the object. These grooves will become conditioning factors of the future destiny of the individual, and they will go on playing the same tune like a gramophone record, so that we will never forget an earlier enjoyment. They will be harassing us even in our dream, and they can persist even after the shedding of this body. Rebirth is caused by unfulfilled desires. The frailty of this body and the fickleness of our social relationships are such that all desires cannot be fulfilled in the short span of life. Hence something always remains as a residue unfulfilled, which rockets forth our subtle body to that particular condition in space-time, where these unfulfilled longings can materialise; this process is called rebirth. Thus, the agony continues even in the future life – *samskara-dukha*.

Fourthly, there is a philosophical or a metaphysical reason behind the impossibility to come in contact with real happiness in this world, that is, the perpetual rotation of the very constituents of *prakriti*: *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. What we call happiness is the preponderance of *sattva*, the equilibrating power of nature – which we rarely pass through in experience in life on account of our being mostly under the pressure of a desire which is unfulfilled, which is nothing but *rajas* acting, distracting our attention. There is a perpetual other-consciousness, an awareness that things are outside, which keeps us in a *rajasic* mode. *Rajas* is a condition of consciousness where it is forced to be aware of things other than its own self – duality-consciousness, separation-consciousness, object-consciousness – and all these things attending upon this consciousness

come under the activity of *rajas* which separates, dissects, cuts off one thing from the other, especially the subject from the object.

The movement of *prakriti*, the rotation of the wheel of this natural process consisting of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, never allows us to be in a permanent condition. Like the movement of a wheel which is in motion, conditions of *prakriti* are perpetually moving for the fulfilment of their own purpose, which is not necessarily our individual purpose. When there is a momentary cessation of *rajasic* activity – a flash of a second as it were, when we come in contact with an object – there is a preponderating feeling that the need for the movement of our mind towards the object ceases. When we are in possession of an object of desire, the need for the mind to be conscious of the object as an external something ceases, *rajas* does not operate for the flash of a moment, and the cessation of *rajas* is also a cessation of this other-consciousness, object-consciousness, which is tantamount to self-consciousness. We turn to our own Self for the split fraction of a second, as it were, and consciousness which is the essence of our *Atman* or the Self, tastes its own Source, licks the bliss of its own essentiality and finds itself in a state of ecstasy, because the more we are in union with our own Self, the more intense is the satisfaction we feel, the rapture that we are in, the delight that we experience. All *ananda*, all joy, is a union of the subject with its own Self.

Now, I turn your attention to a definition of this Self, which is a crucial point in our study of the sixth chapter of the Bhagavadgita, which describes the art of meditation, the science of self-integration by means of an inward communion of the lower self with the higher Self – this was the subject of our study yesterday. We have, first of all, to de-condition our minds from assuming any notion already about the characteristic of the higher Self, the lower self, etc. All of our learning about this has to be foregone for the time being because many of us may not have a correct notion of what this Self means. We are mostly under a misapprehension concerning the nature of the Self. If you can recollect what I told you yesterday, it is a name that we give to pure subjectivity of awareness. We are never in this condition at any time in this world. We do not enjoy an experience of pure subjectivity at any time, except in a perforce way in the state of deep-sleep when we may be said to be purely subjective; but that does us no good because of an absence of what is happening to us there. Incidentally, the intensity of the joy that we feel in the state of deep-sleep is due to our union with our own Self – unconsciously though. However, the point is that this union with the pure Subject has to be effected in a conscious way; and a conscious endeavour on the part of one's self to commune with this true Self in the various levels or degrees of its ascent may be said to be the function of yoga practise. All yoga is the art of communing one's self with one's Self. Again we are here in a difficulty in the matter of understanding what this 'one's Self' means. Everyone knows what this one self is. "I am here myself, you are there yourself." We speak in this train, but this is a physical, social and psychical way of defining the self. But the Self, to reiterate, is pure subjectivity; and the psychological, physical or social self is an objectified form of Self.

In the language of the Vedanta, the Self is supposed to be understood by us in three ways – namely, the apparent self, which we seem to recognise in all objects of our longing or desire; a self which seems to be present in everything with which we are vitally connected, especially through our emotions, known as the *gaunatman* or the secondary self. The son loves his father, the father loves his son. We cannot say that the son is the father, or the father is the son. There is no intelligible explanation as to why the father should cling to his son as if he is his own self. However, the father loves his son as if the son is his own self, and the joy of the son is the joy of the father, the sorrow of the son is the sorrow of the father. Anything that happens to the son happens to the father. The birth and death of the son is the birth and death of the father, as it were, as we see in social parlance. How come the father sees himself in the son, the rich man sees himself in his wealth, and anyone fired up with an intense passion of any kind sees himself or herself in that object which is the target of this feeling?

This particular object which forces the subject, directs its attention towards itself, this power in the object which necessitates the subject to pour itself upon itself on the object, is the bondage of the individual. The power by which we are compelled to be intensely conscious of that which is other than ourselves is the *samsara*, so-called – the involvement of every individual in a terrible, unintelligible network of suffering. The *gaunatman*, or the secondary self, is the object of our desire, to put it precisely; it may be son, it may be daughter, it may be wife, it may be husband, it may be any blessed thing. Now, why do we call these objects as our self? In what sense do we regard them as an *Atman*, though it may be a secondary self or a *gaunatman*? It is impossible to love anything which is not a self; the *Atman* or the Self alone is the object of desire – no one can love anything except the Self. And even when we love anything apparently other than our self, we convert it into our self in some artificial manner; otherwise, love for a thing or for a person is unthinkable in this world. So even when we love our father, or son, or husband, or wife, or wealth, we are loving our own self in a terribly mistaken manner. A person is totally out of gear psychologically, in a terrible misconception, when one's affections are poured over those things which cannot, in any way, identify with one's self, for reasons already mentioned in the context of that *sutra* of Patanjali – *Parinama papa*, etc. We can never come in contact with them – yet, we have no more regard in this world except the desire to come in contact. Life is a contradiction, it appears. It pulls us powerfully from two different directions in contrary ways.

The *gaunatman*, therefore, is the secondary self – a self which is imagined, foisted upon that which can never become the self. The object can never become the subject, and our object of love or affection cannot become us. It cannot satisfy us, it is not us, we have no connection with it – yet we seem to be concerned only with that. This is the wisdom to which we are initiated by the social atmosphere in which we are born, and the education that we receive in this world. This is a travesty indeed, in which we find ourselves.

You know very well why there should be withdrawal of consciousness from such contacts in the process of self-control, in the execution of the art of yoga.

There is also the other false self, called the *mithya-atman*, which is the psychophysical individuality – this so-called ‘I’, this physical ‘I’, this body ‘I’, this psychic ‘I’, this sensory ‘I’, etc. “I am coming, I am seated here, I shall go there, I shall do this, I am hungry, I am thirsty, I am happy, I am unhappy.” When you make statements of this kind you are referring to a false self in which you are involved. This false self is called the *mithya-atman*, consisting of the five sheaths to which we have already made reference – the *koshas*, so-called. They are the physical, vital, mental, intellectual, and the causal – *annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijnanamaya, anandamayakoshas*, which are accretions grown over the central consciousness which is the true *Atman*, the *mukhya-atman*, the primary self. These accretions are not vitally connected with the self – as much unconnected as clouds are in relation to the space in which they exist. You know how thick clouds can hang over our heads and appear to contaminate space and cloud even the sun itself. But the clouds do not cover the sun, and they do not contaminate space, though it appears that they do this. Like thick layers of clouds, this *mithya-atman* consists of unfulfilled longings. They include what you call the subconscious layer, unconscious layer, etc. They are the psychic personality of ours – the emotional, the vital, the volitional, etc., and even the physical bodily self. Other than this *gaunatman*, or the secondary self, the object of our love and hatred, other than this false self, the five *koshas*, there is a true subjectivity in us, in the direction of which we move gradually along the lines of the cosmological scheme laid before us by the Samkhya, which the Vedanta also accepts in many of its features.

“The self has to be raised by the Self,” says the Bhagavadgita: *uddhared ātmanātmānaṁ* (Gita 6.5). “The Self is the friend of the self”: *bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ*. Your own Self is your friend, and your Self has to guide your self. You may become your friend, and you may also become your enemy, under certain given conditions. *Ātmaiva hyātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ*: “You have no friends outside you, you have no enemies outside you – you are your friend, you are your enemy.” When you see friends outside and enemies outside, again you are committing this mistake of identifying yourself with the *gaunatman*. The secondary self takes possession of the true Self, as it were, with such a power and intensity of grasp that we seem to be seeing ourselves in our so-called externalised forms of friends and enemies, while really we have gone against the larger dimension of our own higher Self when we confront enemies in this world, and we are in harmony with the dimension of our own higher Self when we see friends around us. Thus, the objects of the world do not concern us, unless our self is connected with them in some way or the other, positively in love, or negatively in hatred.

Thus, we are living in a world of ‘Self’, and not in a world of objects. The so-called objects are not our concern. They become our concern, they become even the objects of our awareness of their being there on account of the consciousness moving towards them and enveloping them, entering them, possessing them, and getting identified with them in some manner, which is the epistemological process in the perception of an object. We cannot even know that the world

exists unless we move outwardly in space and time in the direction of another location where we place ourselves, for the time being, either in love or hatred, so that even there we are coming in contact with our own selves – only in a larger manner. Thus, *idaṁ sarvaṁ, yad ayaṁ ātmā* (Brihad.U. 2.4.6): All this universe is Self laid out before the experiencing consciousness, with which the self is identified, and vice versa. The whole universe is Self and the objects, so-called, are misconceived locations and spatially-concealed positions of this universally pervasive Self, which is the Atman. This is a philosophical background of the necessity for the practise of self-control and meditation. When you understand this background you will also know automatically the techniques that you have to adopt in the control of the senses, in the practise of self-restraint, in meditation on Reality, which will be the subject of the sixth chapter.



## Chapter 7

### MEDITATION – A DISCIPLINE OF SELF-INTEGRATION

The discipline of yoga culminates in meditation, *dhyana*, which is the subject of the sixth chapter of the Bhagavadgita. The art of yoga is principally the process of self-integration by degrees through the levels of the constitution of one's personality, such that when we reach the point of meditation proper there is a total concentration of the whole of one's being in the direction of the whole of that which one aspires for through this discipline we call 'yoga'. Last time we noted that essentially this is a technique of communing the lower self with the higher self, and I endeavoured to briefly mention the characteristics of the higher self and the way in which we have to understand what this term means. It means many things, and in every sense of the term it has to be taken into consideration when it becomes an object of meditation – gradually by stages. We can today take up the practical side of it as enunciated in the sixth chapter, since the theoretical side is already known to you, to some extent, through our studies conducted earlier.

Meditation is no doubt the fruit of the enterprise called yoga, but it is a fruit of the tree of an inner development into a state of maturity of personality which is prepared for this last attack, as it were, on the problem of truth – of reality. The scattered particularities of human thinking get gathered in this focusing of attention, and we may bring back to our memories here what we understood of the process of *vairagya* and *abhyasa* – the detachment which is a requisite in this practice, and a concentration or habituation of consciousness which is simultaneous with it. This mustering in of the forces of one's self, the focusing of them, and the attention to be paid on the object of meditation – all these processes involve a gathering up of whatever we are, in every sense of whatever we are. I am not going to repeat what we studied earlier, since we have not much time and we are to cover the entire study in a few days.

"Whatever we are" is an important sentence to be underlined, and we have to understand first of all what we are, which is another way of saying what 'self' means. We are to understand the self in every sense – in terms of the definition of it as *gaunatman*, *mithya-atman*, and *mukhya-atman*, to which we made reference earlier. So, our self is not merely the imagined location of our consciousness within the body, as it were, but everything that we are, even in an established relationship of ourself – spatially, temporally, socially and otherwise, together with our consciousness of this psychophysical organism – finally to culminate in the *mukhya-atman* or the primary Self, which is the universality of our essential being.

For the purpose of meditation, a proper place is necessary – *śucau deśe pratiṣṭhāpya sthiram āsanam ātmanaḥ* (Gita 6.11). *Śucau deśe*: In a purified atmosphere, in a conducive environment we have to place ourselves comfortably in a posture for the purpose of this great adventure called meditation. This is a great spiritual worship that we are performing, an ardent invocation of divinity, a soulful devotion that we manifest within ourselves towards the Creator of the

Universe, and an inward communion spiritually established between ourselves and all that God has created and God Himself is. So it is a sanctified, sacred, worshipful attitude. It is not a mechanism that we are operating – it is a spirit that gets unfolded in meditation. There is an organic growth, an advancement of personality in the process of meditation, so that we become richer and richer, wider and wider, deeper and deeper, and grow well beyond in our spirit as we advance in meditation. The place that we select for our meditation should be free from distractions. Some more details concerning this matter is available in the Swetaswatara Upanishad. There again we are told that the location for the purpose of our seatedness in meditation should be conducive in the sense that there should be no other avenue to pull our attention in any other direction than the point of concentration we have chosen; this is an important point to remember. There are loves and hatreds, prejudices and emotional tensions to which man is heir and from which no one is totally free. These are important things that we may bear in mind.

The process of meditation is not a struggle in the sense of a fighting with nature, or with what we call the odds of life; it is an establishment of a harmony, rather than a conflict with the powers that be, in which we are engaging ourselves. It is more an attitude of friendship by way of communion of feeling that meditation is, than an encounter with an enemy; though in the earlier stages all the opposing forces appear to be our opponents, enemies, and intruding factors. There are stages by which the senses and the mind have to be weaned from the points of distraction, and the highest method should not be applied when one is in the lower stage of evolution. Each one has to realise where one is positioned in this world. There should not be any kind of over-estimation of one's capacities, nor is there a necessity for under-estimation. It is a need for a careful observation of one's self in the true perspective of the position or the station one occupies in this great scheme of evolution. This requires a knowledge of the vaster field of our relationship with the entire scheme of things, where we touch upon the whole story of creation – the cosmological process to which also reference has already been made. When we touch the point of meditation, we are actually coming in contact with every sleeping dog in the whole universe – they will slowly wake up and become conscious of our adventure, our activity and our intentions.

In the lowest stages, such as the one in which we are at present – the purely social, political, and physical – the forces of nature do not actually make themselves felt in our relationship to them. We are so self-centred, physically and socially, etc., that the wider involvement of ours in the larger scheme of things does not become an object of our awareness, usually. But any act of concentration, a pointed attention of consciousness, stirs the atmosphere in a particular manner and this stimulation, communicated to the whole environment of ours by the effort of our consciousness in meditation, rouses into action certain powers whose existence itself might not be known to us earlier. These are the oppositions we feel when we actually enter into the process of meditation in right earnest. In the beginning nothing may seem to happen. For days and

months, and even years, it may appear that our meditation is not yielding any result at all, and we are just the same person that we were – but, this is not the truth. Every effort at concentration of consciousness is a great asset, and even if it be not tangible to our outer consciousness or our surface mind, it is there, like a little bank balance. Though it may not become cognisable because of the little quantum of it, it is nevertheless there like an incipient disease or a possible potentiality for a future development of any kind whatsoever.

Things invisible and unfelt are not necessarily non-existent. But, at a particular stage, when this concentration attains some maturity – gets fructified, becomes ripe – it calls, invokes or elicits the attention of everything in the world with which we are connected in our personality. The so-called obstacles in meditation are not inimical forces attacking us. In fact, there are no enemies in this universe. But, certain operations in the universe may look antagonistic to us due to our inability to reconcile ourselves to the modes of their working and the purpose for which they are operating; the defect is not in them but in ourselves. The forces of nature are also manifest in different degrees of density and, if you recall to your memories the earlier studies, you will realise that the forces around us are manifold in nature. In a way we may say it is a single force manifesting itself as manifold presentations or expressing itself in various forms. We are related to other people in the world. This relationship that is social will also evoke the sort of reaction in a particular manner, when we go deep into this technique we are adopting for awakening our spirit that is asleep now. There are other associations, which are purely empirical, also will get stimulated by the act of our concentration if it is accentuated enough.

But these are minor things compared to the more powerful ones – namely, the elemental forces, which cannot easily be roused by a little of meditation. A huge lion, very strong and confident of his strength, will not wake up even if we pelt a stone at it. Only a little puppy will wake up; it will bark at us even if we look at it. But a mighty lion or even an elephant, which knows its own strength, will not in any way be affected by our gazing at it or even with our interfering with it in a mild manner. So our little meditations may not even be felt by this mighty lion of the physical universe. It may be like scratching a rock with a little needle; the effect is so little and imperceptible that it is practically not there. But if it is strong enough, if we are attacking it with sufficient force and it is aware that it is facing a power almost equal to itself, then it wakes up. This is the waking up of the powers which constitute what we may call, in ordinary language, the five elements – earth, water, fire, air, ether. If the powers of the elements wake up, then we are really in a state where we have to reinforce our energies to effectively take up this task on hand.

We are mostly in a state of irreconcilability with the powers of nature. The elements are not in harmony with the structure of our individuality. We can be seriously affected by physical forces – we can be drowned by water, burned by fire, blown by wind, and become destroyed by anything that is material or physical. Hunger and thirst, to mention only the least among them, are some of the consequences that follow from the weakness of the physical personality in its

relation to the five elements. These energies do not make themselves felt ordinarily; most of us will not feel this difficulty at all. For us, all is a theory only, because our meditation may not be so strong as to wake up the five elements. But, until we are able to touch the borderland of this novel experience where we are able to face the five elements and become cognisant of their existence as vital elements involving our own lives, until this state is reached, we may be said to be a little novice only in meditation, just a 'kindergarten meditator'. But, according to great teachers of yoga such as Patanjali, for instance, true meditation begins only when we contact reality, at least in one of its degrees.

The grossest manifestation of reality may be said to be the five elements in the cosmological process; and until we reach this stage of vital contact with the five elements, we are cut off from reality in a very significant manner. At present, we are out of touch with reality. That explains our misery in life, our sorrows, and our difficulties even in understanding what the world is made of. Scientific analysis, even logical approaches, will not serve any purpose finally when the world of five elements, or the world as such, is considered to be a total alien to us from the way in which we are encountering the world at present. To us, all people around us are aliens – the world is a foreigner, and it is an object of the senses. It is an object in such a way that it bears no organic connection with ourselves; and we study it, try to understand it, experiment upon it and observe it as something totally different from us, which is the error of pure, classical approach of science. There is a vital, basic organic connection between ourselves and the world of nature which is not available to us when we live in the world of pure sensory operations or are cut off totally from this contact with reality due to our involvement in this extreme, externalising feature called space-time.

Thus, when we are seated for the purpose of this great objective of human life – encounter with Reality – in the earlier stages we guard ourselves, as we put up a fence around our field when we want to grow a harvest, or tend a garden, or grow fruits or vegetables, a fencing, a protection is necessary. We put up a protective fencing around ourselves by means of a dual action on our part – namely, the withdrawal of consciousness from sensory contact with distracting objects, and, at the same time, a focusing of this enriched consciousness upon the chosen ideal of meditation, which perhaps is the essence of *vairagya* and *abhyasa*.

In the process of *pratyahara*, the earlier or earliest stage of meditation, there is a need, first of all, to be conscious of what things there are which will distract your attention. What are your loves and hatreds? What are your inner tensions or frustrations, longings? They have to be dealt with very carefully, as we deal with wild beasts when they are tamed in a circus, or as carefully as a physician will diagnose a chronic illness. Here you should not be in a hurry; it is better to go slow – slow and steady wins the race. You should not be too anxious and emotional or enthusiastic about it. Every step has to be a firm step, a reinforced step, such that you need not have to retrace your steps due to any over-enthusiastic movement in this direction. You have to know your strengths and you have to know your weaknesses also. Here you have to be your own judge,

unless of course you have a very competent Guru who may be your judge. Where such a Guru is not easily available you have to be your own intelligent judge; and here you should not be, in any way, over-compassionate in regard to your own self. You should be a physician of your own soul, a judge of your own self, and no hypocrisy is permitted where it is a question of your own welfare and it is not a demonstration before others.

This meditational technique is not an advertisement in society. It is a healing process that you are trying to undergo inwardly for your own ultimate blessedness, so you are concerned here with yourself and not with anything else. Here is the point where you are required to be totally dispassionate in judging your own self. You should make a list of all your weaknesses also together with your capacities, endowments, and know where you stand. "This is my strength, but this is also my weakness." And, so far as your strength goes – so far, so good. Be happy. God bless you. But as far as your weaknesses are concerned, they have to be got rid of with an intelligent psychoanalytic technique of positive induction of a new understanding which you have to receive either from your Guru or, if God has blessed you with enough understanding, to the strength of your own self. Generally your weaknesses are your desires which, somehow or other, seek fulfilment by hook or crook – by any means, fair and foul. This word 'desire' has a vast connotation. It covers a large area; it touches anything and everything in the world. It is a desire for any blessed thing.

Now, a philosophical analysis has to help you here in understanding how desires arise, why they are there, and what are the means and methods you have to adopt in checking them, rather, sublimating them, and transmuting them into a friendly power rather than a disturbing, annoying, agonising distraction. That which is an impediment to you psychologically, may become your friend. An energy that is moving outwardly in the direction of a distracting sense-object may get transmuted into your own mental force or consciousness force, and when this attunement takes place, your energy gets re-doubled. Here we have explained, perhaps, the sum and substance of what *pratyahara* means – the coming together of the energy of the senses with the concentrating activity of the mind. When the senses unite with the mind, you have achieved the process of total withdrawal, *pratyahara*, and the mind gets concentrated.

The place of meditation therefore should be, as far as possible, free from nearness to those objects, persons, and circumstances which may draw your attention, either by like or dislike. So here you are free to choose any particular place for your meditation, under this given condition. A suitable time also is necessary – it is not that you will be able to sit for meditation at any time during the day; and you are here, again, your own judge. The mind should be amenable to this task of concentration of consciousness. It should not be repellent – it should not be revolting for any reason. You should not be hungry, you should not be annoyed, you should not have a commitment to be attended to a few minutes afterwards, you should not have to catch a train in half an hour, or you should not have a court case tomorrow. These things are distractions; they have to be dealt

with in their own way – and as long as they are not fulfilled or handled in an intelligent way, your concentration of mind, spiritually, will not be a success.

Spirituality is a positive art – it is not a runaway attitude of consciousness. In spiritual meditation, you are not moving away from the problems of life, you are not shirking your duties, but communing yourself with the substance and the very causative factor of every problem in life, and handling these forces as a master rather than as a slave who runs away from difficulties. A spiritual seeker is not a coward – he is a scientist in the highest sense of the term who tries to understand and control the forces of nature, rather than a person who would like to be ignorant of their existence and close their eyes to them, like an ostrich. Thus the art of spiritual living, which culminates itself in meditation, is the highest positivity of approach to Reality by a human being who is fully integrated for this purpose in a most healthy manner. The time that you choose for meditation should, therefore, be conducive as the place is. I need not dilate upon this theme, because many of you know which time is suitable for you, for what reason, in what place is conducive, etc.

The method of meditation is perhaps more important. Place, time and method – these three are especially to be taken into consideration. The Bhagavadgita succinctly mentions something about the place, time and method – the techniques to be adopted in concentration. The method is the way in which you conduct yourself, the manner in which you place yourself in the context of your relationship with reality – firstly in its most immediate form of manifestation, and later on in any form of its expression. Usually we are seated for the purpose of meditation – we don't stand up or lie down. You know very well why it is not possible for you to meditate by standing; you also know well why it is not a suitable posture to lie down on a bed. So, a 'via-media' technique is prescribed – to be seated, which means to say, to repose or posture in an *asana* like *sukhasana*, *padmasana* etc., with the spine, head and neck erect, as far as possible, because a crouching pose will affect the nervous system and consequently the movement of the *prana*, and again consequently the very activity of the mind itself. The atmosphere around, the body, the nervous system, the muscles, the mind – all are interconnected; they are not disassociated, isolated aspects. So, you have to be first of all in harmonious condition with your atmosphere, with society, with your daily routine etc., outwardly, and also in a harmony with your muscular system, with the anatomical and the physiological organisation of your personality, which is achieved by being seated in a comfortable posture, as mentioned.

Then, of course, something is mentioned about the breathing process – a little of it is mentioned in the Bhagavadgita, and there are larger details in other yoga texts like Patanjali and Hatha Yoga Pradeepika, etc. As far as you students here are concerned, I would advise that you need not go deep into these technical matters of *pranayama* as it has been described in the Hatha Yoga Pradeepika, etc., because, for your practical purposes, it would be enough if you breathe normally by a daily practice of consistent and harmonious deep inhalation and exhalation than merely breathe shallow; you don't breathe deep, for various reasons. For fifteen minutes or twenty minutes or even half an hour in the morning and in the

evening you may stand up, or even sit down, and throw your arms out by breathing deeply, slowly, gradually, in an open atmosphere, if possible, or in even your own room – opening the doors and windows, breathe deeply and exhale also slowly. This simple, non-technical procedure of gradual, deep, consistent, persistent inhalation and exhalation itself will be sufficient for you. The other technicalities like *sukhapurvaka* – holding your nostrils etc. – may not be necessary for you at the present moment, though they have their own value.

So the *asana* should be a seated, consistent posture. If you cannot sit for a long time in one position, with a straight spine, etc., you can, in the beginning stages at least, sit near a wall which is perpendicular to the ground. This is a convenient position, and you will not feel much of an ache in the back because of your leaning on the wall; but it should be perpendicular, not slanting. And then this breathing process gradually, together with the recitation of OM, *pranava*, if possible with a mild sonorous sound by which systematic, harmonious, calm process of chanting of OM. You will create within yourself a vibration which you will yourself feel as a creeping ant through your nerves. As if a mild electric shock is given to you, you'll feel a sensation through the entire body when you chant OM without any kind of occupation in your mind but with a feeling of devotion to the great ideal before you. This chanting of OM may done every day, for fifteen minutes, before your concentration on the object.

Then, the crucial point comes in – the nature of the object of meditation and the way in which you have to adjust your consciousness to that location and structure of the object of meditation. Here you are face to face with a problem. The earlier stages may look simpler – *asana*, *pranayama* and *pratyahara* even may be regarded in any way, the outer court of yoga. When you come to meditation proper, you are in the inner court. Here, initiation is necessary; mere book reading may not be insufficient. Whatever may be your study, however vast it be, that may not be sufficient because here you are facing a difficulty which cannot easily be explained in textbooks. You may study the biology, the anatomy of a lion, but you will not be able to face it though you are a master of anatomy. You know what the lion is made of, its psychology also is known to you if you have studied a lot about it, but you cannot go near it, in spite of all your knowledge of how its body is made and how it thinks etc. So, likewise, any amount of academic knowledge here may not be adequate to the purpose. A professorial understanding is one thing, and a practical ability to handle the situation is a different thing altogether; like rowing a boat even – you may know the art theoretically, but you cannot row the boat in the water.

So, here comes the necessity for a spiritual initiation by a competent Guru. Any amount of study is not sufficient; and you have to be very honest here, and don't merely pat yourself, imagining that you can stand on your own legs. That is not possible, because you will face such difficulties that you will not even be able to understand them. The initiation process is not merely a teaching which you receive from your Guru, but it is something more. The Guru does not merely give a lecture to you when he initiates you; he also infuses into you an energy of his own will. This is something very important to note; there is a difference between

a Guru initiating a disciple and a professor lecturing in a college – there is no connection whatsoever. You are not merely receiving some information from the Guru – you are receiving something deeper, vital and living; and here the will of the Guru may be said to be operating in your own will, and, in a very important sense, the Guru thinks through a disciple. Sometimes this process is called *shaktipatha* – the descent of Guru’s power into the personality of the disciple. Any amount of teaching verbally was not enough for Arjuna. There was a higher need felt later on, and you know what happened and what Sri Krishna had to do.

The art of meditation is the final touch you give to the whole process of spiritual practice. Which object are you going to concentrate upon? Normally, this object is chosen for you by the Guru. Are you going to meditate on God when you are here for meditation? No one can conceive God – ordinarily. But I may remove this fear from your mind by giving you a lesser and easier definition of God, for practical purposes. Whatever God be as He is Himself, whatever the Absolute be as It is in Itself, that need not deter you from embarking upon this fruitful art of meditation. Actually, for the purpose of yoga which is a psychological technique, the object of concentration – which you may consider as your God, of course – is a thing outside which nothing has to be, can be, or ever is. God is something outside which nothing exists – this is a simpler definition of God. You know the story in the Mahabharata, in the Adi Parva, wherein there is described the tournament which Dronacharya conducted for testing the students – the Kauravas and the Pandavas – and he hung a little wooden bird on the branch of a tree and he asked these boys to shoot the eye of the bird. He asked everyone, “Look, what do you see?” Someone said, “I am seeing a tree with many branches, and a bird kept there with a dot on its eye, of blackish colour. The *acharya* said, “You’re unfit, get out! You are seeing so many things.” And another said, “I am seeing the bird tied on a branch and also I see the black spot.” “No good, get out!” he said, “You are seeing so many things.” Then another he stood up and said, “I am seeing the bird.” “Oh, no good, go!” It was Arjuna who said, “I am seeing nothing, only the spot; I am seeing only the black spot. I see nothing else,” he said. “Here you are, start. Go ahead, attack!” he said. So, the concentration of the mind of Arjuna was so intense that his consciousness got united with that particular spot of concentration and he was not aware even of the bird, let alone the branches and the tree and the many people around.

Now, for the purpose of your spiritual meditation, the God of your meditation is ‘that something’ which is the whole reality for you. Remember this here again: a God for you is that which is the entire reality – it is a total substance. It is that which includes everything that you want in this world. This is, again, an emotional aspect which you are to infuse into this object, because you cannot concentrate on an object which you cannot love emotionally. Again I mention to you this is not a machine that you are operating, but an organising of your own total being that is surging forth in the direction of the object, and not merely an object. It is a soul-filled ideal. A compilation of whatever is desirable in this world will have to be seen in that object. This object, whatever be that object, is my God, whom I have chosen for the purpose of my meditation; it is not merely something



among many other things that I have taken. When you love a thing wholeheartedly, it is not any more one thing among many things – it is the only thing. Intense lovers see the total reality in their objects, and no other objects exist there – that only exists, and you die for it. Unless the whole of reality is concentrated in that object, you cannot concentrate on it, you cannot love it – so love and concentration go together. You cannot concentrate on a thing for which there you have no love; and it is not a mere ordinary love. It is a love where the passion of the spirit gets roused to such an extent that it is inundated by itself and it sees itself wholly in the object.

So, the object of your meditation should have a double characteristic. One: outside which nothing can be, nothing has to be – it is the only thing before you. Secondly: it is the object of your emotional satisfaction. “I love it, and I cannot love anything else. It is the dearest object for me. I will die for it.” And all lovers die for their objects, because they see the total reality there and nothing else exists for them. This is your God. Now, a psychologically conceived totality of reality becomes a necessity in the earlier stages, though the ontological reality is far off from you. As these subjects will be dealt with by our Professor Yavdekar, I don’t touch upon these things. There is a distinction between ontological reality and psychologically-conceived infinite, which also is an essentiality in the earlier stages, for the purpose of spiritual meditation.

## Chapter 8

### CREATION AND LIFE AFTER DEATH

The Bhagavadgita is a *moksha-shastra*, a scripture on the science of the liberation of the spirit. Thus it follows the course of the return process along the same lines as the evolutionary process of the descent of the soul from the Supreme Being. The first six chapters may be said to be engaged in an exposition of self-discipline from the individual point of view, the integration of the human personality and the preparation of the whole man for the greater task which is yet to come – namely, the at-one-ment of the individual with the set-up of the universe. Some of the interpreters and commentators on the Bhagavadgita hold that the first six chapters have a relevance to the significance of the term '*twam*' in the famous Upanishadic passage – *tat twam asi*. The next six chapters pertain to the characteristic of '*tat*', or That, and the last six chapters are confined to the exposition of the process of the union of the two, signified by the term '*asi*', That Thou Art. Thou That Are, to put it another way – *twam tat asi*. So this *twam* is in the first six chapters, *tat* in the next six, and *asi* in the last six. This is one of the opinions held by certain interpreters like Madhusudana Saraswati and commentators of that category. However, there seems to be some point in this opinion that the first six chapters are concerned with the discipline of the person, which culminates in the art of concentration, meditation – *dhyana-yoga*, which is the theme of the sixth chapter.

Now, if we can remember again the scheme of the entire process of the descent of the evolutes in the cosmological process from the higher realities, we would realise that this individuality, this personality, this so-called 'I-consciousness' of ours is a phenomenal appearance. The individual essence itself may not be phenomenal, but what we call the principle of individuality – characteristics which go to constitute the isolated individuality of ours – these externalising features are phenomenal in their nature because it is not true that the individual is totally cut off from the universe. This will be clear and obvious to us if we know how we came from the higher regions. So, the study of cosmology is the background and the rock-bottom, as it were, of any kind of study in philosophy, and certain modern thinkers have held that metaphysics is a critique of cosmologies. This is something very interesting, and without knowledge of the cosmological process it will be difficult for us to know where we are standing today. From the position we are occupying at this moment, we have to ascend further, gradually, through the stages by which we have come from the highest status – the Supreme Being. The Bhagavadgita, from the seventh chapter onwards, right up to the eleventh or the twelfth, occupies itself with this grand subject: the theme of the constitution of the whole universe and its relationship to the creator, Ishvara, Paramatman, Purushottama – the Supreme Being as the director of the whole of creation.

Yesterday, we concluded our studies with a little mention of the five elements, which are the grossest manifestations of the cosmical substance, by a permutation and combination of whose inner constitutions the individuals are

formed – organic or inorganic. Now, the very commencement of the seventh chapter touches upon this principle of the five elements, which are the visible forms of the inner constitution of the universe as it is visible to our eyes. *Bhūmir āpo'nalo vāyuh kham mano buddhir eva ca, ahamkāra itīyam me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā* (Gita 7.4): The outer cloak as it were, of the Creator, is this physical universe, eminently organised by the presence of the Supreme Being.

Here we have a very important task to perform, because now we are entering into certain processes of practice which are more difficult than the ones we passed through earlier during the course of the first six chapters. The discipline of the first six chapters is difficult enough. It is not easy for a person to pass through this course of the first six chapters of discipline, culminating in the art of meditation as described in the sixth chapter. Now, the greater difficulty is before us – our relationship to the universe as a whole, our association with this cosmos and the relevance that obtains between us and God Himself. This is a frightening theme for unprepared minds and persons uneducated in the art of thinking profoundly in this manner, because the world persists in being recognised as an external object due to the force by which the senses work, and most of the theories of knowledge – these processes of the science of epistemology, as they are called – stand on the hypothesis that the world is outside and the whole perceptual process becomes meaningful only if the object is somehow outside the knowing subject. A sort of outsideness of the object is necessary for seeing any meaning at all in the process of perception or visualisation of the object of the senses. The knowledge of the world is the knowledge of the object of the senses. So in all perception which would be considered as purely empirical in its character, the world is taken for granted as something totally outside us, and to establish any kind of meaningful relationship with that which is entirely outside us would appear to be a futile endeavour, because that which is totally outside us bears no connection with us. We cannot even know that the world exists if it is wholly outside.

So the Vedanta epistemology, especially, goes deeper into the implications of the very process of perception. The knowledge of the world is not such a simple process – it is not so innocent as it appears on the surface. We do not just jump into the world and see that it is there; there is some complicated implication behind and underneath this outer association of our personality through the senses with the objects of the world, the world as a whole. It is not true that the world is really outside us. The five elements are not objects in such a way as to be totally disassociated from even our sense organs. A little inkling of this suggestion was given to us in the third chapter of the Gita when we were told: *Gunah guneshu vartante*. The very characteristic of the senses as an impulsion towards contact with objects is indicative of there being a common feature between themselves and the objects outside, and it was made clear to us that the perception of the world by the senses, or rather, the contact of the senses with the objects outside, is a colliding of the *gunas* of *prakṛiti* with the *gunas* of *prakṛiti*. The *sattva-rajastamas* combination, which is the constituent assembly of the individual, comes in contact with its own expanse in the form of a so-called

world presented outside. *Na tad asti pṛthivyām vā divi deveṣu vā punaḥ, sattvam prakṛtijair muktaṁ yad ebhiḥ syāt tribhir guṇaiḥ* (Gita 18.40): Nothing in the world, nothing in the individual, nothing in heaven and earth can be outside the purview and operation of these three *gunas* of *prakṛiti*. Not even heaven is outside the operation of these *gunas*. The heaven of Indra, or all the planes of existence, even up to *Satya-loka* – whatever is in this physical world, whatever is in you and me and everywhere – all these things are the permutation and combination of these building bricks of the cosmos: *sattva, rajas, tamas*. Thus the perception of the world, the knowledge we have of an external object is a very interesting phenomenon taking place of which we, as individuals, do not have a complete picture before our mind's eye. The world beholds itself, as it were, in all processes of perception, and it is not 'A' or 'B' looking at a 'C' outside, unconnected with it. The world is not a 'C' outside 'A' or 'B' as an individual. So, in the process of the practise of yoga in its higher reaches, especially from the beginning of the seventh chapter, we are performing a Hanuman's feat of leaping across this ocean of the large expanse of the cosmos and recognising the basic fraternity that is there already, from time immemorial, between ourselves as subjects and the whole cosmos, the world outside, as an object of ours.

I will bring our minds back to the earlier stages of our studies, lest we may forget them. We began with the first chapter where we are confronting the social atmosphere of the Mahabharata, and it was all a chaotic presentation before the distracted mind of Arjuna, due to which he was disarmed completely, psychologically, and he found himself in a social chaos and an unintelligible relationship between himself and his kith and kin and society in general. This problem had to be tackled by the Samkhya mentioned in the second chapter and explained further in the third chapter. A right understanding of the nature of human relationship was essential, and it became necessary further on to know the nature of one's own personality also. Thus, the social relationships got integrated with the existence of the individual whose coming together may be said to constitute a society.

Then we come to the harder task of relating the individual itself with its original, from where it has come – the cosmos. This is a third step, as it were, we are taking, and a more difficult step because the subject of epistemology is a crucial theme in all philosophical studies, and it is an essential introduction to all further studies in the philosophical fields. It is a very difficult theme and much has been said and written about it – still people are saying and writing about it, without coming to a final conclusion as to how we come in contact with the world at all, and how we know that anything is there at all. Even today we are not able to come to a final conclusion about it because the doctrines of philosophy vary from each other for obvious reasons, and we are still at loggerheads as far as finals are concerned.

However, it has to be accepted finally that, from the point of view of at least the implications of the possibility of knowing anything at all, the knowledge process should imply, suggest and include a kind of kinship between us and that which is known by us. The Bhagavadgita is explicit in this matter. There is

nothing outside this Supreme, Creative Principle: *Mattaḥ parataram nānyat kiñcid asti* (Gita 7.7); *aham kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayas tathā* (Gita 7.6). These magnificent proclamations may sometimes go above our heads; we cannot understand how this could be – how God could be everywhere. Man’s mind is weak and is not endowed with that much strength as to enable it know how God could be everywhere and, yet, we also could be there at the same time to know that God is there. How could God be an object of our consciousness, of our perception? How could the world be there at all as something that we know through our senses? This difficulty has been obviated by the Samkhya doctrine mentioned in earlier chapters, and now we are going deeper into a vital connection that we have, as souls rather than as bodies, with the vitality of the whole creation.

In the beginning, at the commencement of this seventh chapter almost, we are not introduced into the principle of God or Creator very much, though it is mentioned here and there in a scattered manner. A vista of a larger expanse of the universe is opened up before our eyes, wider than our individuality and even our social relations, and we are merely told that God created the world. The principle of creation, or the hypothesis of God creating the world, keeps us in a position of awe, wonder, and our devotion to God as the creator of the universe is sometimes called, in certain fields of theology, *aisvarya-pradhana-bhakti* – devotion charged with the spirit of awe, wonder and majesty as we would look upon a judge of the Supreme Court or a monarch ruling an empire, who is far above us in power, knowledge, and in every respect. The concept of God in religions, at least in the earlier stages, seems to involve a sense of awe and a distance between us and God. This distance is maintained in the seventh chapter, though the distance gets diminished and narrowed down, as it were, as we go further and further in the eighth, ninth, tenth and eleventh chapters, until we reach the eleventh where the narrowness gets abolished completely in the commingling of us with the All-Being. The seventh chapter therefore introduces the principle of the Creator, who is not mentioned at all in the earlier chapters up to the sixth, because the first six chapters seem to be confined to the discipline of the individual which is very essential for even knowing something about there being such a thing as Creator himself, or God.

Now we are introduced into the cosmological principle of creation and the Creator, which theme was essential in the earlier stages of mere discipline of the personality which culminated in *dhyana*, in the sixth chapter. God Is! And when we are passing through a mere disciplinary process, such things need not be told us. When we are in the earlier stages of our schooling, we do not even know who is ruling our country, we do not know that there is a government at all, because we need not be concerned with such things which are beyond our heads and which do not constitute part and parcel of our education in the earlier stages. Later on, we begin to study geography and history and political science, civics, and then we come to know something more about the environment and the ruling powers, and so on. So in the first six chapters we are in a preparatory stage, and so we were not introduced into that higher area which is cosmology,

theology, and so on – to which we are now introduced, from the beginning of the seventh chapter. But there is something higher than these five elements. *Apareyam itas tvanyām prakṛtiṁ vidधि me parām, jīvabhūtām* (Gita 7.5): There is a subtle organising power behind the physical elements. The universe is not dead; it is not constituted of inanimate matter as it may be told us in the earlier stages of our study. There is nothing dead and insentient in this cosmos. Everything is vibrant with energy, everything is moving, everything is flowing, everything is living. In some form or other, in some incipient potentiality of consciousness, it manifests living characteristics. The Soul of the Universe vibrates through even the minutest atom and the electron, which perhaps explains the purposiveness that we recognise in the movement of even the littlest of things in the world. There is a teleological movement of everything in the world, there is a purpose in everything – it is not a dead mechanism that operates, though that appears to be our interpretation of things from purely a spatio-temporal point of view. Thus, the existence of God becomes a necessary postulate in earlier stages – a hypothesis, you may say – to explain the purposefulness in creation and the nature of the very evolutionary process of the cosmos.

These things raise doubts in our mind. Arjuna had difficulties; he was startled by these enunciations. (I mentioned to you, I'm passing through these chapters very very briefly, partly because we have very little time, partly because already I have gone through these chapters in greater detail, in a different session whose themes you can study in a printed form.) These mentions made in the seventh chapter raise questions of a cosmological nature: What is the universe? What is the world? What is the soul? What is God? What is creation? When we are told that we are there, the cosmos, the universe is there, we are related to it some way, organically, and the universe is created by God, many cosmological questions arise in the mind – *kim tad brahma kim adhyātmaṁ kim karma puruṣottama, adhibhūtā ca kim proktaṁ adhidaivaṁ kim ucyate* (Gita 8.1) – and so on and so forth. *Adhiyajñāḥ kathāṁ ko'tra* (Gita 8.2) – Questions of this type are raised.

There is an indubitable existence of ourselves; there is the individual existence of ours:

- I am there, you are there, there and we are many people here in this world.
- There is this world outside.
- There is a Creator of this world.
- There is a relationship between this Creator and this world.
- There is a relationship between you and the world.
- There is a relationship between you and the Creator.
- And, number 7, number 8. Many other involved questions arise concerning the mutual relations of these categories mentioned: the Supreme Creator, the universe created, the individual, including human society, and the mutual relationship among them.

This is the commencement of the eighth chapter, which concludes with a short enunciation, a narration of the life beyond this world, studies which are

comprehended in what is called eschatology – life after death. The world is involved in a cosmical relationship, as you and I are. These terms are differently explained by different interpreters and students of the Bhagavadgita. There is no uniformity among the understanders of these terms. *Brahma, karma, adhiyajna, adhibhuta, adhidaiva, adhyatma* are intriguing terms into which we can read any meaning from our philosophical, predilection point of view. And if we read different commentators, they will tell different things to us – all of which may be right in their own way, and yet there are more things to be said about them than perhaps are available in existing commentaries. There is an interrelationship of everything. The world is a structure of interrelated constituents. Everything is connected to everything else. In this sense we may say that everything is everywhere.

A very homely and easily intelligible analogy that I may place before you to understand this interconnectedness is the organism of our own personality, the *sarira*, which is the illustration given by such theologians and philosophers like Sri Ramanuja. God is *sariri*, and the whole creation is *sarira*. The relationship between the universe and God is *sarira-sariri-sambandha*. What is the relationship between the body and the soul? There is some sort of a very clear, intelligible relationship between the body and the soul, though we may not identify one with the other. The body is not the soul, but we cannot keep the body here and the soul there; they are so much related that even the word ‘relation’ is a poor word to describe what sort of association is there between the soul and the body. They are one, as it were, yet they are not one. A kind of non-separate existence is enjoyed by the soul and the body, notwithstanding the fact that we cannot say that the one is the other. This is, perhaps, the viewpoint of Ramanuja – the theologians who hold that the universe is organically related to the Supreme Being, call Him Vishnu, Narayana, Brahma, Vishnu, Siva or the Supreme Being, or any name we would like. I do not wish to stretch this point too much to the breaking apotheosis of it, and for all practical purposes it will be enough for us to know that there is a non-separate relation of the whole of creation with God, which includes our relationship also. The words *adhidaiva, adhyatma* and *adhibhuta* are interpreted, as I mentioned, in many ways. In a subtle way, the Bhagavadgita itself gives the definition of these principles.

*Akṣaram brahma paramam* (Gita 8.3) – the Imperishable Eternal is the Supreme Brahman, the Absolute, Creator Supreme, the Infinite Eternal. This is Brahman, in Sanskrit language. Brahman is the total, all-comprehensive Absolute-Being, *aksharam*, and it is imperishable – *svabhavo’dhyaatmanuchyate*. Here, interpreters differ from one another in what they mean by the terms ‘*svabhava*’ and ‘*adhyatma*’. *Adhyatma* is the *pratyak chetana* or the internal consciousness, the subjective awareness we may say, literally understood. *Svabhava* is natural disposition. The natural disposition of a being is the *adhyatma* or the subjectivity of that being. I am giving you a non-committal definition without going into the details of it because you can read any meaning into them according to your theological standpoints, or rather, philosophical predispositions. Or more properly, to make it more clear to you as novitiates in

this study, we may say that *adhyatma* is the individualised consciousness – consciousness locked up in the individuality of the person, which is the determinant of our *svabhava*, and which decides our *svadharma* also. Our duty as *svadharma* will be decided by our *svabhava*, or our essential nature as *adhyatma*, the individual principle in a particular location in the scheme or stage of evolution, a point to be underlined.

*Bhūtabhāvodbhavakaro visargaḥ karmasamjñitah* (Gita 8.3) – *karma* is understood to be action, Everybody knows what this word means – action. *Karma, karma, karma* – it is understood in a thousand ways. “Oh, it is my *karma*,” people say when they wail, weep over something, by which they mean their fate, or rather, more properly, the effect of what they did in the past, or what they do, what they have done, and so on. But more profound thinkers have understood by this word ‘*karma*’ here in this context – *visarga*, or the very process of the emanation of things from the Supreme Being. *Visarga karmasamjñitah* – the cosmic action, the original, universal impulse to diversify and project itself into this multiplicity of creation, this original creative will, as it were, may be said to be the *visarga*, the coming out of beings that is the *karma*, the original *yajna*, the first action. This is one interpretation, and I am not trying to go into the other interpretations which may not be necessary for us – *bhūtabhāvodbhavakaro visargaḥ karmasamjñitah. Adhibhūtam kṣaro bhāvaḥ* (8.4): All the perishable forms in creation are the *kshara*. *Kshara* means perishable, transient, passing. *Adhibhūtam kṣaro bhāvaḥ puruṣaś cādhideivatam*. Here again there are varieties of understanding of the meaning of this statement. *Adhideiva* is the superintending principle, the divinity transcending the subject-object relationship, the consciousness that is the connecting link between us and the world outside, the seer and the seen. These are all very difficult things to understand and will not be grasped merely by a single utterance of them. However, let them be told at least once so that a vibration may be produced for further studies. This is perhaps the most knotty point in the Bhagavadgita as far as the cosmology of it is concerned.

*Bhūtabhāvodbhavakaro visargaḥ karmasamjñitah, adhibhūtam kṣaro bhāvaḥ puruṣaś cādhideivatam adhiyajñoham evātra*. Here again we have a difficulty in understanding what *adhiyajna* is. Sometimes it is held that the whole field of performance in any manner whatsoever is *adhiyajna* – the divinity presiding over, superintending over, transcending, controlling, deciding, determining and judging. All activity in the universe is God as *adhiyajna*, the Supreme Being who receives the fruits of all our actions. This whole world is the field of activity. It is *dharmakshetra-kurukshetra*, and this field of action is the field of the performance of duty – *svadharma*. It is, therefore, a field of performance of sacrifice, *yajna*, and therefore it is holy land, the whole creation, this cosmos, this universe, this world, this society, this area which we are occupying is a sacred, sanctified *dharmakshetra* cosmically, where we perform our devout worship to the Almighty in the form of our duties, functions – whatever they be, whatever the shape they take. These are very difficult things to understand, but very essential, so that a correct understanding of the mutual relationship of these



principles among themselves will give us a strength to face the world and provide us with that internal inner energy by which we can direct our soul-consciousness in the direction of the object of our meditation. We are thrilled, enthused, stirred and stimulated by these descriptions because we know we are a cosmic citizen. We are not a man or woman living in a corner somewhere, in some state of India – we are a citizen of the whole of creation. We have, therefore, the support of the angels in heaven and the gods everywhere and the Supreme Being Himself. Thus, meditation becomes a cosmic activity. Yoga is a universal performance on our part, and this is the message of solace that the Bhagavadgita gives us.

Now, the Bhagavadgita still keeps God away from us a little bit, and does not want us to jump into God immediately, though much has been said about our relationship to creation and the existence of God as the Supreme Creator. There is a necessity felt by us to understand what happens to us after we quit this body. “Well, I understand what you say. Here I am, here in this vast world, this universe, and the Great God is there as the Creator. Yes, perfectly okay; but when I leave this world, what happens to me?” This is the subject of eschatology – the life after death subject. “When a person dies, what happens?” This was the question of Nachiketas as we have it recorded there in the Kathopanishad. What happens when we quit this world? When the soul leaves this body, where does it go?

*Yam yam vāpi smaran bhāvaṃ tyajaty ante kalevaram, tam tam evaiti* (Gita 8.6). Here is a psychology of the transition of the soul from this body to another realm. Whatever be the determining force behind the psychic operation in us, especially at the time of the passing, that would decide our future. Precisely stated, whatever we deeply think at the time of passing will decide where we go and what we will be. Now, this may raise a question in our minds. “I must think some noble thoughts at the time of death so that I may go to some higher region, if not God Himself. So, I must have a holy thought in my mind, but I am not going to die today – everybody knows this. I will not die today, maybe after many, many years – so, there is time enough.” Here is a terrible delusion in our minds. Nobody will ever believe that today is the last day – it cannot be for obvious reasons. There are forms of logic which substantiate this view that it is not today definitely; it is not tomorrow either, and not the day after tomorrow. “These are frightening things, don’t tell me all these things. Oh! The day after tomorrow, horror! It is after many, many years, thirty, forty, fifty years. So the last thought, if it is going to determine my future, I shall look after it afterwards; now, let me live any kind of life.” This is a delusion. The last thought is not an isolated link, but the fruit of the tree of the whole life that we have led in this world. We cannot have apples from thistles, so if we have sown seeds of thistles, we know what will come out of it. Therefore do not be under the impression that the holy God-thought will come at the end when we have lived a life of abandon, distraction, deceit, and so on.

The last thought is the cumulative outcome of the total force exerted by us throughout our life upon our mind. So it is not the last thought in a chronological

sense; it is only a 'logical last', not the 'historical last' – we have to understand this very clearly. So, do not be under the impression that death is very far, and the last thought shall be taken care of after some time. It is not so. Whatever we have sown will decide what we will reap, and therefore the thoughts, the feelings, the preponderating impulses in us throughout our life will be the determining conditions of our last feeling, last thought. This last thought is not merely a psychological operation; it is a surge of our total being. The nerves will crack, the muscles will melt, as it were, we will feel as if the bones are breaking and the whole of us will rush out of this body. It is not merely shallow thinking as we think that the tree is outside us. This kind of thought is not the thought that will be there at the time of death. It is a shattering of the whole structure of the individuality and a wrenching of oneself with such force that the last thought is not a thought at all in the ordinary psychological sense; it is a surge of whatever we are, and an inundation of our whole being with the cumulative completed form of our whole accumulated ascent throughout our life. We cannot imagine what will happen to us at the time of passing, when the whole of us quits this body. They say, sometimes, it is like 72,000 scorpions stinging at one stroke. This is a frightening illustration given by old grandmothers, touching upon the fact that there are so many nerve currents in our body – not 72,000, even much more. Every one will crack, and if we break one nerve we know what happens to us – we feel it and then know the pain of it – and when 72,000 nerves break, we will know what it means. Such a pain will be felt by the departing spirit because of the attachment which we have to the body, through every cell of our body. We are wholly involved in this body, we have become the body; we are the body itself. Don't be afraid of this! Perhaps we are all more blessed – Swami Sivananda's grace is there! And God will be more merciful, such a cracking of the nerves will not take place. We will happily go to the Supreme Being. Be happy!

So, now, the question of the predicament of the soul after death is taken up towards the end of the eighth chapter, briefly. I will touch upon it in another session.

## Chapter 9

### THE MAJESTY OF GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS

From self-discipline, the Bhagavadgita now takes us to the level of God-Consciousness as its discourse proceeds, and especially in the ninth, tenth and eleventh chapters we reach the climax of the description of this state. Here we seem to find God taking possession of everything. Human individuality and human responsibility do not anymore stand as an outside principle when God begins to rule His kingdom. The kingdom of the *jiva*, the individual, is no more an isolated factor requiring separate attention on the part of the individual. As we noted in earlier stages in the preceding chapters, the Gita concentrated itself upon the training which the individual has to undergo, until there is a complete preparation of oneself for the final onslaught, which is the great yoga of union with the whole cosmos.

We were discussing the other day the implications of the teaching in the eighth chapter. The whole universe is envisaged in various facets as *adhideva*, *adhibhuta*, *adhyatma*, *adhiyajna* etc., all which somehow maintain the position of a transcendent reality. *Akṣaram brahma paramam* (8.3) – the super-cosmic aspect of the Creator is subtly maintained and the facets of the universe, the *adhibhuta*, *adhyatma* and the like mentioned, also seem to give a suggestion that there is a graduated relationship of the individual to all these cosmical levels – which, incidentally, also hinges upon the question of the life of the soul after death.

The peregrination of the individual consciousness through the various stages, which were touched upon in our scheme of cosmological studies, is an interesting part of philosophical studies. Briefly it was told us that the last thought decides the future, and I mentioned that the last thought is not an isolated link but a culmination, a fruit, a maturity, the finality of the total psychological operations of the individual throughout one's life. So it is not a chronologically disassociated last thought, but a logical development of the entire thought process, fructifying in this total thought. We can describe it only in that way – the total thought, and not one among the many thoughts. This complete thought would be the factor that determines the future of the soul. Whatever one aspires for, that one shall attain to. *Yaṁ yaṁ vāpi smaran bhāvaṁ tyajaty ante kalevaram, taṁ tam evaiti* (Gita 8.6). This is a great theme in the studies of the field of psychology, including abnormal psychology, we may say. The soul is supposed to depart from this world, shedding this body, and move in certain directions towards the destination where its unfulfilled longings can find fulfilment and fructification. The law which governs the universe seems to be so precise, mathematical, and exact in its functions that it does not ignore anyone – it does not set aside the longing of even a single psychological operation. Every thought has to fulfil itself – if not today, at least tomorrow. So there is an automatic action taking place in this computer system of the cosmos, and there is no need for another operator behind it. It is self-operating. And this system seems to be so exact and inexorable that preference seems to be given to the strongest of thoughts and feelings, and

the lesser ones receive attention later on, at the proper time and in the proper place.

The Bhagavadgita does not go into great details in this subject, as much as we have in the Upanishads, for instance. There is a brief statement of the exit of the soul. 'The departure of the soul from the body,' is the way we describe things generally, as if we are encaged in this body and we are not this body. As a person may leave his house, we, the real individuals lodged in this tabernacle, leave it one day in order that we may enter a new house which is already constructed for us by the architect who is paid for by God Himself; and already the house is built, the foundation is dug and the entire structure is complete even before we leave this body. Such wondrous mechanism operates in the universe.

But where do we go? – is a crucial question. "Where do I go, and where does anything go?" We will not be taken to that place which we have not desired in our mind, or rather which does not follow as a natural consequence of our thoughts, feelings and actions. The Bhagavadgita will tell us at another place that the consequences of our deeds are not entirely in our hands. And the deed so-called is not merely what we do with our hands and feet, but also what we think and feel and will; all these are actions, perhaps they are real actions. Our deep-seated longings are our actions, more than what our feet do or hands do. And many times our longings are different from the shape taken by our physical activities. Social conditions and many other factors prevent inward longings from manifesting themselves in outward form, and we live a repressed life. But this repression is something like burying a seed in the ground, which will sprout itself forth one day when there is rainfall and a conducive atmosphere is manifest.

Anything can happen to the soul after death. One can be reborn into this world, one can rise to a higher level, a higher region or superior plane of existence, and if we are to follow the trend of the thought given to us in the Upanishad, one can go to heaven and hell also. One can go to *Brahmaloka*, one can move along the *Uttaramarga* or *Dakshinamarga*, the *Aksharadipatha* – the path of light, or the path of smoke – as the Bhagavadgita puts it. We need not go into minor details of these eschatological studies. The point that we may bear in mind is that we have to be very cautious in thinking, feeling, and willing. We should not be fools when we start thinking through our minds, under the impression that we are masters in this world. No individual can be a supreme master here, because of the very fact of a different type of relationship that seems to obtain between ourselves and the whole creation into which we had a peep when we studied the cosmological processes. But, however, we are given a solacing message in the end – "Whoever contemplates the Supreme Being, God Himself, that soul will enter God." There is no need of exit – that soul, which is in permanent communion with the Supreme Master of the Universe, the Sovereign of the Cosmos, the Absolute, *Parabrahma*, *Ishvar* – that consciousness which is in union by yoga with the Eternal Reality will melt into the ocean of existence, here and now. *Atra brahma samaśnute* (Katha 2.3.14); *na tasya prāṇā utkrāmanti* (Brihad. 4.4.6): There is no movement of the *prana* in any external direction to such a soul, and there is no *Uttaramarga*, *Dakshinamarga* or any kind of *marga* –

it is a dissolution of the drop in the ocean, there itself, at the very location of it. Such a liberation is called *sadyo-mukti* – instantaneous liberation.

Otherwise there is a progressive salvation, a graduated ascent through the paths which are described in the Bhagavadgita and the Upanishads. But God is more than all these things that have been told us. The power of God and the jurisdiction of God's operation is so vast that everything that we have said up to this time seems to pale into almost an airy nothing before the glory, the resplendence, the majesty and omnipresence of the Almighty. Nothing is there outside God, nothing is superior to God, nothing external. The absoluteness of the Infinite Being, who no more remains as an extra-cosmic creator but is an immanent reality, is the theme of the chapters to come, so that we seem to be in a more friendly, parental relation with God than a judicial relation or a very distant, remote, unreachable relation with God.

In the earlier stages it appears that God is far away – infinite is the distance between us and God. Often there is doubt whether it is possible for us at all to come in contact with Him. But this doubt is dispelled when the religious consciousness deepens, and it realises that the very being of God is the being of infinitude, eternity, and therefore there is no distance between the soul and God. He is not an unreachable potentate – the monarch ruling in high heavens, but an immediate presence, such that His presence is inseparable from our deepest self, and His language is spoken by our own inner conscience. The language of the Eternal is the voice of our conscience, and our Atman is Brahman.

The ninth chapter reveals before us the majesty of this deepened religious consciousness. In the earlier stages of religion it appears that the world is ruled by powers – divinities, angels, masters, adepts who are hidden behind the forms and the things of the world. There are many divinities, and every form has a divinity which ensouls that particular body. There is an extreme externality of these divine presences in the widespread expanse of the universe before us – this is the outer reach of the religious consciousness. When we go deeper in our studies and experiences in religion, there is felt an inwardisation of this concept. The presence of these divine powers in the far-fetched distance of the cosmos seems also to be in harmony with the deepest essences of all the *jivas*, individuals, so that that which is present in distant space has also to be present immediately in the heart of even the thinker himself. Thus the so-called thing-in-itself, which is incapable of contact by phenomenal means, seems to be at the back of the very person who thinks so. Thus God, the distant being, is also the God who is the soul of the very seeking spirit which feels God as a distant being. Thus the inwardisation leads to the universalisation of this concept. God is not merely a distant master, a creator of the universe that is far away from us, He is also not a secretly hidden light within an individual body, but a large presence which occupies all space and all time so that outside it nothing can be – not the universe, not the individual.

*Ananyāś cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate, teṣāṃ nityābhiyuktānām yogakṣemaṃ vahāmyaham* (Gita 9.22): God protects us, and the succour which we receive from God's presence is an immediate consequence that follows from

an inward union with Him. This verse that I quoted just now is immensely important in our religious studies because that discloses the deeper relationship that is there between man and God. In fact, the word 'relationship' is a poor word; there is no relationship – they are inseparables. Two birds perching on the same tree – say the Upanishads, say the Veda – these two birds are actually not two different birds. The higher self and the lower self may appear to be two birds sitting on the same tree no doubt, but we know very well that the higher and the lower are not two distinct birds. The lower is included in the higher, and thus the other bird does not stand spatially away from the bird which is the bound soul. But here we have only a symbology of a psychological and logical distinction that seems to be there between man and God. There is no spatial distance, and there is no chronological history of the distance.

There is immediate action following from deep meditation on God – 'immediate' is the word. Timeless is God's existence, and timeless, therefore, is God's action in His operation. Timeless is He because He is also spaceless. Hence, the grace of God is a non-spatial and non-temporal gift. Inasmuch as it is non-temporal, it is instantaneous – just here and now. There is not the time-gap of even a second, because there is no time in God. So when the soul, the seeker, the *yogin*, the aspirant, the devotee timelessly, spacelessly unites itself with this timeless, spaceless Being, there is a timeless and spaceless consequence that follows. There is an immediate fulfilment of all that is essential; there is a flood of all that one needs. This verse has been understood in many ways by different types of understanding. God provides us with every kind of need and necessity – not even a thousand mothers can equal Him in compassion and in love for us. The mothers of the world are nowhere before this Supreme Parent, because the love that proceeds from God in respect of us is the love that emanates from every corner of the universe. It is not one person like another person. A mother is one person, and even if there are ten-thousand mothers, they are only in some place. But this is a single mother who works from every corner; every nook and cranny, every particle of creation responds when God speaks. *Sarvā diśo balim asmai haranti* (Chhand. 2.21.4) says the Chhandogya Upanishad. The quarters of the world begin to pour upon us the tribute which God sends to us. A single thought, which is the total surrender of the whole of one's personality to this God-Being, evokes a response which is eternal and non-spatial, and an abundance follows – which the mind of man cannot contain, which the intellect of man cannot describe, and all the treasuries of the world cannot find place to keep – such is the wealth that God can pour upon us. All the lockers in the universe cannot contain this treasure, if God pours upon us this wealth that He has, which is unending, unthinkable, most glorious. Can we find a more solacing, comforting message in any vision than this great verse: *ananyāś cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate, teṣāṃ nityābhiyuktānām yogakṣemaṃ vahāmyaham*: I shall provide you with a cup of tea; I shall give you a spoon of sugar.

There was a Brahmin who was a great devotee of the Bhagavadgita – this is a story which touched me deeply, and perhaps it has a great meaning. He was a great devotee of this verse: *ananyāś cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate, teṣāṃ*

*nityābhiyuktānām yogakṣemaṁ vahāmyaham*. He was so confident of the help that he would receive from the Almighty that he was carefree in life, poverty stricken though he was. Practically, he was living a life of begging from the neighbourhood. Yet he was so confident that he would receive what he wants because of the promise that the Almighty gives in this great ordinance. One day he had nothing to eat; second day he went starving; third day there was nothing to eat, children were crying, the mother in the house was weeping. "Is God dead, is He alive? What is the meaning of your *sloka*? Throw out this Bhagavadgita," said the old mother. The poor man was flabbergasted, he wept, "Is this proclamation false? There is no truth in this statement?" Down goes the Bhagavadgita – he struck that verse with a nail. Those days, scriptures were written on a palm-leaf, not a printed paper like this. He struck with a nail the verse written on a palm-leaf, tore it up, threw it away and went out in disgust that no God exists. "We are dying and nothing comes – and yet, there is this promise." The old man went; very interesting story for you to hear. He went weeping in the streets. The story goes that one boy came running with a bag of rice on his back and with some rations and many other things on his head – a large hoard – and threw it on the verandah of the house, but his tongue was bleeding. The mother of the house came out and asked, "Who are you? What is it that you are bringing?" "These are the rations sent by your master; the father of the home has sent this – I will go." "Thank you very much, but why are you bleeding? What happened to your tongue?" "Oh," the boy said, "I was a little delayed in bring you these things, and your man was so angry with me that he tore my tongue." "Oh, I see. What a cruel fellow! I did not know this." He vanished – the boy vanished. After the old man came home, the lady was down upon him. "What happened, are you mad? You tore the tongue of that boy because he came a little late?" The old man said, "Which boy? I never sent any boy." Then the lady described the whole story. The old man burst into tears, cried, and then told the lady, "From today, you are my Guru, you had *darshan* of Lord Krishna; I had not that fortune." Who else could have brought this costly stuff, and this indication of the torn tongue shows that it was nothing but divine dispensation that so grandly operated. God is never unkind, He is never unjust, He is never cruel, He never does harm to anybody – such is God.

There is some sort of message that we seem to receive from the meaning that we can read between the lines in the ninth and the tenth chapters – everywhere He is present, sometimes more pronounced in His manifestations, sometimes not so manifest. *Yad yad vibhūtimat sattvaṁ śrīmad ūrjitam eva vā, tat tad evāvagaccha tvam mama tejom'śasambhavam* (Gita 10.41): Wherever there is exaltation of any kind, power, knowledge, capacity, whatever it is, a super-normal manifestation of anything in this world, it may be artistic capacity, literature, music, administration, whatever it can be – where there is a super-normal expression of this characteristic or endowment, know thou, I am present there." Not that He is not present anywhere else; this will be seen in the eleventh chapter that He is present even there where He is not pronouncedly present or markedly visible.

We are taken gradually to giddy heights where God's preponderance, superintendence and all-inclusiveness engulfs not merely human individuality and the isolated existence of *jivas*, but absorbs all of our rules and regulations, predilections, studies, power and knowledge into His bosom, so that He stands unparalleled. There is no second, either above or below or right or left or anywhere. This is the might of God, and there is no one to behold this might except He Himself. It is the Glory of God, beheld by God only, and He sees Himself, He loves Himself; He is what He Is. To this height Arjuna's mind has to be taken, and the minds of every one of us have to be led. Then we shall no more feel a necessity to exist as we are today. The love of this body, the greed after self-justification, this craving of the *jivas* will no more feel the necessity to receive recognition from anywhere, as a disease would not like to be recognised. This so-called independence of ours can be compared to an illness, like a carbuncle that has grown on the Universal All-Comprehensiveness. Who would justify it? Who would like to maintain it for a long time? This is a disease, but as one can love one's own disease, so one can love one's own ego, this body and everything that is connected with it.

Deluded man, totally oblivious to his glorious goal, foolish in his pursuits, regards himself as all-master in this world, which may carry on and continue for some time until God takes up his rod and tolerates it no more. And there cannot be a greater evil in this world than self-justification. Every other evil follows from this: audacity, tyranny, despotism – all these follow from self-justification. A little bit of long rope is given by God Himself to every one of us, so we may live in our own fool's paradise for the time being and we may rule in the hell that we have created here. That is okay; for some time, enjoy your hell. But when *adharma*, incomparable *adharma* which is this egotism of man, goes to heights, to the breaking-point, then God Himself cannot tolerate it anymore. He takes up His cudgels and there is a dissolution of the cosmos. And, when He takes up the reigns of rule in His Hands, the rule in the kingdom of individuals not only does not operate, but powerfully gets communed with this universal rule of the kingdom of the Absolute.

All this is told to Arjuna and he weeps, "Mighty Lord, I cannot understand what You are speaking. I am in a state of consternation, my mind is not working, I do not know where I am standing. You are describing a glory in a manner which my mind, my reason, is not expected to contain or understand. What is this 'might', this 'glory', this 'grandeur', this 'completeness', this 'absoluteness' – it is possible for me to behold this?" That is the question in the earlier verses of the eleventh chapter. "Who can behold It?" This eye which sees through the microscope or the telescope is not the instrument to see the Almighty. We have but only these eyes, these two eyes. They cannot see that All-being. An integral vision is necessary to behold this integrality of existence. The superficial, phenomenal eye sees diversity everywhere, but distinction between the seer and the seen is not the tool that you can employ in the vision of the Absolute. So the Great Lord says, "You cannot behold this Being, this Mighty Form of Mine, with these two eyes. I shall endow you with a third eye." This third eye is an integral



intuition, the total consciousness, the whole of our being welling up into action – the Atman beholding Brahman. That miracle seems to have taken place by some magical action of the Almighty, and we cannot understand how it took place. We have only to accept it; it has been there, it is there, and there is nothing more to say about it.

What did Arjuna see? Well, when we say ‘saw’ or ‘see’, we should understand that it is not ‘seeing’ with these two eyes, because it is already mentioned that the two eyes of man, the mortal eyes, cannot behold the Immortal. He saw a miracle. These sentences we are using are inadequate to the purpose; we are using fragile words of mortal language for describing the characteristics of Immortal Existence. Like a frog in the well describing the ocean – this is how we are describing the Almighty. Whatever be our description, it falls short, badly, from that Mighty, Super-Nature. It is impossible to describe the meaning of the eleventh chapter. It just stands unparalleled in poetic excellence, and an exuberance of philosophic abundance. We have to read it for ourselves; our soul has to read it – not merely our eyes. Vyasa, the great author of the Bhagavadgita, goes into raptures, as it were, in giving a description of this rapturous experience of Arjuna, and poetry is the only way of expressing such miracles and wonders and marvels and majesties. Prose is poor – poetry is supreme here, and the poetry in Sanskrit here goes to its heights. When we are in a state of rapture, we speak anything that we like – any word that comes from us is holy at that time. It is the Divine Word that we speak because we are in ecstasy of Self-possession, God-Possession – it is a Veda that comes from our mouth when God possesses us and we speak at that moment. This great vision is difficult to have because God is ‘All’ and He cannot tolerate the presence of another ‘all’ external to Him. There cannot be two kingdoms of God. If we establish our own kingdom here, on earth, vying with the eternal kingdom of the Absolute, then we may rule our kingdom well in the way we are having here in it; but this empire of ours cannot reach that divine empire.

*Na vedayajñādhyayanair na dānair na ca kriyābhir na tapobhir ugraiḥ, evamrūpaḥ śakya ahaṁ nṛloke draṣṭum tvadanyena kurupravīra* (Gita 11.48): Not anything that man can do or an individual is capable of, can be considered as adequate for this purpose. What is necessary is the total abnegation of oneself. God does not require anything from us – no *prasad* or sacrament. Nothing can be offered to God because everything belongs to Him. There is nothing with us because we possess nothing here. What can we offer to Him? Perhaps the last thing that we have is our own individuality, our egoism, our personality, our being. God asks that we may be offered to Him, and not anything that we may have. He does not want a temple to be built for Him, a house of brick and mortar, calling it a chapel or a church. He does not want any offering because all these offerings are not our properties. We are offering to Him what does not belong to us – this is not a charity. But what we consider as our property is ourself only. The last thing that we can part with, the dearest and the nearest of our possessions, that object which we love most, it is our own self – let this love melt into God-love.

*Bhaktiyā tvananyayā śakya aham evamvidho* (Gita 11.54): This *bhakti*, this devotion spoken of here, is not a little lip sympathy that we show to God. It is not a bowing of the head, it is not the folding of the hands or the striking of the cheeks – it is the melting of ourselves in the menstruum of God-Being. We can only speak, but our reason cannot grasp what all this means. *Matkarmakṛṇ matparamo madbhaktaḥ saṅgavarjitaḥ, nirvairaḥ sarva-bhūteṣu yaḥ sa mām eti* (Gita 11.55). Again to repeat, *ananyās cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate, teṣām nityābhīyuktānām yogakṣemaṁ vahāmyaham*. Recite this *sloka* every day – contemplate its meaning. Nobody can harm us. There is nobody who is not under the subjection of God’s rule, and therefore when we are in communion with this Great Master of the World, who can do harm to us? The whole army of God will protect us, provided we are honestly in fraternal relation with Him and we regard Him as All-in-All. In a way, the response from God is proportionate to the response from us in respect of Him. The way in we envisage Him, or contemplate Him, or understand Him, that perhaps is the way in which He will respond. “As you do to Me, so I shall do to you – what you think of Me, that I will think of you – and what you give Me, that I also give you.” If we give ourselves, God will give Himself. God does not give any material prosperity, though He can give that also. But when He Himself gives His Own Being, why should we expect any material prosperity? Do we not think that God is more than all matter, all the wealth of all creation? But God will offer Himself only when we offer ourselves to Him – not before. If we offer only a tidbit or tinsel, the response will be of the same type.

Thus it is that the Self-offering of God is an automatic, instantaneous occurrence as a response to the whole-souled offering of ourselves to Him. Here is *bhakti* reaching its culmination, its logical completion. The word ‘*bhakti*’ is not the proper word to describe this condition. It is not *jnana*, it is not *bhakti*, it is not yoga – it is every blessed thing. When we love a thing with all our soul, with all our heart, with all our being, we do not know how to describe it in our language. It is not devotion, it is not affection – it is something more than all this. Do not use any words from language; it is something more. Thus is the devotion, thus is the *bhakti* that is the surrender, that is the yoga and that is what is expected of us here when we reach the supreme culmination of yoga which is the vision of the Absolute in the Vishvarupa. *Jñātum draṣṭum ca tattvena praveṣṭum ca parantapa* (Gita 11.54): To know It, to visualise It and to enter into It. These are the duties of man, finally. God-realisation is the goal of life. Union with God, entry into God, merging into the Absolute is the final goal of all things everywhere, all beings, living, non-living, visible, invisible.

Thus, yoga is an art of attaining to God-consciousness. The various types of yoga, which are the ways we understand for the purpose of this grand culmination, are described in the twelfth chapter, briefly, later on.

## **Chapter 10**

### **THE ONE SUPREME ABSOLUTE ALONE IS**

The faculties of knowledge and action in the human individual correspond, practically, to the functions of reason, will, emotion, and the impulse to act. We rationally and intellectually consider the pros and cons of a particular step to be taken – this is the rationality behind our way of living. Apart from pure intellectual or rational assessment, there is also a faculty in us which goes by the name of will – volition – which decides and determines a course of action or a purpose to be fulfilled. There is also a very important contributory factor in all of our engagements in life, namely emotion or feeling, and there is also the vigour which impels to act. Practically, the human being is exhausted by these operations: reason, will, emotion, and an impulsion to vibrate as activity in some direction or the other.

The way of life of the human being is also the way in which we live a religious life. Even our practise of yoga and our concept of God, everything for the matter of that which is connected with this, has to be cast in the mould of these endowments. We cannot go beyond the limitations set by these facets of human individuality. In our adventures in life, we operate one or the other of these faculties – sometimes one preponderating over the others, and often, some one faculty assuming such an importance that it may even bury down the other aspects as if they do not exist at all. But we are a blend of all these faculties. It is not wise to over-emphasise any of these, because we are a wholesome, total human organism; and health, whether it is physical or psychological, is to be considered as a balance of our forces – the forces which constitute us, whether they are physical or otherwise.

The religious life that we live is also conditioned by these principles of our psyche, and though it is true that we should harmonise the operations of all these faculties due to certain inborn traits in us, characteristics into which we are born right from the beginning of our life, we are not capable of paying equal attention to all these. There is an automatic preponderance of one or the other of these faculties, so that people are either predominantly intellectual, and the emotions do not play such an important role in them, or they are pre-eminently feelingful, touchy, sentimental, emotional and the reason does not play an important part in their life. There are others who are terribly active, they cannot sit in one place; there is always a tendency to move and do something or the other throughout the day, whatever the reason behind it be, and the feeling also be. There are psychic types who are accustomed to concentrate, and this also sometimes assumes a special importance for some characters. It is rarely we see people with all these faculties in proper proportion – such an integrated individual is difficult to see.

These faculties in the human being are the instruments of the practice of yoga, so that we cannot contact reality except through the apparatus with which we are endowed. These four features mentioned determine and decide our encounter with God, the Supreme Being; and the way in which we visualise the

Supreme Being through these faculties goes by the names of the various yogas: *jnana, yoga, bhakti, karma* and the like. In the Bhagavadgita we have a large detail opened up before us of all these methods of spiritual practice, though we cannot say that anywhere does the Bhagavadgita create a watertight compartment among these procedures or ways of approach. In every verse of the Gita there is a touching of everything practically, and there is no airtight distinction of one from the other. However, to be more precise and to make it more convenient to us, teachers of the Bhagavadgita and interpreters of this gospel have tried to discover instructions and teachings in the Bhagavadgita which accept the employing of these faculties for the purpose of religious living or spiritual practice, and particularly references to some of the verses from the twelfth chapter of the Bhagavadgita which, at least according to certain careful interpreters like the great Madhusudana Saraswati, seem to take into consideration these four yogas, so-called, which adopt the techniques of reason, will, emotion and action.

*Mayyeva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhiṃ niveśaya nivasīsyasi mayyeva ata ūrdhvaṃ na saṃśayaḥ* (Gita 12.8). This is one verse in the twelfth chapter: "Absorb yourself in Me." This has been understood to signify a communion of the soul with the Absolute. *Mayi buddhiṃ niveśaya*: "May your reason be united with My Being." Our principle faculty of knowing is reason, for all practical purposes, and when the reason is dissolved in a higher reason, the individual practically is swallowed-up in the larger dimension of this Infinitude. So in this verse of the Bhagavadgita in the twelfth chapter, we seem to be told the final stroke in yoga – a jump into the Ocean of All-Being, and a dissolution of one's self in the All-Consuming Reality. But this is a hard job. No mortal who considers himself or herself as a human being can have the strength to embrace the ocean or the fire of God without terror for the affirming feature or the character of individuality. Nobody would like to die even for the sake of God Himself; they would like to live, whatever be the background of it. Dying is a very difficult thing. You cannot immolate yourself for the sake of God even. That is the last sacrifice that we would be prepared to do, and nothing can be more fearsome than that. And any argument that God is all things will not be adequate here. "Let God be anything, but I will not do this sacrifice." Bhagavan Sri Krishna, the teacher of the Bhagavadgita, seems to know this weakness of human nature, and as a good master, a school master, a psychologist or a teacher, He would not expect the student to do what the student is not able to understand or do. So the teaching goes, "If this is not possible, you can take to repeated practise of this type of concentration." This *abhyasa-yoga*, or repetition of concentration, is akin to the technique suggested to us in such methods as we have in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali for instance. *Atha cittam samādhātuṃ na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram, abhyāsayogena tato mām icchāptuṃ dhanañjaya* (Gita 12.9): "If you cannot so forcefully unite your whole being with Me, try by repeated practise to establish this contact Me and carry on this practise throughout your life."

*Yamas, niyama, asana, pranyama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana* are the graduated techniques prescribed for those who cannot at one stroke attain this

union with the All. But we are not in a position to concentrate our minds even in this manner; it is very difficult for us. Even for a few hours of the day this type of concentration is hard, due to the power of the sense organs – the desires, the passions, the grief, the frustrations, and the many troubles to which a man is heir. Then what can be done? *Abhyāse'pyasamartho'si matkarmaparamo bhava, madartham api karmāṇi kurvan siddhim avāpsyasi* (Gita 12.10). Here I am trying to follow the reading of Madhusudana Saraswati who seems to be more generous in his understanding, because it is hard to make out the true implications of these statements of Bhagavan Sri Krishna. The very shrewd interpretation given by Madhusudana Saraswati is that here in this third verse the teacher seems to suggest that if this application of our will in the way of direct concentration becomes difficult for us for any reason, we should engage ourselves in service in His name – that is service of God through devotion to Him, maybe in the form of worship. *Sravanam, kirtanam, visnoh smaranam, pada-sevanam, arcanam, vandanam, dasyam, sraksham atma-nivedanam* – these are the ways of devotion. See God in all, serve God in humanity, feel His presence in everything, worship Him in all visible objects, mankind or otherwise. This is the large manifestation of the Creator in the form of this universe. Through the *bhavas* of *bhakti* or the various methods of devotion, resort to this daily practice of doing such things as are pleasing to Him. *Madartham api karmāṇi kurvan siddhim avāpsyasi*: All our actions be for My sake. That means to say, one is always keeping in mind the vision of the presence of God, even when one is performing one's daily routine. All the routines or duties of a devotee or a *bhakta* are worships of God in one way or the other, whether it is worship in a temple or *atithi satkara* in the house. However, the instruction in this verse and that which follows in the succeeding one seem to meet at one point, and we cannot easily demarcate the meaning conveyed by this third verse and the fourth one, because what is called *karmayoga*, action performed as yoga, is somehow inseparable from action performed in the name of God.

*Abhyāse'pyasamartho'si matkarmaparamo bhava, madartham api karmāṇi kurvan siddhim avāpsyasi. Sarvakarmaphalatyāgam tataḥ kuru yatātmavān* (Gita 12.11). So this seems to be teaching on karma yoga. "The abandonment of the fruits of action at least may be your way, if everything is not possible and any other thing is not practical. Neither can you reason and argue and unite your total understanding with Me, nor can you find time to concentrate on My Being. You have not got the will, nor will you be able to feel My presence, love Me whole-heartedly. Then do your duty as per your station in society." Our duty will depend upon our station in human society, or station in a particular given circumstance or environment. But this duty that we perform should be such that it does not get tagged-down to a result that we expect to follow for our own personal benefit or advantage or personal satisfaction. We do not do something because we expect some pleasure out of it. The great ethical doctrine of Emmanuel Kant is – when some pleasure is connected with duty, it ceases to be duty, because duty is an impersonal requirement on our part and pleasure is a personal affair, so they cannot go together; this is what the German philosopher

thought. But, however, he may not be wholly correct in going to such a puritanic extent in distinguishing between satisfaction and duty, because there can be higher satisfaction – not necessarily a personal pleasure arising from our performance of duty, because the correct performance of duty is possible only on the basis of a higher understanding, and wherever there is right understanding, there is a great satisfaction. We cannot say that there can be only duty minus the feeling sense in it, though this feeling of satisfaction need not be connected with personality, egoism or individual affirmation, or selfishness of any kind.

So, *karma, bhakti, yoga, jnana* – these seem to include every possible approach of man to God. The Bhagavadgita seems to have told us everything – there is nothing further to tell us. The theory and the practise of yoga, the philosophy and the application of it in life, is here complete for our practical purposes at least. There are those who imagine, think and conclude that the Bhagavadgita is over, here, and there is nothing further to be told. Some think that it is over with the eleventh chapter itself, because once one has had a vision of the Supreme Being, there is nothing further to be told. But this is one view, of some people – not the generally accepted view, because there are internal references in the Mahabharata itself which seem to suggest that the Bhagavadgita is not complete with the eleventh or the twelfth chapter – it goes further; and we may follow this tradition that the Bhagavadgita is not over with the eleventh or the twelfth chapters. Arjuna has some questions, or perhaps he has no questions, because the beginning of the third chapter is sometimes with a query from Arjuna, sometimes without a query, according to different readings. The general reading is a direct speech from Sri Krishna himself, but some extraordinary editions add one extra verse, posing a question from Arjuna as to what *prakriti* is, *purusha* is, etc. However, whatever the truth of the matter be, it is immaterial for our purposes. There is some context, evidently, due to which the thirteenth chapter has become a necessity, and inasmuch as great masters like Jnaneshwar Maharaj have gone into great detail in their discourse on thirteenth chapter, etc., and we cannot set aside the views of a great master like Jnaneshwar Maharaj who was supposed to be a God-realised being, it would be wise on our part not to go to extremes of historical analysis, and accept that there is a great point in the Bhagavadgita continuing from the thirteenth chapter onwards – for some important reason which we shall see.

We have practically understood the essentials of religion and spirituality with this long discourse, right from the beginning of the Gita till this present level we have reached now. But the vision of the All-Being – Vishvarupa, if it remains mainly a vision which passes, and it actually passed in the case of Arjuna, we have to conclude that he did not enter into it and dissolve himself there, because he was still there as an individual. He had a flash, he had an intuition, he saw with the third eye, but he did not conduct a *pravesha* into it. *Jñātum draṣṭum ca tattvena praveṣṭum ca parantapa* (Gita 11.54) – the three words are mentioned towards the end of the eleventh chapter. He knew it and he saw it, but he did not enter into it, evidently.

Whatever it is, these are very hard things to understand. There is a persistent assertion on the part of every seeker that there is a universe outside. With all our practices and our philosophical affirmations, we cannot gainsay the presence of a world outside us, sometimes even people around. We cannot easily identify the objective universe with the consciousness that conceives it, beholds it, perceives it, comes in contact with it. A persistent distinction is there between consciousness and matter, which are called *purusha* and *prakriti*. The whole bodily encasement of the individual and the entire creational structure is supposed to be a conglomeration of the constituents of what we call *prakriti* – the original matter, we may say. Matter is more than what we sense with our gross organs – it is a subtle potentiality for objectivity. Even according to modern physics, matter is not actually the hard brick or the solid mango that we touch. It is something very unintelligible, transcending even conception by the mind; something which cannot be described even as ethereal, yet existing as a very subtle transcendent potentiality for manifesting externality. Matter is externality. The power of externality is matter and therefore it is something more than solidity, and we cannot identify it with solid objects. Somehow, something is there. This something which is there, and not here, is the so-called *prakriti* or the object, and the one cannot be identified with the other easily. But the verse at the very beginning of the thirteenth chapter, in a very subtle way, seems to solve this difficulty for us when it says: *kṣetrajñāṁ cāpi māṁ viddhi sarvakṣetreṣu* (Gita 13.2): “I am the Knower in all the fields which are known.” The multiplicity of perceivers and a real external universe seem to be ruled out by the suggestion given here that there is a single ruling consciousness as a *kshetrajna*, which is the perceiver, true cogniser, knower behind all the bodies. If a body or a material structure is to be considered as that which is constituted of the five elements – earth, water, fire, air, and ether – and if there is a uniform *kshetrajna* or a knowing principle behind all these bodies, it is difficult to believe how the universe can be outside this consciousness.

The Bhagavadgita accepts the Samkhya principles of the dualism of *prakriti* and *purusha*, with a great proviso that there is something beyond these two principles which are like the two wings of the bird of the Supreme Being, but the wings themselves are not the bird. We have a similar thought in Spinoza in the West, who had a notion of the Supreme Being by way of what we call substance, with two attributes of space and time. The attributes of Spinoza are something like the *purusha* and *prakriti* of the Samkhya according to the Mahabharata, the Manu Smirti and the Bhagavadgita – not Kapila’s or Ishvarakrishna’s Samkhya. There is a practical utility in taking for granted that there is such a thing called *purusha* and *prakriti*. Whether they are really there in the last word is a different matter, but they have to be taken as existent, like an ‘x’ in an equation; it is not there, but it must be there because it has utility. Human beings, who can think only in this manner and cannot think in any other way, cannot obviate their involvement in this concept of the duality of the seer and the seen, and we cannot jump over our own skin.

But the philosophy of the Bhagavadgita, or any profound philosophy for the matter of that, is a study of the implications of experience, and not merely a study of empirical experience. Empirical experience may tell us that there are two realities – *prakriti* and *purusha* – but the implication is something deeper. The very knowledge of the fact that there are two things shows that there is a third thing which is other than the two things; otherwise, no one can know that there are two things. *Prakriti* cannot know there is *purusha*, *purusha* cannot know that there is *prakriti*, if they are totally different. The possibility of the one knowing the other, or one contacting the other, is acceptable only on the presence of a larger ground to which a subtle hint is given when the Bhagavadgita tells us, “I am the Knower behind all the things,” – which means to say, the consciousness behind the whole material universe. Consciousness is the Knower of the whole cosmos. There is a single Seer – ‘The Beholder of the Universe’ that is God, who is brooding over the waters of creation. We need not go further, deeper, into the difficulties that we may have to face, in going a step beyond this conclusion that we have arrived at, because if we press this feature of the omnipresence of consciousness as immanent in all creation to its logical limit, we will be forced to conclude that matter does not exist, because consciousness can be omnipresent only if the so-called material object is a part and parcel of the existence of consciousness itself. This is to go too far, and we need not to such an extent at the present moment.

The thirteenth chapter of the Bhagavadgita is thus: *prakriti, purusha, viveka, kshetra, kshetrajna vibhaaga-yoga*. This *prakriti*, this material – a metaphysical matter, we should say, not the ordinary matter of the carpenter, or the chemist, or the scientist as we know, the philosopher’s matter – this matter is not a solid substance, but a constituent of forces, energies. There is no matter outside energy. This is what our science also says, and the Bhagavadgita says. These energies are called *sattva, rajas* and *tamas*. *Sattva, rajas* and *tamas* are not three substances. The idea of substance attacks us like a hobgoblin wherever we go; and whichever we try to contact in any manner whatsoever, the idea of solidity of objects and the externality of things is so hardboiled in us that we cannot understand how a mere force, an energy, can become a solid universe. The solidity of a substance is not the characteristic of the substance itself – it is a reaction set up by the contact of senses. Again we go back to that famous statement in the third chapter of the Bhagavadgita where it is said that the perception of the universe is nothing but the coming together, in contact with each other, of the constituents of the individual with the constituents of the cosmos – the *gunas* of *prakriti* colliding with the *gunas* of *prakriti*, an ocean of waves, dashing against one another, as it were, where there neither a seer or a seen, no subject or object. ‘The Ocean of Being’ is dancing within its own bosom!

So the *prakriti* so-called, the matter to which reference has been made in the thirteenth chapter, is constituted of three forces – *sattva, rajas, and tamas* – which is the theme of the fourteenth chapter. The idea that the universe is a solid, material, brick-like substance is removed from our mind by the teaching that the whole universe is force. Here we have a corresponding philosophy of German



philosopher Leibniz – the universe is made of force – and this is also of modern physics. As we are told, all great men think alike, whether they are from the East or the West. When we reach the top of the mountain, we will see the same thing, whoever we are. So all these great men – Plato or whoever he is, they have reached an apex of perception of things, so they have the same explanation, finally, of the internal character of things. We have to overcome our subjection to the *gunas* of *prakriti* – this is a teaching towards the end of the fourteenth chapter. We are caught up by these forces, as it were, and we cannot easily understand how we are so caught. The grip of these forces upon us is such that we have lost consciousness of the way in which this grip has been affected upon us. We have been totally brainwashed – until madness – so that we cannot know what has happened to us. When we are indoctrinated into a particular system of thinking, by hammering into our mind the same thought, again and again, we may forget our original thinking. So the world has been effective in driving into our minds the falsity of an existence of an external, material, so-called universe; and we are indoctrinated into it – we think only in this manner. Thus it is that we are in a prison-house, imagining that we are in heaven. The teaching has been so very powerful that we have accepted it wholly – that this prison-house is the same as the heaven supreme. This body is delightful – it is made of gold and silver, it is perfumed, it is very delightful. We decorate the body as if it is a deity. We look at our own face in the mirror as if there is nothing more beautiful than that – our own face is the most beautiful thing. We take care of it more endearingly than our own firstborn child, but it is the dirtiest of things – the most awful thing, if we go into the structure of it. It will stink if you don't take bath for a few days, it will deteriorate for other reasons, and we know its fate finally – such is the glory of this body which we are considering as a temple of our so-called ideal. This is to say how far we have gone into erroneous notions about things; and even the fear of death is not a deterrent factor for us. We are not afraid of death, provided that we can taste the honey of this body. The Bhagavadgita goes far enough to remove this objection, this difficulty, this problem facing us and repeats again and again. There are repetitions of ideas many times, and these repetitions go to contribute to the effect they produce upon us, because a thing told once only is likely to be forgotten. So it is told again and again, hammered into our minds.

The world appears to be there as a *prakriti* outside, but it is not really outside there. It is immanently controlled by a Supreme Principle – the *kshetrajna*, the Knower of all things – and even this so-called outside object, this *prakriti*, is not a solid substance. It is a sea of turbulent energies which attack each other with the force of a cyclone blowing over the surface of an ocean. Above these *gunas* of *prakriti*, transcendent to the visible structure of all this creation, beyond the individual seer, is the Supreme Purushottama. The whole universe is guided, controlled, illuminated and ruled by this Supreme Purushottama. God is called Purushottama to distinguish the supremacy of God over the ordinary *purushas* which are the individuals. While the *jivas* are called *purushas*, there is a Supreme Purusha who is the best of all *purushas* – that is Purushottama.

The fifteenth chapter again describes the nature of this universe, with a different type of emphasis – the subject which was touched upon in the thirteenth and the fourteenth chapters already. The thirteenth, fourteenth, and the fifteenth chapters concern themselves with cosmological themes, creation, and the entire series of the levels of manifestation, God's role in this creation and man's relationship to God, the connection with the universe, with the other principles, and so on. These are all in varieties of ways mentioned in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth chapters. The fifteenth chapter has an importance of its own because it very poetic. It has its own majesty, and in a beautiful allegory it compares the whole of creation to a tree with its roots above and branches spread below. This allegory of a tree is also to be found in certain mystical scriptures of the West, like the Scandinavian myth of 'The Tree of Yggdrasil', as it is called – they compare the universe to a large tree. There is some point in taking this as a suitable comparison in for the way in which universe spreads itself out, because the universe is like a spread-out, large banyan tree – *asvatthavraksha*, the *peepul* – the only difference being its roots are above and the roots are not below, as we have in the case of other *peepul* trees here. *Ūrdhvamūlam adhaḥśākham* (Gita 15.1) – We have never seen a tree like that, where the tree's roots are above; they are fixed to the sky as it were.

But this is a very interesting analogy for us, for the purpose of meditation even. We know very well that we are always accustomed to this concept of the 'above' whenever we think of the higher realities, especially the Creator. Don't we look up when we pray to God? Do we look down on the ground? This is a symbolic inclination of the human consciousness – to recognise the transcendence of higher realities. And, whenever we speak of the sky, we look above, as if the sky is only above, though it is also underneath. If the sky is all around the earth, why should we say it is above? This earth is hanging in space, in mid-space – there is no below for the earth. But it is a notion of our mind on account of our inability to see the whole structure of this planetary system, and we cannot believe that we are a moving in a spaceship called this earth. We are not in a rocket, though it is so, perhaps, in some way. We are rushing, rocket-like, in some direction, but we think we are on the solid ground of the Earth. This habit of the human mind is to consider that it is on a low ground, and everything which is of a controlling nature and an administrative type, especially divine in nature is above because the world and everything connected to the world is considered as 'effect' which proceeds from a cause, and the cause being superior, is also transcendent. And we, like children, think that all transcendent things are above in a spatial way, and look up. But, it is above also in a logical sense. Logically, God is above us. To repeat what I told you earlier, He is above in the same way as the higher class in a school is above the lower class. It is not above in space – it is not a 'spatial aboveness'. We don't find the higher classes in a school or a college standing in the sky and the lower classes below – yet, we still say it is a higher class. So in what sense do we call it a higher class? You know very well – it is a 'logical, conceptual highness'. In that sense we speak of the 'higher self' transcendent to the lower self. We conceive of the realities above the

world as 'above' in a very very specific, psychic, psychological or philosophical sense, mystical manner. In this way, we have to conceive that the rootedness of the tree of this universe in the Transcendent Being – God the Creator, the Absolute, and the descending of this tree, and all the effects that you see here, spread out as branches of which we are all parts.