

THE RELEVANCE OF THE BHAGAVADGITA TO HUMANITY



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Publishers' Note

This is a series of 31 discourses on the relevance of the Bhagavadgita to humanity that Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj gave to the students of the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy between November 1984 to January 1985.

The Bhagavadgita was a favorite subject of Sri Swamiji Maharaj, and he never tired of speaking on it, yet every series of discourses that Swamiji gave is new and fresh, taking a different approach from other series that have been given on this subject.

Table of Contents

- Publisher's Note
- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: The Sabha Parva of the Mahabharata
- Chapter 3: The Aranya Parva of the Mahabharata
- Chapter 4: Stories from the Aranya Parva
- Chapter 5: The Udyoga Parva of the Mahabharata
- Chapter 6: Beauty and Duty in the Bhagavadgita
- Chapter 7: Can War Ever be Justified?
- Chapter 8: The Realism and Idealism of the Bhagavadgita
- Chapter 9: The Classification of Society
- Chapter 10: The Need for Sankhya
- Chapter 11: Participating with the Intention of the Universe
- Chapter 12: Control of the Senses
- Chapter 13: The Supremely Friendly Power
- Chapter 14: The Coming of God as an Incarnation
- Chapter 15: Seeing the Eternity in the Temporal
- Chapter 16: Understanding the Essence of the Mind
- Chapter 17: The Meaning and Purpose of Sacrifice
- Chapter 18: Reconciling Knowledge and Action
- Chapter 19: Knowledge and Action are One
- Chapter 20: The Arising of the Concept of Unity
- Chapter 21: The Two Ways of Yoga
- Chapter 22: The Integration of Sannyasa and Yoga
- Chapter 23: Introduction to the Sixth Chapter
- Chapter 24: Sannyasa and Yoga are One
- Chapter 25: The Lower Self and the Higher Self
- Chapter 26: Being Spiritually Alone to Oneself
- Chapter 27: The Practice of Meditation
- Chapter 28: Sitting for Meditation
- Chapter 29: The Yoga of the Bhagavadgita
- Chapter 30: Communion with Eternity
- Chapter 31: The Message of the Sixth Chapter

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

We are assembling here to form a system of what we may call a refreshing of ourselves in the art of thinking along the lines which may lead us to a satisfaction that we have lived our life properly, because one day the earthly life comes to an end and we are likely to enter into a field of a new way of living, for which we have to be prepared. The possibility of entering into that new field is not necessarily a distant event, and no one knows the nature of one's tomorrow. Hence, it is incumbent on every one of us to be prepared, at every moment almost, to receive the call of life, we may call it the call of God, because any moment can be the last moment of a human being. Why we do not believe it is a different subject, which we may have time to consider at some time in the near future. Why is it that in spite of it being possible that any moment can be the last moment, no one can accept it? That is a secret that is hidden behind this phenomenon of the transiency of all things.

This is an ashram where an atmosphere has been created by its founder for providing psychological, intellectual and spiritual facilities for the purpose of awakening oneself to this fact, and living that mode of life which is acceptable to the law that is operating everywhere. It is generally said that he who obeys the law has no fear of the law. Law is a source of fear when it is disobeyed. It appears that we are mostly in a state of fear due to our not knowing what is going to be our fate in the future, and fears and anxieties of this type may be attributed to our not being fully confident that we are aware of the nature of the law that operates in the world. A person who does not know what law is operating is likely to make a mistake. An ignorance of law may breed a particular kind of problem. A visible problem may have to be encountered by a person who is uneducated in the operation of law.

There is only one law operating in the whole universe, though we have different laws operating in man-made national situations. National laws differ; country laws differ. There are even minor laws of communities and small societies which differ from one another, and these differences can be attributed to the habits, traditions and customs of a group of people in certain regions. But these are all conditioned laws, conditioned to circumstances which may be anthropological, historical, geographical, and the like. But there is a superior law which envelops all these laws, in the same way as the law of the nation, as laid down in the central constitution and its further regulations, determines, conditions, and presides over every other little law which one may have in one's own family or community, in one's house, in the little provinces, and so on. We may have little customs and systems and regulations of living which may not be identical with those that are prevalent in other areas in the same country, yet, nevertheless, they are all ruled by a single administrative law of the whole nation.

In a similar manner, there is one law which decides the way in which subsidiary laws should be framed. Even our eating habits and our modes of behaviour, conduct and relations are conditioned by it. It is not that we can live as we like. We have a freedom, and every citizen in a country has a freedom. We are all free people. Everyone is free. We do not look like criminals or shackled persons. Everyone is aware of some sort of freedom. We can do certain things according to our wish and according to our freedom. But this free will of ours, this freedom that is sanctioned, is conditioned by certain norms of behaviour which we cannot violate. So even freedom can be limited by certain sanctions. In a sense, we may say there is limited freedom.

But we need not be very much concerned over this limitation that is set over our freedom because it is necessary that individual freedom should be so limited in the interest of a larger welfare, because if this limitation is not to be imposed on the sanctioned freedom of the individual, there would be a tendency to assume an infinitude of that freedom. Infinites cannot be two; there is one infinite. If we assume an infinitude of our freedom, another person cannot exist, because our freedom will swallow everybody else. This erroneous tendency is sometimes visible in morbid thinkers like tyrants, dictators and despots who assume a kind of infinitude of freedom, by which behaviour they are erroneously united in that everyone else is subsumed under them as their satellites, as it were, and one man can do anything to anybody else. This is a kind of Caesarean despotism, as they call it, which is freedom going amok. No individual can be free in that sense, because infinitude of freedom sanctioned to a particular individual may defy such a necessity felt by other individuals. Then existence would be nothing but chaos.

Now, inasmuch as everyone is aware that the welfare of each person is, to a large extent, determined by the welfare of other people also – we are sure that the welfare of other people is also, in some way, a deciding factor in our welfare – it follows from this that there is limitation on the freedom that we exercise by the mere fact of the existence of other people who also are free, as we are. The freedom of another is the limitation on our freedom. This is simple to understand. If another person is free, that freedom of that person is a limitation set on our freedom. Now, we cannot complain that this is a bad state of affairs. It is good to limit our freedom because, in a very strange way, we will be able to appreciate that the freedom, even apparently limited in that manner sanctioned to all people, will bring about a larger security of all. Actually, cooperation or coordination of people is nothing but a sacrifice, on each one's part, of one's freedom to the extent that it is necessary to allow that kind of freedom to other people also. This is a generous way of thinking, a liberal way of thought, and a charitableness of feeling, which is not merely a niggardly concession that we are giving to other people, but it is essential for our own welfare also.

When we are good to another person, we are not showing a high-handed, royal gesture of charitableness. It is not a superior attitude that we are assuming by our charity to other people. It is a necessity on our part, because we also expect charity from other people, so we cannot assume an air of importance in

this world of coordination and cooperation. There is no one important in this world and, therefore, there is also no one unimportant. The world is a community of ingredients, components, who are equally essential for the working of the machinery of this largely pervasive law of the cosmos. Some modern thinkers consider the whole administration of creation as a kind of management of a cosmic society.

I saw an advertisement of a book written by an American scholar. The name of the book is *Cosmic Society*. I was very much happy to hear that there is such a thing called cosmic society. The whole of God's creation is a society, or we may call it a family, to make it more intelligible. It is easy to understand the way in which we have to live in this world if we can compare the whole universe to a family. We need not be too philosophical and metaphysical or abstract here. We can be simple, homely, and matter of fact in the understanding of what these things are.

We know how happy we are to be members in a single family of brothers, sisters, father, mother, and so on. We feel happy by our coordination with other members in the family, notwithstanding the fact each one has an independence. It does not mean that any member of the family will subjugate another. There is no such intention of any member in a house. One brother will not consider another brother as a subordinate. Yet, the very fact of there being cooperation, which gives them so much satisfaction and security, is an automatic restriction on each one's freedom. Each one is ready to sacrifice his or her freedom for the sake of giving that very kind of freedom to another member in the family, by which act of limitation of one's freedom, one does not feel unhappy, but more happy. We are one. So, there is a larger integration and a wider form of security and a sense of welfare sanctioned to each member in this coordinated family. By the very fact of the limitation we set upon our freedom in the family, we become more happy than we would be if we granted infinite freedom to ourselves, to the exclusion of everybody else's welfare. This is a little homely illustration of the way in which we may be able to live in this world.

But there is something hidden behind this little mandate and prescription that I placed before you to understand the cosmical set up. It is not true that we are always so much cooperative, even in a family. I am now placing before you an example of a hundred percent cooperative family. That is a wonderful thing. If each one understands everyone else one hundred percent, nothing can be better than that. But there are occasions even in a family when such a kind of one hundred percent understanding of another is not available due to various reasons, and there can be any number of reasons. The idea of the son may not be fully in harmony with the wish of the father, and two brothers may have different ideas in the performance of their daily vocations, and so on. There, a greater thought has to be exercised in the manner of running a good family. In fact, administration of any kind is not necessary if everyone is one hundred percent cooperative, and if one hundred percent understanding is available in each one in respect of everybody else. If that is the case, no government or administration is necessary.

They say this was the condition prevailing once upon a time in the Golden Age of creation; we call it Krita Yuga in Sanskrit. There are four *yugas*: Krita Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga and Kali Yuga. It is said that in Krita Yuga there was no government. It was not necessary at all, because each one was one hundred percent capable of appreciating the needs of another. It is very difficult to imagine such a state of affairs. Each one knew his duty or her duty. Nobody need say, "Do this"; nobody need say, "Don't do this." Everyone knew what was to be done and what was not to be done. That was the golden age of humanity, called the Krita Yuga. But the Krita Yuga did not always prevail.

The intrusion of difference in ideologies, ideas and perspectives of life began to show its head in the Treta Yuga. Then there was felt a need to create a force which would bring all these differences into a state of harmony. If two people do not agree, a third person is appointed as a judge to decide their differences. If they agreed a hundred percent, why should there be a judge? This third element which was felt necessary to bring about a harmony among dissident factors was the king, the monarch. The need for a king or a ruler arose. Whatever be the way in which that king was appointed, elected, placed, etc., is a different matter.

Now, the subject on which I was supposed to speak a few words to the people who wanted to listen to me was 'the relevance of the teaching of the Bhagavadgita to humanity'. There was no need for the gospel of the Bhagavadgita if there was no occasion for conflict of ideas and ideologies. It was not a harmonious way in which people were thinking. There was a difference of opinion, and each one was sticking to his gun, as it were. Each one was saying, "I am right"; therefore, there was a necessity to decide what is actually to be done under those circumstances.

In a case that is brought before the court, for instance, the contending parties always hold that they are right. Each party argues the righteousness of the cause or the point that they make out, and both are right. This is what they are emphasising. Each party says, "I am right." Now, if both are right, they cannot differ; but in their conception of the rectitude of their behaviour, they do differ. So the difference has to be bridged by a cementing link, which is the judicial pronouncement. Such a situation arose in humanity when the golden age descended into the denser form of human thought, when such recognition and appreciation of one in respect of the other was not possible. It was not accepted by a certain state of mind that such a one hundred percent cooperation with another is going to be for one's welfare. "My welfare does not lie in my totally agreeing with another. It mostly depends on my sticking to my own point of view." This is the beginning of dissension among people. If each one starts thinking like that, there is tension in human life. This can lead to more and more concrete manifestations of the tension, which we call battle and war, which leads to any kind of consequence.

Such a state is pictured before us in the Mahabharata. It is nothing but a whole epic of the battle of human existence, which necessitated the bringing into the picture of human thought the gospel of the Bhagavadgita, which tells us what we have to do under a given condition. The whole of our life is a confrontation.

Today we are living in a world in which we are faced with confrontations of different types, and our duties, our performances and execution of our daily vocations have mostly taken the form of a confrontation, rather than a smooth-sailing affair. It is not a happy thing, because we have to be cautious and vigilant in our daily attitudes and performances. This is the state of affairs today, especially in humanity at this moment.

Some such thing is before the mind of the great author of the Mahabharata epic. Similar is the Ramayana. These two standard epics present before us a portrait of the human predicament, which calls for certain deep thinking on the part of everyone as to what one should do under a given condition, and the given condition is some kind of confrontation, though the nature of the confrontation may vary. It is something like saying that so many people are ill; they are sick, but it does not mean that everybody is sick in the same way. One man has one kind of illness, another has another kind of illness, a third has a third kind. They may be different types of patients from the point of view of the varying categories of illness, but the fact that they are ill is a common factor that is ruling over all of them. So everyone has one kind of problem or the other.

Now, the Bhagavadgita is supposed to be a recipe for the solution of the problems of every person. This is something unique about it. It is not intended for me or for you or for anybody; it is supposed to be a universally applicable recipe for the ills of mankind. This is a speciality about it, and that makes it very difficult to understand what its intentions are, because we have never heard that one recipe can be prescribed for every kind of difficulty. Yet, there is a norm that can be prescribed as a basic precondition for individual steps that we may have to take in detail for day-to-day engagement.

There is what is called medical science, for instance. We cannot say that there are many varieties of medical science. The basic philosophy behind the prescription of medicine is uniform. It takes into consideration the structure and the constituents of the human personality, the conditions that are necessary to cause health, and those conditions which bring about disease. There is a general philosophy of medicine, notwithstanding the fact that different medicines are prescribed for different kinds of illness. These varieties in the prescription of medicine under given conditions of illness do not mean that the basic philosophy of medical treatment is variegated.

In such a way, we may say there is a final word about the fundamentals of human behaviour and conduct, which norm is laid down in the Bhagavadgita. It is true that the Bhagavadgita does not tell us how we can cook our food, how we can take a bath, or how we can stitch our shirt; but it lays down certain fundamental, basic principles of human conduct under confrontations and difficulties which are the irreconcilable elements in human society. There were dharma *sankatas*, as we call them. Dharma *sankata* means a quandary in dharma. 'Quandary' means a difficult situation, where we cannot pass an immediate judgment. Sometimes we are in a dilemma. Either way it is a difficult thing. We cannot go that way, and we cannot go this way. Sometimes we find ourselves in that state of affairs, and that is a dharma *sankata*. It is a quandary, a helpless

state, a difficult confrontation where it is hard to make out what is the proper step to be taken, because it is a terrible tangle. That tangle was the background of the whole Mahabharata story. It was a tangle, a network, a difficult knot which could not easily be broken through. Very many questions arose in the minds of people, and they were not able to easily decipher the background of the answers for these questions. It required a superior understanding to throw light on these problems. As a judge in a court is considered to have a wider form of understanding, transcending the understanding of the clients, similarly, the person, the personality, the figure that spoke the Bhagavadgita stood above humanity.

So a superman spoke a superhuman gospel. It is necessary that a superman should speak to solve human problems. Man's problems cannot be solved by man only, just as a patient cannot treat himself. He requires a doctor. Man cannot help another man, because all men usually think alike and they are in a similar state of difficulty. A superior hand which has an impartial judgment and knows all the pros and cons of the difficulties and problems is necessary. Such a figure was the personality of Sri Krishna in the Mahabharata. The role that he played in the whole epic is an outstanding example of a judicious superhuman intelligence operating in difficult situations.

I mentioned that a superman has to come out of man, and though we may not be superhuman individuals in our solutions of the problems of life, we may have to be superhuman in our understanding, in some percentage at least. We should not stoop down to the level of an utterly selfish outlook of life where what is pleasant to me only is good, and the pleasant need not necessarily be the good. So the superhuman figure of Bhagavan Sri Krishna spoke a superhuman teaching for a superhuman good that is to befall all mankind if that law is to be followed.

Because of the fact that it ranges beyond human understanding, it is not easy to know all its implications. Therefore, many commentaries have been written on it, and every commentary seems to be good. There are so many commentaries written by lawyers on the Constitution of India. Every enactment has a commentary, and each lawyer who has a point of view attaches a kind of footnote to elucidate a knotty point in a particular enactment. Likewise, there are commentaries on the Bhagavadgita. All shed light on certain facets of the great light which is the Bhagavadgita.

Now, this is a great question which students who wish to live a higher life raise before themselves and try to answer. To find this answer they come to holy places of personages who are in a position to guide them – teachers, masters, Gurus or yogis, whoever they are. In this ashram of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, we are all here to seek an answer to this great question, to answer our own questions. I have to answer my question, and you have to answer your question. For this purpose, to receive guidance along these lines of answering our questions, we are gathered here. Hence, may we consider ourselves blessed that God has planted in us a little inclination to accept that it is necessary for us to live a better life than what we are living now – a higher life, if we would like to call it that. So goes today.

Chapter 2

THE SABHA PARVA OF THE MAHABHARATA

The great epic called the Mahabharata consists of eighteen books, and each book is called a Parva. In Sanskrit, *parva* means a halting place, a section, a part or a volume, we may say, of a great text. There are eighteen such books which form the immortal epic of the Mahabharata, and the names of these eighteen books, or Parvas, are as follows: Adi Parva, Sabha Parva, Aranya Parva, Virata Parva, Udyoga Parva, Bhishma Parva, Drona Parva, Karna Parva, Shalya Parva, Sauptika Parva, Stri Parva, Shanti Parva, Anushasana Parva, Ashvamedhika Parva, Ashramavasika Parva, Mausala Parva, Mahaprasthanika Parva, and Svargarohana Parva. You will be very pleasantly surprised to visualise the whole story of man, as it were, in this wondrous series of the ascent of the Parvas, the rise of thought from level to level in this beautifully conceived human saga called the Mahabharata epic.

The first book confines itself to the infant stage of the Pandava and Kaurava brothers. Incidentally, it is also a description of the infant stage of any living being. It is a state of ignorance. Little babies are beautiful because of their knowing nothing. Everything attracts sympathy when it is a small child; it may be even the child of a lion, of a tiger, of a dog, of even a snake, what to speak of others. Even a little crawling tiny baby of a snake will attract sympathy, but not the grown-up snake. The innocence, ignorance, incapacity, helplessness, total dependence, and many other interesting factors contribute to the reason behind this dangerous beauty of babyhood. The Pandavas and the Kauravas were totally oblivious of their future. It was a joyous, jubilant, playful age of the little children, princes born in a royal family. They were together, and they were immensely friendly. They were one family, and it was all love and brotherhood and intense affection that prevailed in that childhood of the royal family.

But even a little snake will show its hood. In the beginning, it simply crawls without raising its head. The little cub of the tiger will tell you, "I am a tiger, and don't mistake me for anybody else." Even older children will slowly begin to manifest tendencies of psychic vagaries and become a little naughty and uncontrollable. They are not so very palatable and handsome as they were earlier when they were on the lap of the mother. We have to be careful to note what these potentialities of a human being, or of anything, are.

We are going to be told in the Mahabharata what the potentialities of these children in the royal family of the Pandavas and the Kauravas were. We will be surprised at all the things we have in ourselves. We have every blessed thing. There is nothing that we do not have. Each one began to manifest his potentiality. There is a vociferous tendency also present in us, side by side with an affectionate tendency. It is not that we are capable only of affection; we are capable of many other things also. Our capability beggars description. There is nothing we are not capable of. Immense affection, kindness, goodness – yes, we are capable of that. And we can trample on somebody's foot, and on the head of

somebody. Even this is not impossible for us. "Down you go to hell!" you may cry to a man, even if he be your own brother. "To hell you go! I will bury you alive." These are also our capacities, capabilities. And wondrous capabilities of genius, scholarship, art, music, and happy behaviour are also our potentiality.

These started manifesting themselves. Gradually there was a split in the ideology of these children. For what reason do people hate one another? Is there a reason behind it? We do not require a reason for hatred, even as love also does not require much of a reason. Perhaps, love and hatred have no reason behind them. The moment we apply reason, they cease to be affections and hatreds. So it is not that only reason is present with us; unreason also operates. There is a potentiality for the capacity to defy every kind of rational attitude. "I cannot listen to you. Don't talk to me." Sometimes we say that, and is it a rational attitude? We have decided not to listen; we have decided not to do something, or we have decided to do it. This kind of attitude is the expression of another faculty in the human being, which is not reason. There are many other things also inside us. We are a Pandora's box. If we are opened, anything can be found in us. I am not trying to expatiate on any special field of human psychology here. The subject is something else.

The Pandavas and the Kauravas were happy children. Slowly they became unhappy children. What a wonder! Don't you believe that we slowly become more and more unhappy when we grow in age? Or are we going to be more and more happy? Let each one think of himself or herself. "I have been a daughter, I have been a son of so-and-so, I have come out from the womb of the mother, and I was a happy little child playing in the garden of the house. Now, am I more happy today than I was at that time due to my studies, due to my activities, due to my being busy with this or that occupation?" Let each one find out. "Am I more happy today than when I was a little child, or am I more unhappy?" You will not be able to have a clear answer to this question. You may say, "Yes, I don't think I am as happy as I was, but..." Now, that 'but' is a very crucial question. You would not like to be a baby merely because of the fact that babyhood is a happier state. Otherwise, who would like to grow up into the adult condition?

Immediately the potentiality to observe difference, which is also latent in every self-centred being, began to manifest. Difference is also a reality in one realm of the expression of the universe. We say the whole thing is unity, which may be true in one sense. At one stage, in one condition, from one point of view, it is a unity. But in another condition, from another point of view, from another angle of vision, it is all variety. So the potentiality that is capable of quick expression manifests itself first, like a disease that is ready to erupt at once, among many other kinds of illnesses that we may also be having. The unity which may be the basic fact of our nature does not manifest itself always, though it will manifest itself under conditions. But the conditions in which the empirical individual being lives do not permit the manifestation of unity, and what is capable of expression is that which is sanctioned by the atmosphere. Intense body-consciousness, intense sex-consciousness, intense family-consciousness, intense community-consciousness, and race-consciousness, colour-

consciousness, economic conditions which differentiate people into princes and beggars – these are also capacities, characteristics, which we cannot easily forget. The son of a king will not forget that he is the son of a king. He will not say, “I am man like any other man.” He may be right in feeling that also. Certainly he is a man like any other man. Why should he not think like that? Why should he say, “I am the prince and he is a beggar”? Why should only this trait manifest itself in a person, and not the other one, which is also equally true? When it is true that the king and the beggar are both human beings, why is it that one does not feel this similarity, but feels only the difference? Why should we insist on the difference, and not on the similarity? What is the peculiarity in us which evokes only the trait of difference and not the character of uniformity?

This is because of the peculiar psychic level in which we operate at a particular time. We are not solid masses of metal. We are now concerned with the human personality more than any other living being. None of us is one heap, like a brick or a lump of iron or a nugget of gold. We are not such indivisible, solid matter. We are layers of compressed power, energy, potentiality and force. As a building is made up of little pieces, we are also constituted of little brickwork, an analysis of which has been dexterously conducted by ancient Indian philosophers particularly, right from the time of the Upanishads, the Taittiriya Upanishad, etc., where human personality has been analysed threadbare into the five *koshas*, five layers: the physical, the vital, the sensory and the mental, the intellectual, the causal, and the spiritual.

It is not easy for us to understand what these layers are, though we might have heard it repeated a hundred times. We seem to understand – yes, these are the layers, the sheaths, we say, *koshas: annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijnanamaya, anandamaya*. And finally the Atman is there at the root and the base of every one of us, which is said to be commensurate, coextensive, co-eternal with all existence, and eternity itself. We are heirs apparent of this wondrous possibility also, but we are not always operating on this level.

I gave you a small example how we cannot believe that we are only human beings, notwithstanding the fact we are human beings. We have other ways of describing ourselves, and I gave you a specimen of how we describe ourselves. These differences arise due to the level in which we operate. Modern psychologists, parapsychologists, etc., tell us there are levels in us. Alpha, beta, and all these levels are supposed to be in our mental operations. These are modern terms, comparable to these levels I mentioned already in a traditional fashion.

In what level are you functioning at present? This is for you to think deeply. “Am I now operating in the causal level, in the intellectual level, in the sensational, emotional, feeling level of mind, or an intensely sensuous level, or am I intensely physical?” This requires a little bit of deep brooding over one’s own self. Whatever be the level in which you are functioning, that characteristic will manifest in you, not necessarily the other features which are also the properties of certain other levels. The Atman’s characteristics will not manifest

themselves in you, though you are the Atman. Nobody can have Atman qualities; everyone knows that, and it is a very unfortunate state of affairs.

We are also not functioning as pure intelligence, intellect, reason. As I have said, it does not look like we are always reasonable and rational. We have other traits which sometimes seem to be more palatable to us. We are intensely sensuous, empiric in our outlook. Much more than that, we seem to be physically bound. We are material bodies. Hunger and thirst, heat and cold, tell us that we are not far away from the physical body. It is no use theorising too much. It is good to be practical, matter of fact, and call a spade a spade, as they say. It is good to be honest to one's own self. "I do not like to be bad in any sense of the term, but if I have any bad qualities, it is good to know that they are there." That is the realisation of what you are in order that you may overcome that level, and step into another one. While it is good for you to know your capacities and powers, it is not bad to know your weaknesses. You should also know your weaknesses. If you are ignorant of your weaknesses, you would not know even your powers. It is like an Army General, a Field Marshal. He may be a powerful leader, but he is not expected to overestimate his own strength without knowing the limitations which also may be part of his nature, and the presence of other powers encountering and confronting him, such as the opposite party, and so on.

Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj never tired of saying that we must have a spiritual diary for questioning ourselves every day: what I am and how I am, and so on. Secretly, put a question to yourself: "Am I so important as I appear, or am I a foolhardy person? Something is wrong with me, and I must remove this weakness in me. I have decided that from tomorrow onwards I shall move earth and heaven to remove my weakness. I am very sorry I have this weakness. I shall remove it." Gurus, Masters, saints, sages, and scriptures have told us also that there are ways of overcoming weaknesses.

Now I am digressing from this field to tell you the point that I was driving at, that we have various potentialities and tendencies in place. Why do people behave in different ways, and not in a uniform way? Why should the Pandavas be like that, and the Kauravas be like that? Why should I be like this, and you be like that? Why is this like this, and that like that? It has to be like that because of the particular stage of evolution of the psyche in which one finds oneself at a given moment of time. It does not appear that everything is manifest at one stroke. There is what is called the system of the degrees of evolution; therefore, it is impossible for us to expect all humanity to entertain a single thought always, though that would be a happy thing. Let all people think only this thought, and one thought only. Why two thoughts? Then all the human beings will be one person only. That would be a happy state of affairs. This cannot happen because of the varieties in the levels of expression of the psyche, and these are the reasons behind confrontations, conflicts, and irreconcilable differences and tendencies.

So we are capable of differences also, and we are forced to work on the level of difference only, due to the fact of our each one being ourselves, each one of us being in a different state of evolution. Clash takes place. I cannot agree with you, I

am jealous of you, etc. This was what happened when the children grew up in the palace of the great king. They did not like each other. This is the Adi Parva of the Mahabharata. They started scratching, showing tooth and claw, hurling somebody down into the dust, and even attempting to finish off a person by hook or by crook.

Schoolboys are notorious in such behaviours even these days. Very unreasonable, rowdy behaviour, and for a little, meaningless, insignificant cause, they can kick up a huge row, and a war can take place. This happens in schools and colleges. Sometimes students even die in this scuffle, for nothing. It can be cricket or football, or even a drinking tap, a place to sit at a desk in a school, or any blessed thing. These potentialities, the manner of their expressions, are majestically described in the Adi Parva.

But we recover ourselves. A little sense arises in us. We get educated and we try to reconcile our differences. It is true we live in difference. One cannot agree with the other entirely. This is perfectly true, and everyone knows it. No person anywhere can entirely agree with another. Yet, we make a concession. "It is believed that this kind of life is no life at all. Total disagreement always, in every way, does not mean anything. So in spite of the fact that there is a basic difference of attitude, a kind of concession is made by each one so that they may live a life of community. I shall share with you, and you share with me. I shall live happily, and you also live happily. How can we live like wolves? It is not possible."

This state of complacency and tentative satisfaction by mutual concession, a feeling that everything is all right, is a very deceptive feeling. It was a politically manoeuvred satisfaction, and we cannot trust that kind of truce and that kind of agreement for a long time. Nevertheless, we cannot also distrust it. We have to say, "Yes, I think we have come to a conclusion, and an agreement has been arrived at. We shall not anymore be contending parties. We have shared our ideas and our property. We shall be friends because it is necessary for you to be in peace, and it is necessary for me also to be in peace." Yes, it is okay for the time being, but inwardly I am jealous. Why should I have to make a sacrifice for this person? I shall see that this person is put down immediately. I have made a sacrifice, and it was done because of the necessity to bring about a kind of peaceful atmosphere, but I don't like it. Why should that person have anything? I shall have everything.

In the Sabha Parva of the Mahabharata, the second book, a tentative deceptive glory of royalty is described. There was an agreement among the cousin-brothers, who originally had a jealous feeling among themselves, and by some agreement brought about by elders and pressure exerted upon by the differing parties, for some reason or the other, some good thing came out. Each one was bestowed with some blessing. Everyone was happy. The Pandavas were in the height of glory. They were crowned kings, and so were the others.

So is the joy of adolescence. All kinds of ideas come to our minds when we are adolescent youths. It appears as if the whole world is dabbled with honey and milk, and there are no thorns anywhere in the world. It is all glory. "I shall do this, I shall do that, I shall become this, I shall become that." Young people have such

ideas, because it is the period of the budding of the potential energy of the human individual. All the energies come up into action. There is the rising up of every kind of capacity in you at that time, and it is up to you to choose which line you are going to follow. It is, therefore, a very difficult period, adolescence. You cannot understand yourself, and others also cannot understand you fully. You do not know what you are at, what you expect in this world, what you want to become, what vocation you want to pursue, and so on, and others cannot understand your ideas. But you are ready to pursue any line of action. All the energies are ready for action, like an army ready for any kind of order to be issued to it, and now it depends upon what order you are going to issue. Stand still, go forward, retreat – any order can be issued to the army.

All the potentialities in us – biological, psychological, emotional, volitional, and even a little bit of rational faculty – rise up into action, and it is a flower trying to effloresce from its stage of bud. All was beautiful, but there was the sting of future sorrow. That also was a potential in this beauty of the growing and budding adolescence. The latter part of the Sabha Parva of the Mahabharata unleashes the sword which was hidden under the armpit of a satisfaction and a false complacency, and it was a great surprise indeed that a friend could unleash his sword suddenly, and rise into action and ambush. This was done unexpectedly, as it were, by those people who did the sacrifice, agreed to a truce, and said that everything is fine. But my dear friends, it was not fine. The world is not so very sweet as it appears on the surface. It has many other potentialities. “I shall tell you what they are,” said the Kauravas to the Pandavas. With this, the Sabha Parva concludes.

Chapter 3

THE ARANYA PARVA OF THE MAHABHARATA

Great and interesting meanings have been read into the Mahabharata epic, and the more we go into its secrets and implications, the more may we be able to relate it to human life in general. Do we not hear it said again and again that the more we study the Bhagavadgita, the deeper is the meaning that one discovers in it? If that is the case with the Bhagavadgita, that is also the case with the Mahabharata because in a comparison, we may say, if the Bhagavadgita is the soul, the Mahabharata is the body. So the spirit of the Bhagavadgita is embodied in the epic of the Mahabharata. If the Bhagavadgita is a gospel for all life, the Mahabharata epic is a dramatic description of the performances of man as such.

In the early days of spiritual aspiration, it is natural for those days to appear very fine, like a beautiful rising sun. At dawn the sun is so cool that we never feel that it can get extremely hot. Pleasant is the contour of the golden orb that rises in the east. Its internal nature and capacity will be known in midsummer. Early days are happy days. Childhood days and student days are days of freedom, with a kind of satisfaction born of not knowing much of the meaning of life. If all knowing is a great joy, not knowing anything is also a kind of joy. They are two types of extremes. Little babies know nothing, and the spiritual seeking in the early days is like a sapling, a tender plant, and a tender plant is very beautiful to see. It is not manifesting in that budding age the ruggedness of the huge tree that it is going to become one day in the future. A little baby plant with tender leaves, how beautiful it is!

I was referring to the implications and suggestiveness of the first book of the Mahabharata, the Adi Parva, and the subsequent occurrences, the interesting transitional periods one passes through, and if we can study our own selves as spiritual seekers in the story of the Mahabharata, it will be easy for us to discover that spiritual life is not a smooth-sailing affair. It is not blindly walking on a beaten track, a cemented road. There are ups and downs, and zigzag movements. In the initial stage, there is a total oblivion of the difficulty on the path. Every one of us is in that condition, or has been in that condition.

“I shall search for God. There is nothing meaningful in life except the vision of God, communion with God, the realisation of God.” How beautiful is this aspiration! But whoever has passed some years in this world carrying this aspiration in one’s mind will be able to recollect how unintelligent and unclear that enthusiastic feeling was. It was a wonderful feeling. Nothing could be more wonderful, more beautiful, more pious and praiseworthy, and yet it sowed the seeds of difficulty later. Irregularities of behaviour psychically began to manifest. We were not so very clear and positive later on. There were suspicions, doubts, and tendencies of problems, though they did not actually manifest. It is something like what we nowadays call a Cold War, not an actual conflict. It is a kind of uneasiness, and a not knowing what is the direction that is to be actually taken.

In our transitional period of aspiration, which originally was a single beaten track of movement towards only God in the early age, we think, "Neither I want this, nor that. It is only the Father in heaven that I am after. Spiritual salvation is the goal of my soul, and I have no other aspiration." But with a little more growth into the final maturity of the adolescent and the earlier ages of being an adult in spiritual life, doubts arise in the mind. They are all accepted, logically feasible, valid doubts; and these doubts generally, most often, do not leave a person till the end of life.

What are these doubts? They are the voices of the world speaking at the same time, simultaneously with the earlier voice which said that the aim of life is spiritual realisation, union with the Almighty. No wife of a husband will refuse to accept that God is the Ultimate Reality. Everyone will say, "Yes, I understand." But when the husband insists on these issues and becomes pronounced in his love for God in actual outward behaviour, the dear wife, who is the partner of this husband in the house, who cannot deny that God is the Supreme Being and the Ultimate Reality, will add, "You have to listen to my voice also a little bit. I understand, my dear husband, that God is to be pursued, but I am also here, and you cannot say that I am not here." This is what the world tells you when you say, "I shall pursue God." The world replies that you have to consider that it is also existing there. "I have been with you," says the wife, "and you cannot say that you have nothing to do with me." Though religious life is highly praiseworthy and it is the aim of everybody, the world says, "I understand what you say, but you have to listen to what I say also."

This is a difficulty. You do not know what to do. The pulls of the earth reveal themselves in the forms of justifiable doubts, and you feel a duty towards the world. Mature minds begin to feel a difficulty of this kind – and highly mature minds, not ordinary mature ones. Sometimes there are humanitarian pulls from the earthly side, social pulls, and we may not be far wrong if we think they can be even nationally motivated, political pulls which may look like spiritually motivated aspirations. But there are subtler calls of the earth, not so gross as the pulls of humanitarian outlook and social behaviour. The subtler ones are called the instincts and the impulses of the lower nature, as we generally call them. They bring about a tussle in the personality.

I was casually mentioning yesterday that we live in different levels of personality, not only in one level. We live in all the fourteen worlds at the same time. We are the physical body – yes, right. We are also the sense organs; that is also right. We are the prana, yes. We are the mind; that is also true. And we have a reason, an intellect to think. That is also correct. Now, all these layers of our personality are valid expressions and reasonable levels, requiring justifiable attention. We cannot over-emphasise any particular level. Sometimes, in an over-enthusiastic mood, we are likely to lay excessive emphasis on one particular level. It is said that harmony is yoga, and it should be understood as harmony in every blessed thing – harmony in eating, harmony in daily routines, harmony in social behaviour, harmony in your performance of office work or vocational duty, and also harmony in your duty to the inner layers of your own personality. When

it is said that yoga is balance, there is a wide meaning inside this statement. Anything can be stuffed into it. Balance is yoga. "All life is yoga," say some yogis. Sri Aurobindo was fond of emphasising that all life is yoga. What is meant by saying that all life is yoga? And if, at the same time, we say that yoga is balance, then all life is balance. It can be any kind of balance. It is a very great joy to believe that life is balance, and we are not supposed to upset the balance.

In the adolescence of spiritual aspiration certain turmoils of the psyche may manifest themselves in different degrees of expression, and they can be of any shape: one thing in me, one thing in you, and in different persons it is different things. Each one has to write for one's own satisfaction, at least in one's own mind, an autobiography of one's own self. You need not write a book. At least you may be aware of your own autobiography: How was I when I was a little boy? How was I when I was a little girl? What was I doing? What was I thinking? Am I thinking the same thing now? Why should I change my mind now? Traverse your thought through the whole gamut of the life that you have lived from your childhood days, as far as you can remember in your mind. Much of it you may remember, and some minor details you may not remember. You will be surprised at the varieties of experience that you have passed through, and the multitudinous variety of your likes and dislikes, many of which have been dropped as meaningless but which appeared very meaningful in earlier days. "When I was fourteen or fifteen, what were my likes and dislikes? Are they the same today when I am fifty or sixty? Why have they changed? Was I right at that time, or am I right now?" Compare your own status in different levels of your advance in psychological development. This is what I mean by saying to write your own autobiography in your mind, and judge yourself. "What has happened to me today, and what are the justifications for my outlook today as it is?"

What are the difficulties of a spiritual seeker? These are the difficulties the Pandavas had to face. They had even to be exiled into the forest. The third Parva of the Mahabharata is called the Aranya Parva, or the Vana Parva. The exuberance of a tentative placement in luxury and security gave place to a sudden bolt from the blue, unexpectedly come from the skies, as it were, and the royal prince seated on the throne found himself in the thick of the forest. Oh, what a pity was Yudhisthira's fate!

My dear spiritual seeker, we find ourselves in a wilderness after some time. We hop from place to place in search of different kinds of spiritual security and atmosphere. It is a kind of psychic wilderness where we do not know how to properly place ourselves. It is an exile from our original aspiration and the satisfaction and security, the balance of approach and positivity that we seemed to have in our minds in the early days. The Kauravas drove the Pandavas out into the forest.

The wild tendencies within us, which are also in this kingdom of our personality, gain an upper hand. In one interesting, humorous place Acharya Sankara, in his commentary on the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, says the devils in the universe are more in number than the gods. It is a very amusing statement indeed. The devils are greater in number than these gods. Why should the gods

be small in number and the devils be more? Anyway, each one of you can make a commentary on this sentence of Acharya Sankara. The gods get defeated. Sometimes even gods get defeated. In our epic stories and Puranas, we hear of gods being dethroned and vanquished by *asuric* forces. The Pandavas, the virtuous, good, righteous ones, are in the thick of the wilderness of the forest, and the licentious, greedy and unsympathetic forces of the Kauravas are on the throne.

This should not happen to a spiritual seeker. One has to guard oneself against such a predicament. Whatever be the security we may have, however much we may guard ourselves, yet we may find ourselves in the position of the Pandavas. There is a glory of young age of spiritual aspiration. I am not referring to our physical age. Spiritual aspiration also has a young age, which is exuberant and joyous. We feel that we are happy if we have all facilities, and sometimes we appear very elevated as seekers if we become pundits, learned in the sutras, masters of commentaries, or teach in a classical style of language. All these are satisfactions, no doubt. We are enthroned in something. In the Sabha Parva there is enthronement, but the trouble is yet to come. Trouble comes only when the unattended impulses inside are going to speak in their own voice. Unattended impulses are those with which we have not yet made peace.

As I gave a homely example, it would not be possible for the husband to suddenly kick away the wife and go to a meditational mood. He has some duty to the house. The house is this body and everything that is there, and the furniture of this personality, our property, is not easily forsaken with impunity. I do not say that everyone should pass through this stage of wilderness, but mostly everyone passes through that. Everyone falls into a pit, and then wakes up. "Oh, I'm sorry. Here is a pit. I shall not go in this direction." But we will know it only after falling, not before. Nobody can instruct us not to go there. Desires, instincts and impulses are irrational, like naughty children. They will not listen to any advice, and we have to fall and break our neck. Then we will say, "I made a mistake. In future I will not go there."

Then what happens? In spiritual life what is required is sincerity, honesty of purpose, and a genuineness of acquisition. They say there is nothing else required except that. Yet, even very sincere souls are sometimes put to a hard test. We cannot say that the Pandavas were not sincere. They were very sincere, good souls, but they had to undergo this difficulty. What a hardship!

In one place, Kunti prays to the Lord to express the troubles all her children had to pass through and the mysterious way in which God's help came to their succour. And in the end, old Bhishma regretfully states, "What a pity, my dear people! You are good souls, with great mastery in warfare, indomitable strength, great learning, and a person like Krishna as your friend. With all that, you had to suffer untold misery in life. Indeed, mysterious is fate. Providence is difficult to understand." This is what Bhishma uttered in the end. With such security and facility, such hardship had to be faced and could not be avoided.

All of us, all spiritual seekers, are basically good persons. A sincerely aspiring spiritual seeker is a great asset to this Earth. They are what we call the salt of the

earth. Such people are rare to find. A soul that seeks satisfaction in a super-mundane reality, and longs only for that as the only worthwhile thing, is a great manifestation of force, a divinity on Earth. And Yudhishthira stood for that ideal of super-mundane aspiration and righteousness, what we call the righteousness of the kingdom of God, but that righteousness also had to tread the path of thorns. Why should it be like that? Even today, people are not able to understand why such good souls should have been exiled into the forest. For what fault were they exiled?

We may say there was some indiscretion. There are occasions when we may be able to read some meaning of indiscretion on the part of even good ones, which leads to their difficulty and problems. We may accept this point of view also. Even an extremely good person is susceptible to erroneous action, due to what we may call an error of judgment at a particular moment. As we say, why did Yudhishthira have to play dice? He could have withheld himself from that, and so on. Likewise, spiritual seeking may also sometimes get involved in a slight error of judgment, and that error consists in an imbalance of attitude, some protest coming from an unattended part of our personality and society.

In the beginning, it is a protest from society. We will have so many difficulties when we try to free ourselves from the tangles of family attachment, social attachment, etc. Many people come to this ashram who are between two horns of a dilemma. They cannot stay here, they cannot stay there, and they want to stay here, they want to stay there. Such difficulties arise. There is a pull from here, and a pull from there also. And even when we seem to have settled this issue, we will find that we might not have judiciously done it. Sometimes we may vehemently settle an issue. That vehement settling is not a judicious settling. We may settle an issue by giving some pain to one party, which is also one kind of settling. But here, in dealing with our mind, we may not be wise in settling the issue of its demands by giving pain to it from some side, against its own will. Yoga, as is the case with any other enterprise in life, is a sort of educational career. We have to educate ourselves. Force of will is not to be applied except when it is applied as a sort of educational method. It should not be merely a vehemence of the ego or the force of the rod. Sometimes this difficulty is before us.

Every spiritual seeker, every *sadhaka*, should have time to sit alone for one hour every day. Sit under a tree somewhere. Do not chat with people unless, of course, it is a helpful person. Why do you chat unnecessarily? If it is an equal to you or it is a superior person like a Guru, you can chat with him, but do not chat with youngsters. You should go on thinking, "What is my difficulty?" Do you believe that there is no difficulty? And you will not be able to know yourself much, except when you are totally alone to yourself. In the din of the noise of work and social engagement, you lose your personality in the psychology of the crowd, and you will not know anything about yourself. In a large crowd of noise and celebration and function, you forget even your appetite and hunger. You can even miss your meal; you don't bother about it because of the immense satisfaction of the crowd and the noise. But when you are alone, you feel your appetite and would like to have food.

All the things that are inside the mind will slowly start moving when you are alone. There should be no noise. Even scorpions and lizards in the house will not move if you make a lot of noise. They will be still or go into a hole. We make a lot of noise in our life, and so all our impulses are buried inside. This is what psychoanalysts call suppression and repression of impulses, which are not likely to be good for the health of the psyche. They create complexes – a kind of odd behaviour which we sometimes have. Our behaviour is not always very fine and happy, cultured and sweet. Oftentimes we become odd. It is not that we want to be odd, but we suddenly feel pulled to behave like that due to the pressure of something inside. We may repent for it afterwards, but yet we lose our balance occasionally, even in the outside behaviour of our personality, let alone in our balance inside. Therefore, each one of us should find time to sit alone.

And you should never hide your faults to your own self. Nobody would like to tom-tom one's own faults to society, because there is a conflict between desire and social reality. This is what psychology and psychoanalysis say. Human longings do not always concur with social norms, and this is what is meant by conflict with reality causing revolt and various complexes in the individuals of society. But it is better to know one's own position: "I have this weakness in me." Otherwise, if you do not settle these issues, they will gain an upper hand. A silent enemy should not be considered as a friend merely because it is silent. Silent impulses are not necessarily absent problems. They are present potentialities of future difficulties.

Again, a question may arise: what are these difficulties? They are nothing but the calls of our own personality, the calls of our involvements. Anything in which you are involved is a reality and, as I said, our difficulty is a conflict with reality. What are the realities? Anything with which you are concerned is a reality for you. If you are not concerned with anything, it is not a reality. As a citizen of a country, the national law is a reality. You should not say it is not there. You cannot come in conflict with that.

Then there are social norms. You are in an ashram, for instance. You have to live like the other people in the ashram. There are certain systems and norms of behaviour. It is not possible to behave as you would behave in a railway train or in a circus tent, and so on. An ashram is an ashram. If you are in some other place, it is a different matter. And you have got a physical body. It is a reality. Who says it is not a reality? If you say you are not involved in it, then it is not reality. As I mentioned, a reality is that with which you are involved and which you consider as real. Do you consider the body as real or unreal? If you say it is unreal, very good, no problem. But if you say it is real, then to whatever extent it is real, to that extent you have a duty. If you do not do that duty, it will show its strength, and you know what it will do. So are the internal layers, all the layers: prana, senses, mind, emotion, feeling, prejudices, likes and dislikes. And, of course, there is the final aspiration for God. As the Atman inside, you long for God. That is a reality. But is it the only reality, or have you any other reality? Be honest to yourself.

We live in fourteen worlds, as I mentioned. All these layers are the worlds, and each tollgate has to be paid a tax. Even if there are twenty tollgates, twenty times you have to pay the tax. You cannot say that you have paid once. "Now further you cannot go," the collector will say. So these are the taxes that we owe to the layers of our personality. We take a bath every day, we clean our teeth, have ablutions, and have breakfast. This is the tax that we are paying to this body. Otherwise, it will say, "No, you cannot move." You cannot tell the body, "You are unreal. Don't talk to me." It will say, "To the extent I am real, you must pay the tax." Likewise, every impulse will tell you this. If certain injudicious behaviour of yours causes trouble, then the tax collector rises up and prevents you from advancing. Then even your good intentions get suppressed by the legal mandates of unattended issues, which are the realities in which you are involved. Otherwise, you will be exiles.

However, God is always with us. We have a terrible situation to face in this world. The whole world is a battlefield of the Mahabharata, yes, but Sri Krishna is always with us. All the terrific philosophy, difficult to understand, expressed in the Third Chapter of the Bhagavadgita, the crux of the whole of karma yoga, was hard even for Arjuna's mind to comprehend. Is it possible? Is such a thing possible? It is possible, because whenever you find yourself in a crisis of this difficulty of the impossibility to advance, the finger of God will operate if you are sincere. That is the Avatara. *Sambhavāmi yuge yuge* (4.8): "I shall come and help you. You may be in trouble, but I shall help you."

So is this drama of life, which has several stages. As Shakespeare mentioned somewhere, the life of man is all a theatre. The world is a large stage, and we are all *dramatis personae*. The personalities of the Mahabharata are actually not Yudhisthira, Arjuna, Bhima, Duryodhana. There is no Karna, Arjuna, or anyone. We are the people. It is a story about ourselves only; therefore, we shall be happy because as the Pandavas suffered, we may be also suffering in some way, but we shall also have the satisfaction that the great Master is with us. He shall not leave us. Even in the forest he will come and talk to us. So be happy.

Chapter 4

STORIES FROM THE ARANYA PARVA

The Aranya Parva of the Mahabharata is a very vast book. It is the largest book, next to the Shanti Parva, out of the eighteen books of the Mahabharata. All the stories, anecdotes, narrations, mythological descriptions – practically all which we may consider as popular religion – can be seen beautifully pictured in the Aranya Parva of the Mahabharata. It is one of the most interesting treatises, filled with stories of wondrous, miraculous occurrences and the possibilities, secrets, and profundities of creation.

No human being will believe some of the things stated there. They will say that this is not possible, but everything is possible in this creation of God. Nobody believed some centuries back that planes made of tons of metal will fly in the air, but today they do. So we should not be under the impression that we are very wise, or that we know all the features of nature.

I am mentioning one instance of a miracle mentioned in the Mahabharata. The Pandavas were unbefriended in that wilderness. Yudhishthira of the Pandavas, with his queen, had no food to eat. Where is the food in the forest? A rishi told Yudhishthira, “Pray to the Sun for relief of the suffering of hunger.” We will not do that kind of prayer when we are hungry; it makes no sense for us, but it made sense to him. In a touching prayer, Yudhishthira expressed his feelings to the mighty Sun. Now came the miracle. The deity in the Sun emerged out of the orb and offered a vessel, saying, “If food is cooked in this vessel, it shall be inexhaustible.” But a condition was put so that they may not be under the impression that everything was well with them unconditionally. “When your queen eats, the food shall be exhausted. Until she eats, food will always be there. Any number of people can eat from that vessel and the food will be inexhaustibly present.”

Now, can we believe in such a possibility? If we believe in the language of modern science that there is such a thing called the four-dimensional reality, we will accept this truth. It is only in the three-dimensional spatiotemporal world that we can deduct something from something else. In the four-dimensional realm, nothing can be deducted. It is an inexhaustible indivisibility. The full can be taken away from the full, and yet the full only remains: *pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate; pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evāvaisyate*. Even if we take all the food from the vessel, still the food is there as it was. These are wonders.

Today I am not discussing any intricate theme. It is a light vein of a story which you may find very interesting. The Pandavas were getting on with the miracle vessel, the divine bowl offered by the Sun. How can the Sun be so kind to us? I was happy to read a little anecdote in the Kalyana Kalpataru. Kalyana is the magazine of the Gita Press. They narrated a story that actually happened. One gentleman from Europe who was not accustomed to the heat of the Indian sun in summer got sunstroke when he stood in the sun. He could not bear the heat of this summer of India. He had fever, and he took rest and recovered. The next day

some brainwave occurred to him. It appears he took in his hand some flowers and holy water, gazed at the mighty brilliance, chanted a mantra, put it down as an offering, and stood there for more hours than he had stood the previous day, and nothing happened to him. He was perfectly all right.

Sri Krishna, the great superman, was the friend and well-wisher and the unfailing protection of the Pandavas, but he was not available when they were in the state of great misery through which they had to pass, an incident that is described in the Sabha Parva, an earlier section of the book. It was an outrageous condition in which they were sunk, yet the hand of God did not help. Why should God not help us every minute? God only knows. But some explanation is sometimes offered. He comes only when we want Him, or rather, when it is impossible for us to exist without Him. And certain circumstances were there which explain this mystery. We need not go into those details now.

Sri Krishna came with a retinue and greeted the Pandavas in the forest to express regret over what had happened. He did nothing else, only expressed regret. "If I had been there at that time, I would certainly have not allowed this to happen. But for some reason I was engaged otherwise, and I could not be present. I am really sorry for what has happened. That is all. What can I do? I am very sorry."

Now, why he said only that much and did not raise his finger? This is for every spiritual seeker to research. Many a time we see wretchedness superintending over even good souls. Great saints lived a life of hardship, intense suffering, test and turmoil. Everyone had to carry a cross. And it is perhaps necessary that everyone has to carry this cross as long as one is in this world. It is the process of burning and burnishing our spirit, and making us ready for God to embrace us.

Another incident was very humorous. Many of you might have heard this story. The jealous, envious Duryodhana did not want that the Pandavas should have peace, even in the forest. They had been exiled, were in a very bad condition, had lost everything, and this man need not have any fear of them. Even then, he did not want to know that they are alive. One day he had a peculiar idea in his mind, which arose due to some sudden circumstance that occurred. The great sage Durvasa came to Duryodhana's palace, and he was very mightily pleased with the hospitality accorded to him by the king, Duryodhana. "Ask for a boon," said the sage.

Do you know what kind of boon Duryodhana asked for? "I would very much wish that your holiness extend this kind of blessing to my brethren in the forest. They too will be happy to receive you and to extend to you this same hospitality. What can be a greater satisfaction to me than the same blessing be given to them also?" Look at this man. He knew that they could not give anything because they were beggars, and the sage would be so angry. Nobody could encounter Durvasa's anger, and the Pandavas would be destroyed by the curse of this man. So this was the very shrewd suggestion Duryodhana gave. "O your Holiness, please bless them also."

The holy sage went at midday, with eighty thousand disciples. Yudhisthira, who was extremely kind, received the great sage. "Blessed is this spot at this

moment to have your divinity here. You shall receive my hospitality today.” The good man sometimes spoke without proper understanding. What kind of hospitality could he give to eighty thousand disciples? And they have to be served lunch. Well, you may say, there is an inexhaustible vessel, so why not serve? But unfortunately the queen had eaten, and there was nothing left there. And the sage said, “Yes, I shall have my bath and come.” He went to the river for a bath, along with his eighty thousand disciples.

Draupadi, poor lady, knew the predicament. “What have you done?” she asked her husband. “You have said, ‘Please come for lunch.’ What will we cook? And you know the consequence of his displeasure.”

Yudhisthira said, “Now I have spoken, and what I have said, I have said.”

“Oh Lord, protect us!” she wept inside the house.

Now this is another miracle which we will not be able to understand, and because we cannot understand, we cannot appreciate it from the bottom of our hearts. Suddenly there was a knock at the door. She had bolted the door from inside, and was weeping. Again there was another knock, two knocks, three knocks. When she opened the door, it was Sri Krishna standing there. Sri Krishna said, “I am hungry. I want some food.”

Draupadi said, “I am crying with sorrow. Don’t come and taunt and tease me at this moment. I have now a need for help from people like you.”

“Now don’t talk of help and all that. Give me some food,” Krishna said.

“Food? Where is the food?” she asked. “My vessel is empty.”

“No, your vessel is not empty. There is some food in it. Bring the vessel,” said Krishna.

Draupadi brought the empty vessel. It so happened there was a little leaf of vegetable sticking to it, which she had not washed properly. Krishna ate a piece of that little leaf. “Let the Universal be satisfied,” he said, and then he vanished. Where he went, nobody knows. He was not there afterwards.

Now, the interesting part of the story is what happened to these disciples and the Guru taking a bath in the river, who were expected back for lunch? One hour passed, two hours passed, three hours passed, and they did not come. Yudhisthira, the good man, thought they may be annoyed or that something is wrong. He sent Bhima. “Please go and find out what has happened, why they are not coming.” When they saw Bhima, they ran from there. The more he called them, the more they ran. What was the matter? Why did they run? Because when they were taking a bath, they felt their stomachs bloating with satisfaction as if they had eaten food up to the nose. They said, “Now if we go back and he serves a meal, how will we eat? It will be a disrespect that we don’t eat, so we will go from here.” And when that man called them, they all bolted away.

Now, what is this mystery? When the soul is satisfied, the whole body is satisfied. Even when we take our breakfast, lunch or dinner, it is necessary that our soul should be satisfied. This is incidentally some instruction for every one of us, apart from the miracle aspect. We are not supposed to eat like animals, like dogs, just swallowing something crudely while thinking anything and saying anything, and then giving distress to the stomach. It is nothing of the kind. Unless

your soul is satisfied, you have not eaten. There will be a satisfaction arising from the deepest recess of your being if the food that you have taken has been really received by the God inside you. If it has not so been received, you have not eaten. You will not get strength. It will not give you energy. It will only cause illness. Nowadays we have a disrespectful way of eating. There are many hotels and such places. It is an unsanctified way of eating because it is a commercial activity. Everywhere there is business, and eating is also a business. It should not be.

There is a beautiful illustration of this art of eating in the Vaishvanara Vidya of the Chhandogya Upanishad where we are told that eating is a sacrifice that you are performing to the great God that is within you. It is called *prana agnihotra*. It is outwardly performed by traditional Brahmins in India as an external sacrifice, but the real meaning is an internal oblation that is offered to the flames of fire in the form of the five pranas. These five pranas are like flames of fire that receive the oblation that you offer in the form of the food that you eat. Those who are traditionally oriented and instructed in the religious way of eating do not suddenly put the food in their mouth. They do a little ritual. That ritual is an outward gesture of their internal methodology of offering the food to the Atman inside. *Pranaya svaha, apanaya svaha, vyanaya svaha, udanaya svaha, samanaya svaha*. Five times it is offered with some little ritualistic procedure. The Vaishvanara Vidya mentions that when one prana is satisfied, everything connected with the prana is also satisfied. Then that aspect of the mind which is related to that prana is satisfied, and the divinity operating on that aspect of mental function is also satisfied. If the divinity is satisfied, that to which the divinity is connected is satisfied, the five elements are satisfied, and the universe is satisfied. You can imagine, if you eat, the universe is satisfied! So in our Indian custom there is a belief that feeding is a great religious ritual. We do not consider anything as more honourable in the way of charity than giving food – *anna dhana*. No charity is equal to giving food and drink, it is said. It is not just that you are thrusting some material into the stomach of some man. It is a holy act that you are performing.

So this incident in the Mahabharata, where a little leaf that was eaten by a mighty person like Krishna satisfied the stomachs of thousands of people, means he was universally commensurate with all the forces of nature. He was a master yogin, and so when something went in, it went to everybody. His prana was universally spread out, Hiranyagarbha prana, and that is the reason why we believe that the service done to a saint is greater than service done to millions of others. The satisfaction of one spiritual genius is to be considered as of greater value than the satisfaction of many animals and subhuman levels. It is good to give satisfaction to every living being. It is necessary. The Upanishad mentions that. In a very astonishing statement, the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad tells us we should not disturb even an ant moving in the house. This is one passage which touched me very much. Even an ant in the house we should not disturb. And if you do not disturb a living being, even an ant in your house, it will one day protect you in the same way as you have protected it. A day will come when a mouse will save a lion. No one believes that a mouse can save a lion.

Do you know the story of how a mouse saved a lion? A lion was caught in a net of a hunter and, without going into the details of it, a little mouse said, "I shall be of some help to you, if you do not harm me."

The lion inside the net laughed, "You can help me, a little mouse?"

"I may be able to do something." What did it do? It was waiting for the time when the hunter will come to catch the prey. Every day he used to come at a particular hour. So a few minutes before the time when the hunter was to arrive, the mouse started nibbling at that net, and cut all the knots, and the lion immediately ran out. So a mouse can save a lion.

Therefore, even little animals are not to be neglected. They also have to be taken care of. But, nevertheless, the satisfaction of a spiritually elevated soul is greater. If you satisfy a Christ or a Krishna or a Buddha, it is a greater service than satisfying many others in the world. Well, this is a lesson for us, and also an instruction in the mysteries of creation. There is nothing impossible. In a minute, a miracle can take place.

I will tell you another story. Today I will tell you only stories, nothing else. I am tired, so I will tell stories only. There was a great sage. Due to some error in meditation or through some mistake, he was born as a deer. It is not Jada Bharata, the deer about whom you read in the Bhagavata Mahapurana. Due to the power of meditation, it remembered its past birth. It knew what it was but because it was a deer it was vulnerable, accessible to any hunter. One day it was caught by the hunter. What the hunter did was, he tied a net on one side, set a huge configuration of fire on the second side, let off his hounds on the third side, and on the fourth side, he himself stood with a poisoned arrow directed against the deer. There was no protection. It could not go any direction because all the four sides were covered. Suddenly the deer remembered its previous life, and the great power that was there. How it remembered, what strength of thought motivated its prayer at that time, nobody knows. Succour came immediately. You cannot imagine how you can be helped in such a condition, in the worst of conditions. Unimaginable situation! There was a cyclone. Immediately a wind blew, and the wind brought some clouds. The wind blew in such a way that the net was caught by the very fire that the hunter had set. The wind blew in the direction of the net, so the flames caught the net, and the raindrops extinguished the fire. A snake started moving on the ground just near the foot of the hunter, and he felt some sensation. In fright he let off the arrow, which hit his own dog, and the deer was saved. Why should you not be saved? Many are the varieties of these stories. Some other kinds of stories we have in the Aranya Parva of the Mahabharata.

Anyhow, it was a very undecided condition of the future of the Pandavas. Nobody knew what would happen to them, and according to the principles of the exile meted out to them, they had to live incognito for one year. Great troubles they had. It was only after thirteen years of suffering they saw the light of help coming from friends, led by Sri Krishna himself. That is the beginning of spiritual aspiration, righteousness, goodness, and right motivation taking root positively. Until the Udyoga Parva of the Mahabharata, we do not see any positive light in

front of a person. It is all confusion, setbacks. Though there was sometimes a ray of hope descending from heaven in the form of blessings received from Indra and other gods who furnished the Pandavas with weapons and missiles of a mystical type, with all that, they were suffering. And after all, who would like to be unbefriended in the forest? It was the worst thing to be incognito, living unknown, and somehow escaping the notice of other people. When the period of exile was over, all friends came.

There is a period of test for every one of us in this world. It is not that honey and milk will flow immediately, though it must flow one day. It is not that it should not flow – it will flow, it has to flow, but it does not flow immediately. We are put to the rack in the beginning, for reasons God only knows, for reasons of the very nature of the structure of this universe. Sometimes it appears to us that we have nobody in this world. Every spiritual seeker feels that. “I have neither this world nor the other world. I have neither money in my hand, nor friends to help me. I have not even medicine to take if I am sick.” That dejection of spirit may be compared to the condition of the Pandavas in the Aranya Parva. We have nothing. God save us!

This is a very peculiar state of affairs which an honest spiritual seeker may have to pass through. It does not mean that the very first step is a sweet step. It may be a step attended with tremendous hardship. To wrench oneself from attachments to the world, and then feel that one has nothing to replace that which one had earlier, is an indescribable state of mind. We have, in the name of religion, spirituality, yoga, and love of God, freed ourselves from the clutches of human relation, social contact, position, power, authority, land, building, everything, but to replace that little satisfaction of external possession we had, we have nothing with us. So there is a kind of vacuum which should not be there, but will necessarily be there. In the earlier stages of spiritual life, we will find ourselves in a state of vacuum. When we have lost something, if there is nothing to replace that particular position of loss, we can imagine what our condition is. Nobody can exist in a vacuum. It is not possible. But in the earlier stages it looks like a no-man’s land. Neither is the world going to help us, nor is there any sign that God is existing. Let alone seeing Him, even His existence cannot be discovered.

In a mystical language, this is called the dark night of the soul by certain great masters who lived the life of spirit. It is a vacuum, no doubt, but it is not an unnecessary condition. It is a precondition to illumination. Suffering and a vacuity – both will be your possessions. The Aranya Parva is nothing but suffering, and the Virat Parva succeeding it, the life of being incognito, is a kind of vacuity, a very indescribable condition, and Arjuna was in that condition in the first chapter of the Bhagavadgita, they say. He did not know anything; it was all confusion, a vacuous condition of human understanding.

We see darkness everywhere and do not know what to do. The direction that we have to take is not clear. This is not to be considered as a retrogression in our aspiration; it is a precondition to further illumination. It was the stage through which even a man like Buddha had to pass, and everyone has to pass, but we are

likely to mistake it for a fall rather than a necessary step. When we are completely blank and dazed, looking helpless, we do not know whether we are moving forward or downward in our movement. There a Guru's grace is necessary. We should not be in a vacuous condition at that time. That is a dangerous state where we can fall this way or that way, and to tell us where we actually need to plant our foot properly, a Guru's guidance is necessary.

Once that veil of vacuousness and darkness is pierced through and the life of an unknown existence, an undiscovered existence, the Virat Parva is over, we will find the light of the universe radiantly beaming forth on our face, and the whole world will be at our back. The world will tell us, "I am with you." In the beginning it told us, "Don't talk to me. I have nothing to do with you. You have left me, so I shall also not talk to you." This kind of retort may come from the world, and we may be in that condition of sorrow: "Oh, I have nothing." But we have to pass that step of the test given to us by the forces of nature. It is a psychological condition which the mind has to pass through due to detachment and inward freedom that it has achieved from the emotional connections it had with outward objects.

So in the beginning there is a kickback, as it were, given by those centres which were befriended by the human emotions and feelings, but that kick is a temporary kick. Immediately the tables will be turned, and we will find that our enemies become friends. The world which was a horror and a terrible place to live will become heaven in one minute because the world is not hell; it is the creation of God, and God has not created anything ungodly. Nothing can come from God except that which is divine, so we should not imagine that He has created hell, and so on. It is only a temporary state of our involvement in a peculiar predicament of detachment from external connections, and then Sri Krishna comes with the whole army of help. We shall also wait for that day.

Chapter 5

THE UDYOGA PARVA OF THE MAHABHARATA

There is a tremendous tension of enthusiasm, as we may call it, in the Udyoga Parva of the Mahabharata. When a function is to take place on a crucial occasion, important enough to attract the attention of the whole community, of all people, a kind of emotional tension rises to the surface: "Oh, the jubilee is coming!" Day and night great preparations are made, and it is seen that everything is done precisely, meticulously, to perfection. Such interesting, stirring and active descriptions we have in the Udyoga Parva of the jubilant, vigorous, virile preparations, raising our hair on end. The word *udyoga* means intense effort, preparation, toil, and making things ready with energetic motivation. All this is suggestive of the word *udyoga*.

This particular book, the Udyoga Parva, is a classic in a very important sense. There is high literary beauty in the style of writing, and the poet's outlook rises to its pinnacle of perception, as it were, because it is the aim of a crucial action that is contemplated and is to take place. The mind is up in arms before the body is active. The mind has already started doing what the body has yet to do. That is the psychological background of the great battle to be narrated in several books which follow the Udyoga Parva.

The descriptions are breathtaking. Every kind of *dramatis personae* is brought into the picture of this description, God included. However, we shall not, in the light of what we are interested in considering, go into details of the literary aspect of the dramatic grandeur of presentation of this book of the Mahabharata.

Everything is ready. We have only to utter the words 'one, two, three', and one bursts into action. One is just in the field of activity, not merely preparing to do something. The field is displayed before our mind in the Bhishma Parva, which is the Sixth Book of the Mahabharata, in which the Bhagavadgita occurs.

It is difficult to fully appreciate the interesting and complicated background of the context of the Bhagavadgita gospel unless we know the whole background of the Mahabharata epic because, as I mentioned, it looks as if the whole Mahabharata is the body, of which the Bhagavadgita is the soul. The Bhagavadgita is the theory; the Mahabharata is the theory put into action. Being and doing seem to be the forte of the Bhagavadgita and the Mahabharata narration.

We are basically persons occupied with a notion that the salvation of the soul is the goal of life. Liberation is our main objective in living in this world. Freedom it is that we really seek. We have to work hard for this great attainment, and everything necessary for the realisation of this ultimate objective is to be done as early as possible. We know what it is all about, and what things are necessary as a preparation for this contemplated achievement. Now, the crux of the matter is that we have already a clear plan, and know what is necessary for the fulfilment of this aspiration. These backgrounds of our premeditation, prior to our actual engagement in this task, are important enough.

There is a personality called Arjuna in the history of the Mahabharata battle, and we know what this name signifies – a brilliant person, a youthful, well-balanced personality, highly educated, mighty in the execution of deeds, capable in every sense of the term, with power and knowledge combined, and with enthusiasm motivating every contemplation. He was an ideal man, to say the least, a blend of every virtuous character, with a coming together of properties which contribute to make the human personality a logical perfection. We do not have such perfect human beings easily available in the world. There is something lacking in everybody. But here is the poet's presentation of an ideal human being before us. Arjuna lacked nothing politically, socially, economically, intellectually, and in every sense which we in the world may regard as significant or meaningful. So he was the chief spokesman, we may say, in the context of the great battle of the Mahabharata.

Sometimes a sincere question is raised: How can a gospel which has an eternal value, which seems to be a permanent message coming from a divine source, be associated with a peculiar human context which we call a battle? Often, in moods of partial understanding and on the basis of an emphasis of one aspect of the matter, the Bhagavadgita is called a war gospel. It urges us to act by raising arms and taking up cudgels, but it can be understood in any other way also. There are many standpoints from which we can photograph different kinds of pictures of this Bhagavadgita context. It is not a war gospel, though it looks as if it is that from the point of view of a surface reading of the grammatical meaning of the language used. But it is naturally, and perhaps very rightly, a gospel which has relevance to the inner meaning of what we call a battle, a war.

What exactly is meant by the words 'battle' or 'war'? We have our own prosaic, human, political and historical ideas about this very unpleasant event which has always been part and parcel of history and human existence. But while it is true that people engage themselves in battles and wars to solve a particular problem or a situation prevailing at a given moment of time, it is not the intention of the Bhagavadgita to say that any problem of human existence can be solved merely by reading the historical aspect of the human side of empirical existence.

We never do anything unless we are sure that our doing is going to solve a particular problem or necessity in our life. If a necessity does not arise, we will not budge an inch, and we will not act. There is a need felt for action, and that need is commensurate with a difficulty behind it. What is meant by 'a need' or 'a necessity'? It is an urge to set right a particular condition that is prevailing at present, implying thereby that the present condition is not a happy, perfect, expected condition. A finitude of the prevailing situation, an irregularity of it, an oddness about it, an unhappiness that is attached to it, may be considered as what we call the need of the hour.

Now, our actions are actually a kind of movement on our part to solve a situation which has to be understood very carefully in its subtle, threadbare meaning. It is a state of conflict, a kind of confrontation in which we find ourselves every moment of time, practically every day, in a situation when we are

face to face with some circumstance with which we cannot reconcile ourselves as it looks on its surface, or as it is capable of our understanding in our present state of intellect and mind. We have to understand here again the subtle shade of meaning behind the word 'conflict', which enlarges itself into the cruder meanings of what we call battle and war, etc. They all mean the same thing finally, though the dimension they take may vary, and their grossness or subtlety may also be different.

There is a difficulty. We have a difficulty always, and there is not a single moment when we are not in some difficulty because if there is no difficulty of any kind, in any sense of the term, at any place, in any aspect of our life, it would be difficult to imagine that we would be living and doing things in the manner that we do now. There is perpetual motivation in some direction in our life, and our life is a complicated network of involvements and relations. What is meant by 'our life'? It is a large web of interrelations where everything is connected in some way, in some proportion, in some emphasis of intensity. It is my particular need or necessity felt at this hour, but my need or necessity is not unconnected with the environment in which I am living, and it is not possible to assure myself that I am totally free from any kind of association with my environment outside.

The Bhagavadgita, therefore, goes to the root of human involvements, and conflict is just this peculiar inability on the part of an involved individual to properly assess the nature of its relation with the environment in which it is involved. I am in a particular environment. Firstly, it is difficult to fully understand what this environment is. Secondly, it is also difficult to understand what my connection with this environment is. A twofold difficulty is there facing us every day. I would not be so foolish as to imagine that I have nothing to do with anything in the world. I seem to have some connection with things, but what are the things with which I am connected? A purely parochial outlook, which emphasises only a blinkered attention of the mind in a given direction, will say that this is the thing in which I am involved, and this is the thing with which I am connected as, for instance, when a person is up in arms against somebody, or against some circumstance.

Very rarely does a human being find it possible to take all the factors involved in the circumstance into consideration, because we have a capacity to be prejudiced, and we are not incapable of that state. We are capable of a prejudice which is motivated by sudden sparks of emotion. We are not always judged by or motivated by an impersonal rationality of approach. It is true that we have reason, and that faculty is a blessing. But there are other forces operating within us, and we find that it is not always possible for us to blend these potentialities within us. I made a reference to this difficulty sometime back. Always we are laying emphasis on one side of the issue. A total picture rarely presents itself before our minds.

It is up to each person to appreciate why this situation arises, why mostly people are incapable of a balanced outlook in anything. There is always a spurt or a pressure of a particular aspect of our psychic personality. It is not that all the soldiers within are arrayed in a perfectly logical fashion to form a beautiful,

artistic pattern. It is a hodgepodge of arrangement, a jumble, as it were, of our internal faculties, a chaos. It is not a good regiment that is within us. It is a crowd of clamorous powers, naughty children, an uncontrollable mob making a loud noise, as it were; we do not know who starts the noise, and what is actually the meaning of this noise. A loud noise from inside us says "Do this. I want this", and then we feel that we have to do something in answer to this noise. If a large crowd shouts "We want this", we do not know who is saying that. Everybody seems to be saying it, though someone may be shouting at the top of their voice. Our personality is mostly imbalanced. We are not psychically balanced. This is the reason why we have physical, social, and sometimes even psychological difficulties. We are restless. This is the conflict in which we find ourselves every day.

The conflict of the actual historical battle is, no doubt, a conflict, and it is also to be taken into consideration, but it is not outside the environment in which human beings are involved. We are not always judicious to appreciate that even a historical battle is not purely historical. It is not a political event as it appears on the surface. It is a deep secret of the human psyche affecting a larger atmosphere, the whole world, and it may even reach up to the skies. Even the stellar regions may be involved in exerting some influence in the action of a single man on Earth. It may be an emperor, a dictator, an administrator, a major general, a businessman – any person does something, and he or she is convinced that only that person is the motive and the impulsion behind the action. Sometimes a group of people believes that the group is the impulsion, and a nation believes that the nation is the source. They may not be wholly correct in this opinion because, on a very in-depth analysis, it is difficult to believe that events occur in one particular place. It is perhaps not entirely true that actions are local actions. It does not appear that any event is connected with that particular apparent locality only, as a boil on the foot does not appear to be an action of the foot only. There seems to be some trouble in many other places manifesting in a particular locality of the body. Every conflict is a kind of irreconcilable illness, a morbid condition; but where is its source?

Now, in the finding of an answer to this question as to where the source of this conflict is, we are likely to make a mistake in thinking that other people – so-and-so, this person or that country – is the enemy and they are the causes of the conflict. We have such answers easily available. But man, being finite even in his understanding, seems to have finite answers to these questions.

The Bhagavadgita wants to be your good friend. The Bhagavadgita wants to be a good physician of your illness. The Bhagavadgita does not want to make money off of you as a patient by giving you one tablet for your headache and saying, "Quit, now you are okay." It wants to diagnose your entire disease and say, "My dear friend, this is the difficulty." A holistic interpretation of medicine is the proper way of treating an illness, as people say nowadays. It means that you have to consider the whole being of the person when you treat that person for any particular illness. It is not the leg or the nose or the head or the throat that is ill; you are ill. This is what expert medical men tell us.

The Bhagavadgita tells us, my dear friend, that the war is not taking place in the Kurukshetra field. It is not taking place, it never took place, and it is not going to take place in any country. It is not caused by this person or that person; it is not the fault of this community or that community. It is a complicated situation, into which you have to go deep to solve the problem, if your intention is really to solve it. If you want only to do a patchwork and imagine that you have solved the problem, well, do it. There will be a cessation of the battle; there will be peace, as it were, and after a few years it will burst forth into action once again because it was not a peace, it was a tentative, disgruntled truce. Actually, it was not peace at all.

So, the great solution coming from a great being, Sri Krishna, the mastermind who is at the back of the Bhagavadgita, tells us that even a little event in our daily life – it may be an event in the kitchen, not necessarily in a huge administrative complex – is an action that has to be understood in its proper setup, in its proper relationship to the whole environment. This you will not be able to appreciate properly because you are thinking you are inside the building and it is outside, and you are a private body, you have connection with only a few people, and all events are locally conditioned. These ideas of localisation, parochialism and pinpointed events to geographical conditions and national occasions are the effect of the finite mind thinking. The human problem is not a finite problem, it is an infinite problem. Infinite is man's problem. It is not a national problem, it is not a political problem, it is not mine, it is not yours, and if you take these things in that light, you will never solve any problem. Therefore, a universally oriented understanding had to come into action to solve this great problem of human life. That is the task of the Bhagavadgita.

Chapter 6

BEAUTY AND DUTY IN THE BHAGAVADGITA

(Spoken on Bhagavadgita Jayanti)

It is believed that there was a super-mundane manifestation of power in a particular context of an ancient historical period which is said to defy any relevance to mere temporal events and any attempt to interpret all earthly history in terms of an unimaginably super-mundane system of the evaluation of values. It is as if there was a sudden change of the entire administrative system, and a new policy began to give significance to every project, every action and every event. History has to be read in the light of a super-history, a trend of thinking which is not unknown to some philosophers of history these days. There is a non-temporal motivation, evidently, in all temporal processes; otherwise, it would be difficult to explain how there can be any meaning in temporal existence.

It is not difficult to appreciate that the significance of temporality cannot itself be temporal. If some meaning is to be there behind events we call temporal existence, that meaning certainly should be something other than the temporal. This is common sense, and simple understanding. Our life cannot be explained merely by the processes of our life. Life as we live, as we understand, as is recorded in history, cannot be explained by these processes themselves. Our longings cannot be explained and accounted for by the longings themselves. Desire is not the explanation of a desire. The explanation is somewhere else, not in the upsurge of desire itself. The world cannot explain itself. The explanation of the world cannot be the world. There must be something other than the world to explain what the world is. This is to have a logical insight into the meanings behind life's adventures, if meanings are there at all; but a meaning there seems to be. Meaningless life we do not seem to be living. But where is the meaning? To read meaning into something is to discover in it something other than itself. We are not just seeing an object to understand it. We bring into action a principle of operation which explains the meaning of the object.

Now, it appears that sometimes in the drama of the creation of God, in the cosmic history of events, there comes a time – we have to speak in guarded words here because we do not know how to express these events in their proper connotation – there seems to have arisen, and there seems to be arising occasionally, certain circumstances which require an interpretation; else, perhaps, the purpose of creation is not to be served. It is necessary to provide a system of understanding things while it occasionally becomes difficult to understand events in nature, processes in history, and conditions in life.

Today we are in a small gathering, once again attempting to bring to our memories these super-historical mysteries that seem to burst forth in the midst of historical events, the occasions being called in our own language the coming of a Christ, the birth of a Krishna, the advent of a Buddha, the giving of a gospel, the

happening of a miracle, or God coming, or a vision being presented before the great saint and sage; it is something which is other than the normal, understanding normalcy in the sense of our acquaintance with the world of sense.

The context of the Bhagavadgita, the occasion for whose delivery we are bringing to our memories today, was certainly a historical occasion. But that historical occasion could not manage itself. People require a ruler, as they are unable to rule themselves independently; and to discover, to find, and to install an administrator or a ruler of people is to endeavour to fix the location of a significance in their own lives. Everyone knows there must be some significance in the lives of everybody, but we wish to see the significance operating actively in our lives. It is otherwise difficult to understand how we require a ruler at all. It is nothing but the requirement of a principle of operation, understanding and action. We are not expecting a person before us. A ruler is not a person. We are also persons; in what way are we less? That is not actually what we want when we appoint a king, a monarch or a chief administrative power. We do not require a person; we require a location of intelligent interpretation of the values of life, an impartial observance and observation of the needs of the whole populace, which is a crude manifestation before us of the need we feel in our lives for something which is other than our own selves, something other than pure nature, pure earth, pure mountains and trees. Every moment of time, every day of our lives, we require, we feel a need, a necessity, to transcend, to exceed ourselves, and to allow the operation of an understanding which is not necessarily our individual understanding as it acts in a discreet manner in each one of us.

Everyone has an understanding. There is no one bereft of it totally. If that were the case, where comes the need for a regulation, a system, an operation? Why should we require any kind of rule, constitution and system when everyone has an understanding, everyone knows what is proper, and no one is the less for it? The need is something beyond ordinary human requirement. It is a human requiring a super-human operation. A regulation of any kind, whatever it be, in any measure, in any percentage, is a super-human invading and occupying, controlling the human and the particular.

The Mahabharata was a big medley of the coming together of individuals, many people joining together and deciding things for themselves – a mob, a crowd gathered together in a field of action, operation, the meaning of which to some extent was clear to each one, but its basic principle was not clear. Some sort of an understanding of every performance in our life we do have, but occasionally we find that this understanding is inadequate. There are knotty, difficult situations in our lives when our usual understanding seems to be inadequate. We have our daily routine which we conduct fairly well with our understanding, and we do not feel that we are inadequate in the understanding of our daily performances, but there are certain occasions when we find that our understanding is not adequate to the purpose. Then it is that we run hither and thither for help from a superior understanding. This superior understanding is not to be confused with any person, though, unfortunately for us human beings,

the manifestation even of this superior understanding happens to be through a person only. Sometimes it happens to be in a group of people.

I had occasion sometime to mention that the beauty of a painting is not in the ink and the canvas, though the painting contains nothing but the ink and the canvas. You would be wondering, "What is beauty if not the presentation of the pattern of the ink on the canvas?" It is not possible for anyone to clearly say what beauty is. It is a super-personal manifestation in the context of the personality of the ink and the canvas. That is why it is so attractive that we go on gazing at it and are drowned in its perception. Beauty is inexplicable. That is why it is so attractive. We go on gazing at it and are drowned in its perception. It is not capable of understanding through mathematical equations. Mathematically it is very easy to understand what a painting is – so much of ink and so much square feet of canvas; so much area it occupies geometrically, and so it is easy, mathematically very simple to understand. But beauty is not mathematics, and duty is also not mathematics.

There are two great difficulties in life: the understanding of duty and beauty. Neither of these will be clear to our minds, though only these two things control our lives. There are only two things that pull us vehemently in their direction: beauty and duty. We cannot escape the call of duty, nor can we escape the call of beauty. Neither of these can be really understood, however much we may wrack our heads.

In the Bhagavadgita we have the presentation of a great beauty, and also the explanation of a great duty. Both these things are there. God is the centre of the supreme duty incumbent upon everyone in creation, and God is also the greatest beauty. The cosmic form, the Visvarupa Darshana, was the pinnacle of beauty, grandeur, and magnificence. It was also the explanation of duty. In that picturesque miracle which is feebly explained before us in the words of the poet, a staggering reality is envisioned. 'Staggering' is the only word I can use, because our heads will become giddy thinking that. We will become giddy if we begin to think what beauty is. We will also become giddy if we begin to know what duty is. These are the two things which will make our heads reel. A person who is absorbed in the true conception of duty ceases to be an ordinary human being, and one who knows what beauty is also is not an ordinary individual.

Poets and sages, therefore, are superhuman. They do not speak an ordinary human style, though it appears they employ the medium of human expression through a brush or through a pen. Whatever be the medium that they employ, it matters not; their intention is the same. So the human crowd of individual understanding that brought about that gathering of people in the battlefield of Kurukshetra found that it cannot explain itself. It appeared that everything is clear. In the earlier stages, everything seems to be fine. Yes, we understand, but when we are face to face with a dark screen or thick wall, we find we cannot penetrate through it.

So everything was clear to everybody; otherwise, why should they gather there in such a large crowd? But when the inward constituents of human nature were brought to the surface of direct action, they told each individual, "You are

not intended to understand us.” A confused presentation of ideas is the picture of the First Chapter of the Bhagavadgita – an individual man speaking, and an individual speaking his ideas of some situation which is not necessarily human and individual.

A superhuman difficulty was there. The question was a simple one, namely, the question of the methodology of the battlefield. But that little question actually rose and blossomed forth into another question altogether: the question of mankind itself. One little man’s problem dug out the problem of everybody. It was originally one person’s problem, and it could have been answered then and there by somebody else, but the problem of that one person was so deep that when one had to go to the bowels of that little question of one man, the deepest roots of it, it was found that it touched the problem of everybody. As we go deep into the root of a single wave in the ocean, we seem to be touching the whole ocean. So one question, a little thing of a simple matter, actually brought into the field of action a terrible consequence of the need to solve the whole problem of creation itself.

It appears the Bhagavadgita, in that attempt to solve the mystery of the whole creation of duty and beauty, and many more things, lays down the central constitution of the cosmos, and inasmuch as this central constitution enactment, ordinance and law cannot avoid referring to the Supreme Creator, He is also brought into the picture.

So it is a wonder of wonders that has been bequeathed to us, the coming of the Bhagavadgita; we may call it the coming of the rule of God. We do not know what it is that actually came – a miracle coming and transporting our hearts, burning and burnishing our understanding, thrilling us through the pores of our body, bringing our soul into action to the surface of consciousness, and making us for the moment super-individual, and perhaps divine.

May this message be in our minds that a super-individual and superhuman principle is operating from moment to moment, even now, even in the midst of our earth-earthly humdrum activities in this world. Such a message is of the Bhagavadgita. It is *ascharya*, in the word of the Bhagavadgita itself. *Āścaryavat paśyati kaścīd enam āścaryavad vadati tathaiva cānyaḥ, āścaryavac cainam anyaḥ śṛṇoti, śrutvāpy enam veda na caiva kaścit* (BG 2.29): Nobody can explain what it is because it is a wonder, and if anyone can speak it, that also must be a wonder. If anyone can understand it, that also must be a wonder because what is so conveyed is also a wonder. We hear of it many times, yet nobody really understands it fully. So says this verse of the Bhagavadgita. But we shall understand it if we are receptive to the inflow of that super-mundane into this mundane outlook of our human personality. God bless you.

Chapter 7

CAN WAR EVER BE JUSTIFIED?

It is easy to enter into the spirit, the intention, the purpose and the meaning of what the Bhagavadgita is attempting to tell us because, as we know already, it is said to be a message come from Eternity. 'Eternity' is the word. It was a grand, cosmical circumstance. The word 'cosmical' is inadequate; something more than that it was, which was the source of this message, and it defied all limitations of time and space – defied in the sense that it overcame all these limitations.

It is necessary for us to properly appreciate what it would mean to break through the limitations of space and time. What would happen to us if we are not to think in space and not to think in time? If we are to speak something not in space and not in time, what would we say? Now, we may be under the impression that we will tell some grand, perpetual message if we are not in space and not in time. It is not like that. We will not be saying merely some grand thing. It is not possible for us to imagine that kind of state. Even when we try to understand and appreciate and place ourselves in the context of there being no space and no time, we will be thinking in space and time only. Even in our attempt to overcome space and time, we are in space and time. So even our non-spatial attempt is bound by spatial limitations.

Therefore, human beings that we are, we may not be able to fully appreciate that divine occurrence. We do not know what word to use to describe it. No word will be sufficient. How do we speak, how do we explain ourselves in the presence of what we consider as the Almighty Creator of the universe? Even when we conceive the Almighty, we have our own human way of thinking. There is no other way except the human way. Such is the depth into which man has sunk into the human way of thinking. We have been saturated through every pore of our personality, saturated through every pore of our being, by the intrusion of the conditions of space, time and objects. There is no other way of thinking except through objects. God is an object for us, and a message is nothing but a word written or spoken. It cannot be anything else. But this is none of this. It is not a sound uttered by the tongue of a person, and it is not conceivable by us. And when I said it is Eternity that gave the message for the solution of temporal problems, we may not be able to accommodate ourselves to this peculiar condition where the temporal stands face to face with the Eternal. It is man facing God. We do not know what it means, what it can mean. Our heads shall reel even to think what it could be. How would we face the Almighty?

There is no such thing as that. We cannot face that condition. We get transfigured when we come face to face with that circumstance. We become another thing altogether. The temporal, if at all it is to be accepted that it can face the Eternal, has to get suffused by the law of the Eternal. It is like seeking an interview, to speak in homely language, with a lofty personality, and we will adjust ourselves to the circumstances of that person. We would not go as we are at your home. The person with whom we are seeking an interview may be in a

very highly placed, lofty position, and we have to adjust ourselves in every way to the circumstance of that person. In that way, the temporal may have to adjust itself to the conditions of Eternity to understand what Eternity can say.

There is a little sentence towards the end of the Mahabharata where the very same person who was told this Gita, Arjuna, wanted to hear it a second time. Sri Krishna was sitting near him in a garden, as it were. "I would like to hear once again, great Lord, what you told me in the beginning of the war."

"Oh, no," Krishna said. "It cannot be repeated." The reply of Sri Krishna was in half a sentence, half a verse, in the Mahabharata. *Param hi brahma kathitam yogayuktena tan mayā* (M.B. 14.16.12): "When I spoke that, I was in the state of the Absolute. It cannot be summoned a second time like that." It is difficult to understand the meaning of this little half sentence. "I was in a state of unification with the Supreme Absolute. In that state it was spoken, and once again it cannot be summoned."

Well, we cannot understand what it means. That it cannot be summoned frequently shows that we cannot be always friends with the Eternal. We cannot be walking with friendship, shaking hands with the Eternal on the streets. Maybe sometimes we can befriend it, but not every day. It is not possible. Why it is not possible, let each one of us understand for one's own self.

The point is, it was an unusual revelation which was necessitated by a usual occurrence in the circumstance of a social situation: how one should behave in a given condition. At that time, it was a simple question: how one should behave in the circumstance of that impending battle. It was a question that arose in the mind of one person, Sri Arjuna, in the environment of a battlefield where many were arrayed in the fray, and we may ask why this question arose. It was a simple thing. It was very clear what the matter was. What is the need for a question? Everyone knew what it was, and it was decided long before. To understand what a battle is, too much thinking is not necessary as to some extent it is clear to everyone's mind. But what was it that was not clear to the mind of Arjuna? He puts his position in a few phrases, as we have it mentioned in the First Chapter of the Bhagavadgita itself. It is a long haranguing, but the point is simple, which is a point which every one of us also will raise in our day-to-day activities.

We have some doubts in our mind, lurking at the back of our conscience, when we engage ourselves in any kind of action. Sometimes we suspiciously go ahead with our duties. What is the outcome of this action? We are not clear about it. It may be the proper thing; it may not be the proper thing. "I have been somehow pushed into this situation, and will I succeed in it?" We are not always sure of the success of our engagements. Nobody does something to get defeated in the adventure. Even when we go to war, our intention is not to get defeated, much less to die there. The intention is to win victory and return. Nobody says, "Let me go and die there." We say, "I shall win victory, and come." But there is a fear. "Is it certain that I shall win victory? Why should not the other side win victory? There is a possibility." Where there is a doubt that the adventure may not end in success, is it worthwhile undertaking that adventure? Why not keep quiet? Why take the first step at all because no one can be sure of the

consequences of one's action, inasmuch as the conditions of the fructification of the result of an action do not seem to be all in one's own hand. Even if we sow seed in the field, it is not one hundred percent certain that the expected crop will come because many other factors are there conditioning the growth and the maturing of the crop.

There was another side of it which disturbed Arjuna's mind, apart from the question of the success or the defeat. It was a war. Even today politicians, statesmen and social philosophers do not seem to have come to the conclusion as to the meaning of war itself. What is its justification? There are those who say it cannot be justified under any circumstance. It is a beastly behaviour of man and, therefore, it cannot be justified. Now I am digressing a little from the point I raised, in order to throw light on some interesting issue which occupies many people's minds these days. It is a totally unjustifiable behaviour of man, that which we call battle or war, yes. So it should not be there. If everyone in the world says it should not be there, it will not be there. Yes, fine. Does it imply that everyone should accept that war should not be there? We feel that everyone should accept that it should not be there.

Now, why is it that everyone does not accept that it should not be there? It is because of various reasons which are psychological, and perhaps bordering upon cosmical evolution. Do we want that every man in the world should think the same thought? Very fine, if it could be possible that everyone should think the same thought. There should be no difference in thinking. This does not happen. Because of anthropological, historical, natural reasons, we will not expect all individuals to behave in the same way. And the world being a house of many living beings apart from merely the human, the subhuman level also should be considered part of natural history. The world is not a house only for human beings. You would wish that every living being should have the same attitude always. If that were the case, there cannot be one pouncing on the other, one exploiting the other. There would be no fear of one from another.

But for reasons which are obvious to students of natural history and evolution, this is not possible. The cow will certainly wish that the tiger should not pounce on it. Why should they not be friends? But the tiger is unable to think in that manner, for reasons which are not entirely in its hands. A condition will not prevail in the world where there will be a uniform way of thinking in all living beings; therefore, it is the opinion of certain thinkers that war cannot be avoided as long as the world exists in the way it exists. Then, if that is the case, a most unjustifiable thing has to be accommodated with every circumstance in one's life. If there is at least one person in the world who cannot believe that war is not justifiable, it becomes an unavoidable circumstance. It may not become a justifiable thing; it becomes an unavoidable thing. If it is unavoidable, what should be our duty under that condition? What should the cow do when the tiger says, "I will not listen to you"? This is a great question: Shall I offer myself? Shall I pursue the principle of war and battle being unjustifiable? Even my spirit of retaliation may be unjustifiable, because to retaliate is to engage oneself in war,

so I have already accepted that it is unjustifiable. So if I am to pursue a principle of the unjustifiability of war, I should not retaliate if there is aggression upon me.

These are questions which are not easily answered. There are some people who pursue a very extreme view of the philosophy of *ahimsa*. I read a passage of Bertrand Russell, who wrote something on it. He was a philosopher of every kind of thought. You will find him thinking different systems of thought at different levels of his life. In one place he says it has to be accepted that non-aggression is the law of life. Then what would be the consequence? He gives an illustration of a country being invaded by another country if the country is to pursue the principle of nonaggression to the hilt. Mahatma Gandhi did not believe in that kind of extreme *ahimsa*, though he is said to be one of the protagonists of it. Many questions were put to him. I myself was one who put a question to one of his great leaders, his right hand. He was not saying that aggression can be tolerated. Then I said, "Then, what is your principle? You have diluted your principle of nonaggression by saying that it cannot be tolerated." He was giving some sort of explanation which is difficult to understand.

However, one of the extreme types of policy of nonaggression is: Truth must triumph always, and the triumph of truth need not necessarily mean its material triumph. This is a very hard thing for a materially bound mind to accept. It implies the acceptance of the justice of God and the retribution which God will mete out to a man who does the right thing – if not in this world, in another world. Even death is considered by these people as an acceptable thing, provided it is met by a person in the pursuit of truth. There are others who say: You are not supposed to die. Life is sacred. Suicide and a deliberately entering into the field of dying, where dying has become a certainty, may not be considered as wisdom. In all circumstances you should protect your life, because the last value in existence is existence itself. You have to exist first for any other value to be meaningful. If the final value, which is existence, is itself to be threatened, then every other value falls. So under every circumstance, life has to be protected, and you cannot sacrifice it under any circumstance.

In the Mahabharata itself there is one section called Appadharma. Appadharma means 'your attitude under critical moments'. 'Critical moments' means 'threats to life'. When life itself is at stake, what will you do? There, the usual norms of behaviour get transformed. The rigidity of social mandate gets relaxed, and you are permitted to behave in certain ways, which permission will not be granted under normal conditions.

There is a little story in the Chhandogya Upanishad. There was a poor, learned Brahman, almost starving to the point of dying. He was going to attend a sacrifice, or a *yajna*, that was being performed by the king or the ruler of that country, expecting to receive some presents in that great performance. Utter poverty is the only word that can explain his condition. On the way he met an elephant driver, a person who was considered a low-caste man, from whose hands nothing can be accepted by a high-caste Brahmin. That elephant driver was eating some beans, and he had eaten half. Firstly, one cannot eat from that man's hand. Secondly, half-eaten stuff is the worst thing. It cannot even be touched.

The Brahmin said, "Will you give me a little of these beans? I am dying of hunger."

"Oh great Brahmin, I an elephant driver. How would I give it to you?"

"I do not want to hear anything. Please give. I am dying of hunger."

The elephant driver gave the beans to the Brahmin, who ate them.

Afterwards, the elephant driver said, "Take some water also, to drink."

"No, you are a low-caste man. I cannot take the water."

The elephant driver said, "How was it that I was not a low-caste man when I give you the beans, but now suddenly I have become that when I offered you water?"

The Brahmin replied, "I would have died had I not eaten the beans, but I need not take water from you because I can get it anywhere else. Where it was absolutely essential, even a transgression of an accepted principle is permitted because it was a question of dying, and life is sacred. Nothing can be more valuable than life, nothing more sacred. But why should I take water from you? There is plenty of water anywhere. So I should not take advantage of this laxity of principle always, where it is not necessary to take advantage of that; but where it is unavoidable, I can take advantage."

Don't you believe that a little dose of liquor, wine or brandy may be administered to a person who is unconscious? A man has fallen from a tree and is unconscious. Just to revive his senses, they give a little brandy, wine, whiskey, whatever it is. But would you give it always to a person? So a most objectionable thing sometimes becomes a very necessary thing, and its objectionable character is abolished because of the absolute necessity for it. These are certain quandaries when trying to understand what one should do when there is aggression on oneself.

I had a little talk with Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj on the anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi. We had a little celebration here. I had a peculiar brainwave. It was between us only. That question which I raised before him is still unanswered. He is trying to answer it, and I am also trying to answer it. Anyhow, we have tried to reconcile ourselves somehow or other, and come to a conclusion in some way. I wrote on a small piece of paper and handed it over to him, because it was the occasion of the birth of a great man who was an uncompromising protagonist of *ahimsa*: Under any circumstance one cannot kill. I asked in this little note I passed to Swami Chidananda, "Do you believe that *ahimsa* is uncompromising?"

"Yes," he said. "It is uncompromising."

"What would you like a country to do when it is threatened with invasion?" He thought for a few minutes. He cannot say, "Let them invade." It is a very difficult thing to say that. Nor can he say, "We will attack them." If he says that, then the principle fails.

Then he gave me a single-sentence answer, "Mahatma Gandhi did not say that an aggressor should be tolerated."

I said, "Then where comes *ahimsa*? What is meant by *ahimsa*? I can go and attack anybody because I don't like him. Then I am justified."

Then he said, "This principle, which is highlighted in the sutra of Patanjali also, says that *ahimsa* should have no compromises." It is mentioned in the sutra of Patanjali that it should not be limited by place, time and circumstance. It should not be that in some place one can attack, under certain conditions one can attack, and at certain times one can attack. Under every condition it is not permitted. Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj told me, "This is a rule for those who are striving for moksha, and not for others."

I said, "Do you want others to go to hell, that others should not go to moksha – that the warriors who protect the person who wants to go to moksha should go to hell?"

Ah, this has become a difficult question again, because why should the warriors go to hell? They also should go to moksha. And why should I go to moksha and you go to hell? You protect me. I want you to fight for my sake so that I may go to moksha? What a justifiable argument! It is still in the boiling pot. The question has not been answered. Who is to go to hell, and who is to go to heaven?

These questions were put by Arjuna in a different way. "It is not at all justifiable," he said. "It is not possible to fight because firstly, there was a little question of the success or failure of it, but secondly there is a more crucial question: It is a heinous crime to kill. Nothing can be worse than that. We will all land in perdition. Then, there is a third argument: What would be the consequence of a total destruction of mankind in battle? Anyone who has read history will know what would be the consequence: wretchedness to the core. All ethics and morality go to dogs. There is no question of ethics and morality where life and death are the question, and you will drive people to that condition by depriving them of every security. All the men die and all the wives are without husbands, with no support for them. What will happen? Promiscuous mixing, confusion, chaos, worse than anything that is conceivable will be the consequences of destruction in war, even if we win. Take for granted we are going to win and they will die; let it be, but how many will die? All will go, and then there will be social chaos. Shall we be responsible for it? Do you agree that this is good? Secondly, it is bad to kill. Thirdly, will I really win? Therefore, it is not at all proper to go further in this project. I shall not do anything."

Now, this is a human question which was humanly answered because we are always faced with some counter-correlative of a position whenever an issue is raised. Every issue has a counter issue. You cannot have an absolute issue in this world, and you do not know how to correlate these two sides of an issue where two sides are always there for every issue. When there are two sides of an issue, which side are you going to take? And how do you know which is the right side? The question of the Bhagavadgita is: How do you know what is right?

I will close by quoting an interesting suggestion made by an ethical philosopher who wrote a small book called *Situation Ethics*. He says that an action can be considered to be right if four conditions are fulfilled. An action cannot be considered to be right if any one of the conditions is not fulfilled. If four conditions are fulfilled, the action is right. All the four should be fulfilled, not only

three. Even if one is not fulfilled, it becomes a wrong action. It was an interesting suggestion that has been made. Firstly, the objective before you should be a justifiable one. What is it that you are aiming at? This aim that is before you should be a justifiable aim. Number two, the intention in your mind behind pursuing this objective should also be justifiable. Thirdly, the means that you adopt to fulfil your intention should also be justifiable. Fourthly, the consequences that may follow from the steps that you take should be justifiable. Then your action is right. If one is missing, it is not correct.

Though these are not the words uttered by Arjuna, and this is not the way in which Sri Krishna answered the question, some such intriguing situation Arjuna brought up in that critical hour, and many of us may sometimes find ourselves in such conditions. "I do not know whether this is proper or that is proper."

Little questions arise in offices in the case of some employee. He is between two persons, a boss above and a subordinate below, and he is sometimes expected to do something which will have a terrible impact upon him. If he does a thing, he will be in the pit. If he does not do it, he will be in another pit. So which pit is good? He is in a terrible quandary. "If I want to continue in my office, I have to do a wrong thing. If I do not agree to do that wrong thing, I lose my job. Which is better?" A very big officer drawing a good salary put this question to me. He was in this condition. "I lose my job if I pursue the path of truth, and if I don't pursue it, I continue in the office. What is your answer?" he asked me. What answer can I give? Think over what answer you can give. "Lose your job," you can say. "Do what you like; hang yourself." But how can you say, "Don't be truthful?"

Now, to suffer incalculable pains even for the cause of truth, you have to believe in a destiny and a law which is not of this world; otherwise, nobody will dare to pursue truth to such an extent that it may even threaten one's own life. So the acceptance of the path of truth to the point of logical perfection may sometimes compel you to accept that the world is not the only reality. There is a reality higher than the world; otherwise, you become a compromising individual. So here is a great question, into which we shall try to probe further.

Chapter 8

THE REALISM AND IDEALISM OF THE BHAGAVADGITA

In our understanding of the message of the Bhagavadgita, we may have to move stage by stage, keeping in view the development of thought in a systematic manner which characterises the different chapters of the text. We may say, using a modern philosophical expression, that the Bhagavadgita is both idealistic and realistic. It is uncompromisingly idealistic in the sense that it holds an ultimately valid transcendent principle to be the final deciding factor in all matters, in everything in this creation. There is a final valid deciding factor which is cosmically relevant and harmonious, appropriately juxtaposed with every event in the universe, and existing as the very root of any meaning that we can read in anything, anywhere. In this sense, it is supremely idealistic because it holds an ideal which transcends phenomena available to the senses, and even to the mind and the intellect. But it is very realistic also, as we shall see when we proceed along the different levels of its teaching. It ignores no aspect of the manifestation of reality.

Realism is that principle of acceptance of the validity of the presence of reality in anything, whatever be the measure of its expression in any given level. In everything there is a presence of something we call real. Everything is characterised by something which we call reality. Things are not unreal. We seem to feel that things are real, but they are real in some degree, in some measure, in some proportion, and in some condition. There seem to be degrees in the expression of the reality of things and events in the world. All things that we consider as real in any sense are to that extent real, no doubt, but they are not all equally real. There is a gradation of values dependent on the measure or the percentage of the expression of reality. Something is more real, something is less real, notwithstanding the fact that that even the less real is real. Merely because of the fact that the lesser reality is below the level of the higher reality, it does not follow that the lesser reality can brook any kind of non-recognition of its existence. It cannot be ignored in any way, because it is a reality. Though it is only a finger of reality, not the brain, not the heart, not the whole body, it is, nevertheless, a part of reality. It says, "I am also here." To the extent it is there, it demands recognition.

This is the realism of the Bhagavadgita – intensely practical, very matter-of-fact, considering every issue from its own point of view. This is very important for us to remember: Every issue has to be understood from its point of view, not necessarily from my point of view or somebody else's point of view. The granting of a value to a thing from its point of view is the greatest generosity and cultured behaviour we can think of. I must respect you from your point of view, and not from my own idea about you. That would be an uncharitable attitude on my part. I must know what kind of person you are, at least from your own point of view, and I should be good enough, charitable enough, kind enough and sensitive enough to recognise the fact of your holding some opinion about yourself. This is

wisdom which includes the idealism and the realism of the matter, and Bhagavan Sri Krishna, the spokesman of the Bhagavadgita, is a grand culmination of the blend of perfect realism and idealism. It is a wonder, really, to visualise that personality in which we have a synthesis of everything grand, perfect, majestic, beautiful, ideal, and yet very real to the core from the point of view of any level of the expression of reality at any given moment of time.

You will find, when you cast a glance over the verses of the Bhagavadgita, that it ranges from the most immediate of facts to the most ultimate of ideals. It does not begin with a lofty ideal; it follows a proper educational psychology, the method adopted by a good teacher in a school. The intelligible things are told first, and unintelligible things afterwards. Though the unintelligible things may be greater realities and of more consequence, they are not to be told when they are unintelligible. You should not speak about a step that is not visible to the eyes. We have to confine ourselves to the step that is before our eyes. When we are clear about the step that is before our eyes and place our foot on it, we will automatically see the step that is ahead, which was earlier not visible and unintelligible. So the unintelligible becomes intelligible when a logical method is adopted in the understanding of the values of life.

How does the Bhagavadgita begin? It begins with a most prosaic atmosphere of a political situation, which is the grossest involvement of the human being in public affairs. It is the least that one can do; some people say it is the worst that one can do, and yet it is a reality in its own way. A thing may be the worst, but does it exist? As long as it exists, it enjoys a degree of reality. The worst thing does not become unreal merely because it is worst from some point of view, yet it is the ground on which the edifice of the great gospel is built. The Mahabharata battle is the scene of the commencement of this gospel. We will see a little later why that gory occasion should have been found the most suitable atmosphere for giving this mighty gospel. We shall bestow a little thought on it after some time. Why could not Sri Krishna have called Arjuna by his side many days before, prior to the commencement of the war, and seated him in a holy temple, and given this message to him? Why should he wait for this terrible occasion? That is a question which requires some attention.

However, the point at present is that the Bhagavadgita has a logical approach to facts, which makes it idealistic and realistic. What is meant by idealism? It is the recognition of a higher value than the presently visible one. When we are holding on to an ideal which is yet ahead of us, we are said to be an idealist, but when we do not ignore the level which is just under our foot, we are going to take into consideration even that on which we are seated, we are a realist. So the Bhagavadgita considers very, very forcefully, of course, that there are things ahead of us. The world is not a complete picture of reality. It is one side of the picture of truth, which has many sides, many facets. Because there are realities ahead of us, and the evaluation of them, understanding of them and accepting them is necessary, all philosophy may be said to be idealistic, finally. But no philosophy can be only idealistic if it has to survive in this world, because it has to accept the reality of visible phenomena also. Why should we accept the reality

of visible phenomena when we are going to transcend it one day? Why should I not only cling to the ideal which is ahead of me, which I consider as the final reality? This may be an over-enthusiastic, idealistic approach of immature minds. Because of the fact that there is a reality masquerading even through the lowest of values, it becomes important that it has also to be respected. To consider a phenomenon as existing is to consider it as real to that extent, and to say that we will not accord recognition to it would be to miss the point entirely.

Many a time it may appear to us that the Bhagavadgita takes into consideration the context of the political atmosphere of the Mahabharata war. It did not deny that context; it was considered as existing. And some of the replies of Sri Krishna to Arjuna had a political significance. When he refers to the qualities of a warrior, a soldier, and the duties of a person on the battlefield, he emphasises not merely the social aspect but even the politically valid administrative aspect which, from a cursory vision of things, may appear far removed from spirituality, religion, etc.

If there is any complete gospel of what we may call true religion, we have it here before us in the Bhagavadgita. Most religious forms prevalent in the world today are facing a difficulty of their own even in the matter of their survival, due to their ignorance of certain values which are realistically attached to the factors that condition even their existence. A religion cannot survive unless it is real. An unreal religion is unthinkable, and a religion which ignores certain aspects of reality also ignores certain conditions which are necessary for its own existence. It will defeat its own purpose.

Some of the extra-cosmic enthusiasms of religious phases today become a kind of anathema to realistically-minded, socially-minded, politically-minded outlooks in life, not because religion is bad, but a religion that is unrelated to facts of life loses its meaning. And if there is any outlook of the religious ideal which plants itself firmly on even the lowest values of reality, we have here in the Bhagavadgita a grand consummation of that integrated outlook. It is a friend of the poor, and it is also a friend of the Supreme Creator of the universe. From the uttermost poverty of human thought it rises to the pinnacle of divine perfection. Such is the gamut it covers from the lowest to the highest of levels.

So the position which Arjuna maintained, as described for us in the First Chapter, required a lengthy, systematic answer, like the simple mind of a child entering a school requires a gradational teaching from a competent schoolmaster. It is not thrown on the head of the child entirely in one day itself. The whole curriculum is not opened out. Even an entire page is not taught on a particular day. Little by little it is communicated to the receptive mind of the student, only as much as it can munch, chew and swallow and digest, not more. It must take its own time. Undigested food is not food. It is a useless stuff that you have unnecessarily thrown into your tummy. It has to be digested; otherwise, it is better not to take it. So any teaching, to be meaningful, should be also capable of reception, and it can be received only to the extent of the level which one maintains as a student. Everyone knew the level of Arjuna, for instance, the politically motivated soldier in the battlefield. He was not a priest in a temple. He

was not a yogi meditating with crossed legs. Nothing of the kind was Arjuna. He was an utter realist of the military type, and what kind of teaching can be given to him? But the militariness of the soldier is one aspect of reality, and it is not the whole reality of him. No man is only a soldier; he is something else also, though we cannot say he is not that. So from the outermost coat of this soldier's uniform, the Gita's teaching goes deep into the very soul of that personality until it reaches its climax.

In the beginning the answers are simple, like a friend speaking to a friend. "No, this is not the way you should speak. This is not proper. You have not understood the situation properly. You are confused in your mind. What you have told me just now is not at all correct." This is a good friend speaking to a beloved friend. It is a simple, friendly, sympathetic and loving suggestion from a well-meaning comrade to another comrade. "I understand what you say, but this is not a correct point of view. You have been carried away by certain feelings which are not capable of reconciliation with the facts of the situation now. Therefore, please give up this downhearted, dispirited mood. Rise up to the occasion; do your duty, the thing for which you have come here. Get up! Be bold!" This is the whole of the Gita. If you would be ready to accept this much, there is no need to say anything further. Why should you be told anything more than that? When I say this is not okay, you must do that for which you have come here. Why should I tell you anything further than that? That is sufficient. In a way, it looked that the teaching was over.

But the problem was deep-rooted, like a chronic illness. It was not just a surface illness. There was a peculiar kind of inability on the part of the student, Arjuna, in wholly accepting this little friendly suggestion and swallowing it entirely, but he was good enough to accept that he was confused in his mind. In the beginning, there was a pithy suggestion: "Get up and be bold and do what is proper for the occasion." Arjuna gave a reply: "How would you expect me to do that? You say to get up and be bold, but how is it possible? Do you not appreciate some difficulty here?" And he repeated almost what he said earlier, more concisely. However, he added something more. "I accept that I am not able to understand what is proper. I am confused. What is right and what is wrong is not clear to me. I am *dharmasaṁmūḍhacetāḥ* (BG 2.7). My mind is completely bereft of the sense of what is proper. Therefore, I approach you, Great One, as a humble disciple. *Śiṣyaste 'ham*: Consider me as your student. *Śādhi mām*: Instruct me. *Prapana*: I have almost surrendered myself to you. I am at your feet."

The student has to approach the teacher in this manner. This student should not think he already knows something which the teacher also knows. If that is the case, to that extent he will not be submissive, and he will not be receptive. A deconditioning of the mind is necessary before we try to learn anything. We should not have preconceived notions in our heads and go with some kind of boasted knowledge while we are students. "Empty thyself and I shall fill thee." But if you have already come filled, what can I give you? One of the conditions of a good student, a studentship or a discipleship, is a total deconditioning of

oneself. All preconceived notions should go. It is a clean slate, an empty vessel, a pure mind, a receptive heart, and a submissive attitude.

Now, when the windows are open, rays of light beam forth through every slit of this opening. The doors and windows have to be kept open if the sun is to enter this room. If you have closed every avenue, it will be pitch dark. When the student is open completely from every pore of his personality, the administration of the proper medicine commences in a medical fashion, gradually, slowly: today this, tomorrow that, and so on, taking its own time, not in a hurry. It was done in the context of a perfect master speaking to a perfect student, and giving a message which comprehended all the aspects of the issue, or the problem on hand.

How do you tackle a problem? This may be an administrative aspect of life. Tackling a problem is an administrative issue, but it is also an educational system. Even administration is a process of education. You have to move like a good psychologist, as a good doctor administering treatment to a patient. It is a question of understanding things and approaching a thing only to that extent as would be necessary under a given condition, and not more. You should not point out everything at the same moment. So the immediately visible vesture of your personality is to be taken into consideration.

We have vestures of personality. By vesture, I do not necessarily mean the physical body and the vital sheath, and so on, which philosophers speak of. It is a vesture of your personality, your makeup, your outlook, your attitude, your behaviour, your conduct, your viewpoint, your opinion, your philosophy. All these have certain vestures. They are graded stage by stage.

Our personality is made up of certain levels. The personality of ours looks like an abstract thing. It is not necessarily the physical body. It is abstract in the sense that a human being is also some abstract principle, finally. We cannot say that we are a body, though it looks like we are that only. All the values that we admire in life are not necessarily material and physical, because we have seen that a materially well-placed and physically well-built personality is not necessarily a complete personality, not a satisfied personality. Our involvements are the levels of our personality. Each one has to understand for oneself what are the involvements of oneself. There are immediate involvements, and other subtle ones which come as layers inside, which can be considered a little later. But immediate problems are immediate involvements. A pressing situation which has to be attended to just now is the most immediate involvement of a person, though there are other involvements which are also important enough, and it takes a little time for us to go deep into this issue of what our involvements are. We have to take time to understand that. Sometimes it may look that we are involved in nothing. Some people feel, "What involvement have I got? I am a free man." It is not so simple as that. Involvement means the recognition of anything outside you as real to the extent it affects your existence. Is there anything real outside you, or is there nothing real outside you? No sensible person will say there is nothing outside them. We feel that there are certain things outside us, and they are real to us, and to the extent that we accord reality to that which is

outside us, to that extent we are involved in it. The concession of reality that we have granted to something outside us is also the extent to which we are involved in it, and no one can say that it is not involvement.

Various types of involvements will be unravelled gradually as we move through the chapters of the Bhagavadgita. The lowest involvement, at least as we have it described in the Mahabharata and the Bhagavadgita, is the politically motivated involvement. Every person as a citizen of a nation or a country, every person who is internationally conditioned in some way or the other, is a political unit. And it is difficult for anyone to say that such a condition is absent entirely. Clarified, dispassionate thinking is necessary to accept the extent of this involvement. The security that we require politically and the obligations that we owe politically in any manner determine the extent of our involvement politically. Political involvement does not necessarily mean being an officer in the government or a soldier on the battlefield. Our very existence as a human being, conditioned by an atmosphere of outward administration, is a political involvement. A reply from that point of view also has to be given. It is our obligation to pay a tax. Now, we may think this is not a spiritual instruction. What connection do spirituality and religion have to paying a tax to the government?

We have to understand religion properly, as I mentioned a little before. Religion is not avoiding duty. In fact, the whole of the Bhagavadgita is a gospel of duty. If to be religious is a duty, then religion as a duty, perhaps as a comprehensive duty, will also have the sense to accept various other aspects of duty which have to be included within this comprehensiveness of duty, which is religion. Religion is sometimes said to be the final duty of man, the only duty of man, and so on. But, as I mentioned at the very outset, that would be to take an idealistic view of things, holding on to an ideal which is ahead, and forgetting the fact that which is ahead, in the future, is not unconnected with the present. Realism is the characteristic of the present. Idealism is the characteristic of the future. Now, how can you have only a future without the present?

So the initial answer of Sri Krishna was on the basis of a duty that Arjuna owed from the level of his being a soldier. It was told that Arjuna was a Kshatriya. This raises several questions. Why was he called a Kshatriya? How do we find out who is a Kshatriya? And what is his duty? If we have some way of deciding what are the characteristics of a person, in the light of which we call a person a Kshatriya, and so on, and in that light we are able to decide the duty of a person, we have also to answer another question: Why should that particular person do only that duty, and not some other duty? Why should not a soldier be a priest in a temple? What is the harm? Because it is believed that to be a worshiper in a temple is perhaps a holier occupation than that of a soldier in the battlefield, why should I not be a holy man? Why should I do unholy things as a soldier in the battlefield? These questions may arise in a religious mind: It is better to be a holy man than to be a fighter in the battlefield. Arjuna mentions this. "I shall be a beggar. I shall go to the forest and live the life of a mendicant. *Śreyo bhoktum bhaiṣyam apī 'ha loke* (BG 2.5): "Is it not good to live on alms and not do this, which you call a duty now?" This will raise some interesting questions which

people take notice of and, in answering which, a muddle is made by most people. What is the duty of a person, and how do we find out which person has to perform what duty? Briefly the Bhagavadgita refers to this. It does not give a long commentary, but this brief statement is enough suggestion for a commentary on it.

Many questions arise in this context. Who is to do what duty, and why should anyone do any duty at all? And finally, how will you reconcile yourself to a conflict that is likely to arise in your mind between a future ideal, which you consider as superior, and the present pressing problem, which you consider as inferior? We always have an eye on the superior, better values of life than the inferior ones. If we can get the higher one, why go to the lower? But a reconciliation has to be struck between these two, because the lower one is not an unreal value. We have already considered this issue, that lower realities are not unreal. As long as they are real, they are very, very important and significant. We put our foot into the future only by lifting it from the present. It implies that we are already in the present, and therefore it is a reality. We are not in a vacuum just now. It is not some vacuum reality through which we move. We will move from a lesser reality to a higher reality. These issues are clenched in a few verses in the Second Chapter of the Bhagavadgita, at the very commencement, which you will find very interesting.

Chapter 9

THE CLASSIFICATION OF SOCIETY

Yesterday we noticed that our involvements in life determine the extent of reality in which we are also involved at the same time, which practically mean one and the same thing. The response from Bhagavan Sri Krishna came as an appeal to all these involvements, all the levels of connection of the human individual that Arjuna was, which is so dear to each person.

Every one of our involvements is a dear object of ours. If you are involved in something as a part and parcel of your requirement in that given condition of your life in this world, that becomes yourself. It is your kith and kin. It is dear and near, and an appeal to that relation also is a part of the treatment of the human personality. Even in a medical treatment which may be considered as related to the illness of the physical body, there is a necessity for consideration of other involvements of the patient also. The illness of a person need not necessarily mean a physical nonalignment exclusively. It may look like that, but it may have relations with many other things. When a person is ill, that person is ill in every way, not merely in one sense.

So as a good instructor, as a good physician, as a good friend, as a good philosopher, as a well-wisher, as a real benefactor, the Lord's response comes from all sides. There is an appeal to the social sense, which is important; there is an appeal to the physical sense, there is an appeal to the emotional sense, there is an appeal to the rational sense, and then there is at the same time an appeal to the deepest core of everything, the spiritual, the bottom of all things.

As a social individual, it is incumbent on every person to perform that duty which is related to social relation. It becomes an obligation, an unavoidable necessity. It is unavoidable because that relation called social does exist as a reality, and anything that is real is unavoidable. A totally unreal thing may not be your concern, but your social relation is not an unreality. Any person with some common sense will know to what extent each person is social – socially related, socially conditioned, socially dependent – and to that extent there is a debt that one owes to that on which one is dependent, and to that which conditions, to a large extent, even one's own existence. It is one of the principle teachings of the ancient masters, particularly in this country, that every debt has to be discharged. One cannot be a debtor. It is very, very awful to be in that condition. It is no use living by owing something to somebody else. You owe something to that with which you have an inviolable relation, which contributes something, visibly or invisibly, to your welfare and existence, and which decides your existence itself in some measure.

Dispassionate thinking is a great virtue, the greatest of virtues. To analyse one's circumstance in this world honesty is an endowment and a great achievement indeed. To the extent I receive support from others, to that extent I also have to contribute my support to that. The world is a cooperative existence. Individuals do not exist in the world. There are no such things as individuals,

finally. The whole human society is a fabric of interconnections, interrelations and interdependence. In that sense, we may say the whole of human society is one person. Taken to the logical limits, this one person is extolled as the cosmical person in a great hymn of the Veda, called the Purusha Sukta. The whole cosmic relation of living beings is considered as one body, and he is the Purushottama who is hymned in this great sukta called the Purusha Sukta, commencing with that wondrous statement *sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ* (P.S. 1): All these heads of people, all these locations of individuals, are planted in the body of this large society to which this great man, Purusha, is compared.

'Society' is an intriguing term. It begins with your own body, which is also a little society. It extends itself to all its outward relations, and ordinarily it is difficult to understand what are your outward relations. It requires a little bit of tutoring, some sort of an education. In a purely egoistic attitude, one may imagine that one is dependent on nothing at all. "I am a totally independent person. I owe nothing to anyone, and I seek nothing from any person in the world." This is not true, because such an independent existence is not sanctioned by the nature of things. It is an ignorance of the state of affairs that prompts a person to imagine this.

So, positioned as you are in a particular context in human society, are you not required to contribute your might to the solidarity of this large body of which you are a part? You have to sustain the body in order that you may exist as a limb thereof. You want to be independent of the whole to which you belong, but this is not possible. The concept of society takes us to philosophical considerations, and it ranges beyond the philosophy of ordinary social welfare. We need not go into that depth at present, because the Bhagavadgita will take us to that point also in its coming chapters. But pure common sense will tell you, apart from its philosophical foundations, that you owe a debt to human society. There is none who does not contribute something for your welfare. Sometimes it is known, sometimes it is not known. Sometimes it is visible to the eyes, sometimes not. In Indian tradition, this is the reason behind the great injunction of the Pancha Mahayajnas that every person should perform the five great *yajnas*.

Everyone has an obligation to the welfare of every living being, not merely human beings. You have an obligation to your parents, and even the parents of your parents, your ancestors. Sometimes the obligation is carried to even sixteen generations ahead. In practice, this is adumbrated in the performance of the libations and rituals we call *shradas*. Sixteen generations are remembered, and their influence is accepted as part of the blessing that we have received. Gratitude is, again, a great virtue. Ingratitude is a vice. Not to accept that we have received benefit from others is egoistic arrogance, and it will defeat its own purpose. It is not merely a vice; it is a self-destructive tendency. It will ruin one's own self. You are trying to be ungrateful to that which has sustained you, which is going to sustain you even in the future, and without which you may not even live.

Each person has a duty in this world. Now, this is a very important point which is brought out in many a way through the injunctions occurring in a

variegated manner in different verses of the Bhagavadgita. Everyone has a duty. There is no one who can be free from duty. But what is duty? This was the question. In the beginning itself it was mentioned, "I cannot understand what my duty is. I am floundering. I am completely upset with my very basic understanding. What is my obligation at this moment?"

Now, this is not an easy issue that is raised by a person. You will find that even the tentative answers given by the Lord were not adequate to the purpose. Several replies, several answers, several suggestions are given, but they do not seem to be adequate because doubts persist in spite of these answers, and they appeared to cease only when the total vision of all things was made possible. Our vision is limited. We do not have a total vision of the whole of things. However much we may try to stretch our imagination, we will find the total picture of any situation does not easily present itself before us. Something is missing, and there we are likely to make a little mistake.

So, incidentally, Bhagavan Sri Krishna says, "As a social individual I consider you as belonging to one class of humans, and in traditional terms your class is categorised as Kshatriya." Now, this point that a person is designated by the type of performance expected of that person requires deeper analytical thought. To which class do we belong? To which class do I belong, and yourself, and anybody? The station of oneself in a society is supposed to decide one's obligation. Somebody has written a big book entitled "My Station and its Duty". Here a precise answer is given to this question. Your obligation, your position in society, is to be decided by the makeup of your personality. Your knowledge and your capacity will decide what can be expected of you. There is no one so poor in this world who cannot do some sort of charity. There is something in you with which you can help others. You are not so very bereft of that capacity, because help need not necessarily mean doling out a material thing. It is a contribution of assistance in any manner whatsoever to the welfare of any level of any personality. *Guṇakarmavibhāgaśaḥ* (BG 4.13) is a phrase that occurs somewhere in the Bhagavadgita. This classification of society is done by the *gunas* and the karmas of the person or the group of persons.

Now, the *gunas* are the properties which constitute the personality of an individual. This is, again, to go into philosophical issues like the Sankhya, to which the Bhagavadgita will make reference. The *gunas*, in the language of the Bhagavadgita, are known as *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. These properties are said to constitute everything in the universe. *Na tad asti pṛthivyām vā divi deveṣu vā punaḥ, sattvaṁ prakṛtijair muktaṁ yad ebhiḥ syāt tribhir guṇaiḥ* (BG 18.40). In one place the Gita says that there is nothing on earth or in heaven which is free from these inner constituents called *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Everything that is living, non-living, visible, invisible, empirical or transcendent is constituted of these properties *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. There is nothing in the whole of creation which has not these three ingredients making up its constitution. Hence, each person is also an embodiment of these three *gunas*.

What are these *gunas*? *Sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas* – what do these imply? What is meant by *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*? It is an impulsion, a tendency and an instinct for

behaviour, conduct and operation. It is a tendency, a kind of implied projectile which wishes to take a direction. Every individual has a potentiality to take a particular direction of behaviour and action. That potentiality may be considered as the *guna*, or the property, of each person. This property, this *guna*, may be manifest or unmanifest. The *gunas* may sometimes be manifest, sometimes not. Your tendencies may be submerged as a potentiality or a possibility, or they may be actually manifest in your visible behaviour and conduct. Whatever that be, the tendency decides what kind of person you are.

Now, these tendencies are *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. *Rajas* is a term implying a tendency to extrovert direction, action in an outward sense, the urge of the inner constituents of the personality to move outward in the direction of space, time and objects. The tendency of these three *gunas* decides, marks, indicates the nature of your subtle body. The subtle body is called the *linga sharira* in Sanskrit. *Linga* is a mark or an indication, an insignia which indicates what kind of person you are. It is the force behind your physical body. It is mould into which the physical body is cast. In a way, we may say the physical body is just a visible form of this invisible inner potentiality called the subtle body.

The three *gunas*, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, manifest themselves as the various limbs of the subtle body. What are these limbs of the subtle body? They are many in number. For instance, the character of your intellect, the manner of the performance and the action of your intellect, is also decided by the proportion of the distribution of these three forces in your personality. The preponderance of any one of these *sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas gunas* in your intellect, in your understanding, will decide the extent of your understanding. Hence, it does not mean that everyone can understand things in the same way. *Tamas* can predominate, *rajas* can predominate, or *sattva* can predominate. Your emotions are also decided by the proportion of the distribution of these three *gunas*. The *manas*, the mind, is also conditioned by these three *gunas*.

Then there are the sense organs – the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue and the sense of touch. These are the senses of knowledge, and the senses through which the desires of the psyche inside get manifested outside. The eye has a desire, the ear has a desire, and all the senses have desires. It does not mean that every eye has the same desire. But what kind of desire can the eye have? What do you want to see, what do you want to hear, what do you want to taste, what do you want to touch? This nature of the object that the sense organs in a particular individual crave will depend upon the kind of preponderance of the *gunas* in that particular individual, so it does not mean that everyone wants the same thing. You may not like to see what I want to see, and so on. The sense organs operate in different individuals according to the particular vehemence of the *gunas* in the individual.

Then the *pranas* are there – *prana*, *apana*, *vyana*, *udana*, *samana*. They are the soldiers of action which are prompted to perform their duties according to the propulsion of the understanding and the emotions, and the energy of the sense organs. They are like the army or the police. They are driven to act, and the instruments they use are the physical body, the physical limbs. They are the

vehicles. So finally it means that everything that anyone is consists of just these three principal forces. They are the chief ministers of the cabinet of the government of the human personality, as it were. Whatever they say is to be done.

Your relationship to things in the world, and your obligation to the world in terms of these relationships, will be dependent upon the extent of the manifestation of these *gunas* which constitute you, and you will be fit to act only in that manner, to that extent, as would be permitted by the preponderance of any one of these *gunas* or any two of the *gunas*, etc., because you cannot be other than what you are. You cannot try to do something differently than what is permitted by your nature. The word 'nature', *prakriti*, is sometimes used in the Bhagavadgita. *Prakriti* in a cosmical sense is 'something'. It also means 'the natural tendency of a person'. You cannot go contrary to your natural tendency.

Now, here is a very peculiar mandate before us. 'You cannot go contrary to your tendency' does not imply that you have a sanction or a license to do as you like. It does not mean that. It means something very subtle. Very careful we have to be in understanding what it means. Who can go against one's own nature? This does not mean a license to act as one likes. It is a caution exercised: Beware! Red light! The red flag is shown there; be cautious. There is a road breaker or a tollgate or some such thing. Beware!

What is meant by this bewareness? It shows that inasmuch as your conduct is decided and determined by your nature, and you cannot act contrary to it – you can act only in accordance with it, not more, not less – your contribution to the solidarity of society will be to the extent of the permission granted by your nature at that given moment in that state of your evolution. It is not a license to act in a libidinous or a selfish way, but it is a concession given to you to do only that much as you can under the conditions in which you are placed because of the preponderance of the *gunas*. Nobody will ask you to lift an elephant's weight. You have not got that strength. Only the elephant can lift a larger weight, but you can also lift some weight. That will depend upon what you are.

It has already been noticed that human society is an interrelated, interconnected, interdependent organism. It is one person, as it were, and humanity, therefore, may be considered as one thought in a general sense. It is not one thought in a detailed or particular sense, just as the legs are not the head, the nose is not the eyes, yet they all constitute one body, and we can consider them as one organism. I am not you; you are not another. Everyone is different from everybody else. Yet, in spite of this difference in detail, we are the human species. As humans we are categorised under a particular class of thinking. We think as human beings. We do not think like trees and hills and reptiles, and so on. Therefore, the human way of thinking is considered here as the standpoint of the observation of duty and the performance thereof.

The duty you are expected to perform is whatever you are capable of contributing to the welfare of the whole. Here again, a little analogy of the human body will be good. You do not expect the leg to think as the brain thinks. You do not expect the head to walk. You do not expect the nose to see, or the ear to smell.

It is expected of each organ to perform a particular function. Now, the difference in the performance of these functions does not imply any kind of ethical or moral superiority, or even a social difference. Which part of your body is inferior, and which part is superior? Even a little hair of mine is dear to me. How can I say it is not dear? Even a nail is me. It is not merely mine, it is me – so dear, so loving, so beautiful, so necessary, because it is myself.

We are now considering your performance in the context of your whole relation in the fabric of human society, and we will consider the larger society of the universe afterwards. For the time being, let us confine ourselves to human society only. In the beginning of the Second Chapter of the Gita, the emphasis is on the social side first. The other sides come later on, gradually, stage by stage, when we go deeper and deeper. So your position in society, as conditioned and dictated by the preponderance of the *gunas*, will decide what your contribution should be.

You may ask, “Why should I contribute anything? Why should I not be inactive? I will not do anything. It is better to keep quiet.” Now, this is not possible. *Na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarmakṛt* (BG 3.5): No one sits for a moment without doing something. It is not possible to be inactive, because you are per force goaded to act in a particular way by the very fact of your relation to this larger organisation called society. It is goaded to perform that function, merely because of the fact of its being a part of that mechanism. It is integrally related to it. When the train moves, every part of the train also moves. There is no need to tell each part to start moving. It goes because it is connected.

It is important to realise that we are basically connected to everything in the world. It is not visible to open eyes. The naked eye does not see this relation. From the physical, material, bodily point of view, it looks as if we are totally independent. This wrong point of view, which erroneously tells us that we are independently located in this body, is the cause of the egoism of human nature. The adumbration of pride and self-assertion in a person arises due to the wrong notion of there being no connection of oneself with anybody. Therefore, we do what we like. We forget that we have invisible relationships with everything, apart from the visible difference that seems to be there between one and the other. Socially, pure common sense tells us to what extent we are connected to others. But even common sense is only a superficial understanding. A scientific probe is necessary to know what deeper relationships are involved in our connection with things. We are connected to even the stars in the distant heavens. The naked eye cannot know this. Even the empirical understanding, the mind, cannot appreciate to what extent the sun determines us, the moon determines us. The stars condition even our brains, what to think of other things. Even the cells of the brain are conditioned by the operation of the stars in the sky. Who can accept this if we are to accept only what our senses tell us?

The great Lord does not go so deep in the beginning, but it becomes necessary to go deep later on when the patient is not listening. So in the beginning he suffices with, “Okay. As a social individual at least, you have to contribute your might.”

I shall revert for two or three minutes to the point of this classification of society which the ancient masters classified as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Sudra. We have to be very careful in understanding what these terms mean. They mean the obligations of a person, and not the person himself or herself. We sometimes mistake the obligation for the person, and try to put the cart before the horse. There are people who say these distinctions do not exist and they should not exist. It is no use talking like that. They do exist, and they cannot but exist, just as you cannot deny the difference between the leg and the head. However much you may be humanitarian and equilibrated in your opinion, they do what their functions are because they are expected to do only that function. You have to be honest and generous enough to understand the spirit behind this instruction. It is not possible for all people to do all things. This kind of equality is unknown. You cannot eat grass and give your sweet porridge to the swine because the human being and the swine are the same in the eye of the Lord, and everything is equal. There is a final unity of all things. It is said in a passage of the Bhagavadgita that one should look equally upon a Brahmin, a dog, an elephant, an elephant driver, a dog eater, etc. You can understand the spirit in which this is said. It does not mean you should walk with four legs because you are like a cow. That is not the idea. You do not develop a trunk because you are like an elephant. This kind of literal interpretation is not to be permitted.

The classification of society – the word ‘caste’ may be avoided, if you like – becomes necessary on account of the differentiating capacities and the needs of people. Everyone’s need is not identical. The capacity and the need will decide the kind of function that you have to perform. As you know very well, your capacity is not the same as another’s capacity, and your need is also not the same as the need of another. Society is to be protected in four ways, among many other things which may also be necessary. For the welfare of society, we require manpower. Who says manpower is not necessary? There are also the group of people who engage in commercial transactions and the movement of goods, and work for their production. There is a necessity for the power of social economy; therefore, the production of goods, commodities which are necessary for the maintenance of society, becomes the obligation of some people. Now, would you like everyone to produce only, and do nothing else? Production requires distribution. You cannot have commodities locked up somewhere, without distribution. And finally, there is a need to exercise understanding and a reason to operate this whole machinery of human society, which works variously for its welfare. The reason is the Brahmin, the understanding, something like the judiciary in an administration. It requires the operation of a final judgment of values, and also an administrative setup.

Now, these needs, among the many other needs of human society, should be considered as the foundation for the institution of these classifications. It has nothing to do with the superiority or the inferiority of a person. It is nothing but the classification of function and performance as an obligation for mutual cooperation and social welfare. It is necessary that I should do what I am expected to do from the point of view of my knowledge and capacity as dictated

by my inner constitution, for my welfare as well as another's welfare, because my welfare is decided by the welfare of others, and vice versa.

Therefore, a total organic view is taken by the Bhagavadgita, and not merely a political view, a tradesman's view or a commercial view. It is a difficult thing to appreciate, because all life seems to move from gradations of organisms to organisms, from wholes to wholes. Every part of life, every stage of living is one kind of organism, right from the cell in the body. A little cell in this body is one organism. It is a complete society in itself. One cell can be taken out from your body, and they say that DNA, RNA, etc., are contained in these little cells, and the whole Mr. So-and-so is reflected in that little cell. By studying one cell of the body, one can know the whole person. From the iris of the eye, the whole person can be studied. From one line on the palm of the hand, you can know the whole person. One little line on the sole of the foot can tell what kind of person you are, and so on, and it will also tell you the organic structure of the universe.

Therefore, the classification of society is not the distribution of work to different individuals by the personal motives of anybody. It is a necessity arisen on account of the very organic structure of human society, inasmuch as it is one organism among the several levels of organism, until you reach the final organism of the universe itself. From the little cell of your body until the whole cosmos, you will find there are levels of organisms. There are no individuals in the world; therefore, selfish action is not possible. Selfish action is unthinkable because the whole of life is organically connected right from the lowest level of an atom up to the highest concept of the total universe. Such will be the apex to which we will be taken. Unselfishness is the philosophy of the Bhagavadgita because we cannot but act unselfishly under the nature of things. There is no other way of working.

Chapter 10

THE NEED FOR SANKHYA

The interdependence of human society was one of the points which was taken up as a position to substantiate human responsibility in respect of all humanity. The fact of interdependence of human society would enable us to conceive humanity as a single person. All mankind is one man, as it were. All persons constitute one person. This conclusion would follow from the appreciation of the fact that the units forming human society are interdependent, interdeterminant and interconditioning – we may say, even interexistent. Thus comes the necessity on the part of each unit in human society to contribute its little might for the solidarity, structural stability and well-being of this total reality which we call humanity.

The character, the nature of this contribution, which is the duty that one has to perform in respect to society, differs according to the position that each unit occupies. This is very important to remember. Human beings want knowledge, but inasmuch as no human being is omniscient and omnipotent, each one is not expected to know everything and be capable of doing everything. The different gradations of evolutionary position in which people find themselves would sanction the kind of contribution that can be expected from them and, broadly speaking, this classification of duty has been arranged in a fourfold fashion. The traditional names for these classifications were Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Sudra which, actually, in an impartial manner, mean spiritual power, administrative power, economic power and manpower. This is a very beautiful setup conceived by the ancient sages for not only the stability of society but also for the inner growth of society from the lesser levels to the higher levels.

Thus, there is no person who is totally exempt from the performance of some duty or other. It is impossible to exempt anyone. It is so because of the fact that everyone forms part of the society. It is no use saying that we are not part of society. That also is not a possibility. Whoever exists in society is a part of society. A mere proclamation from one's own side that one is not a part does not become a sanction for one's independence. *Śarīrayātrāpi ca te na prasidhyed akarmanah* (BG 3.8) is a passage from the Bhagavadgita: Even our physical existence cannot be possible if we assert such a type of independence. This egoism is not permitted under the law of nature. Even our physical existence is conditioned by the contributions made by many other units of human society.

Honest, dispassionate thinking is necessary here, and everyone has to be humble enough to realise the extent of one's dependence on external factors. No one is the creator of the universe, and no one is so vastly occupied with power that one can be totally independent. Nothing can be independent in this world of interconnections, interrelations. Therefore, we have a duty, and what our duty is, is to be decided by the position we are occupying in the structure of the human society, our knowledge, and our capacity: *guna karma vibhagasah* (BG 4.13). Details of this *guna karma vibhaga*, the classification of human function and duty

in the light of the *gunas* that constitute and operate in the human personality, will be explained in a little greater detail in the Eighteenth Chapter.

We have a social duty. It is simple common sense. It does not require much of a study and logical understanding. Any sensible person will realise that there is mutual give and take of assistance. So, from this point of view also, we cannot say we shall do nothing. That is not a possibility.

Secondly, there is a fear that the body will die. The argument from the physical point of view also is brought out in a simple, homely manner. There is no body which will not die: *jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyur dhruvaṁ janma mṛtasya ca, tasmād aparihāryerthe na tvaṁ śocitum arhasi* (BG 2.27). It is an unfounded imagination that by not doing anything we will be protecting our body, and that we will be endangering our physical existence by entering into the fray of human enterprise. There is no one who will not be subjected to death, physically speaking. If we accept that the body had a beginning, it shall also have an end, and no one knows when that end will come.

Mātrāsparsās (BG 2.14), or the contact of the senses with physical objects, is brought as an illustration of one of the conditioning factors of the duration of the physical existence in the world. This is a slightly complicated matter. How long can we live in this world? Humanly it is not possible to measure this duration, but there is a background for the duration or the span of life of each person in the world. It is not visible to the eyes and cannot be contemplated by the human mind, because these conditions are beyond ordinary individual comprehension.

The physical body is said to be an embodiment of the forces of karmas, or the effects produced by one's desires and actions. Now, they condition the body in a very important manner. The body does not exist unnecessarily. We do not live here in this body for nothing; there is a purpose in it, and it will be in this world as long as the purpose for which it has been manufactured has not been fulfilled. As a silkworm manufactures a cocoon, as a spider spins a web from its mouth, as the subtle can concentrate itself into a gross object, as gas can become liquid and liquid can become solid, similarly, the potentialities of longing or desire within the mind of a particular individual are for certain types of expression and enjoyment through contact with externals. These potentialities for self-expression in this manner will decide the duration of physical existence in a particular space-time complex, and also the kind of experiences one has to pass through.

The pertinent sutra of Patanjali in his Yoga System is relevant here. *Jāti āyuh bhogāḥ* (Y.S. 2.13): The species into which one is born, the length of life which one will enjoy in a particular sojourn in this world, and the experiences that one will pass through are all decided already even in the mother's womb. Due to the fact that all the potentiality for further expression in life outside are in the seed form at the very root of manifestation, the kind of impulsion of mind, the type of this desire and the intensity of it will decide the length of the physical existence, and also the kind of experiences that one has to pass through. Therefore, the body has to end one day. The momentum of the force of desires is the conditioning factor.

Sometimes another illustration is brought out to make the matter clear. You must have seen a potter's wheel. Potters have a wheel by which they manufacture an earthen pot. The wheel is turned with the power of the hand. It is pushed with a particular momentum, and once it is pushed, it shall spin for some time. Now, the time for which it will be independently moving without being touched by the hand will depend upon the intensity of the push given to it. In a similar manner, the length of life that we will live in this world will depend upon the push that has been given by our desire to exist in this world. So, in a way, we wanted to live in this world. We wanted to live in this world only, and not in some other world. This is another argument why we should not make complaints. We have not to make complaints, because we wanted to come to this world only. We should not ask, "Why did God create this world?" because if we had no desire to come to this world, we would not have come to this world.

However, the physical body is subject to destruction, inasmuch as it had a beginning, and it shall have a rebirth. This is again something very interesting to note: A death of the physical body need not necessarily mean the death of desires, because the desiring principle is not the physical element. It is the mind, the psyche, that desires.

We have a very beautiful analysis of the psychic pattern of desires in our ancient scriptures, namely, the potentialities, the storehouses of desires in the deepest recesses of our being. For our convenience we may call them the unconscious level of our being – karmas which are like a large heap in a godown of a grocery shop. A lot of things are kept there, out of which something is brought out for retail sale by the shopkeeper. He does not bring everything outside; he brings out as much as is necessary, as is required for the day. There is a storage of commodities inside in the main godown, and when he brings things outside for retail sale and finds that the godown is getting exhausted, he will replenish it by adding further commodities to it.

Now, this godown which contains all the stuff is what is called in Sanskrit *sanchita* karma, the accumulated potentiality of all the desires collected from eons and heaped up like thick layers of cloud, which makes us unconscious at that time. The retail commodity which is brought out by the shopkeeper is this *prarabdha* karma. *Prarabdha* is the tentative allotment of a certain quantum of goods taken out from the original godown for the purpose of experience; it is a doling out, in terms of daily experience. This physical body, this physical life, this physical existence of ours here in this particular kind of world is a portion allotted out of the more potential and deeper possibilities already existing within us, and these potentialities are not visible. They are locked up inside us.

Now, we may sometimes be afraid that this inner stock may be exhausted, so we go on adding to it by performing new actions every day. We have to be very careful living in this world. We commit blunders many a time, adding forces of bondage to our mortal existence. How do we do that? By projecting further and further, more and more desire-filled actions. If the allotted portion is going to be exhausted little by little, and nothing more is to be added to the original stock, it is likely that it can be exhausted sometime. But we are not so wise. Desires are

like leeches which cling to a person and will not leave that person free. The more we experience pleasure out of sense contact, the more is the impression created for further repetition of that contact. The more we enjoy, still more is the want; the more we want, the more is the desire, the more is the impression, the more is the potentiality for further longing, more action, and so on. In this manner we add to the existing stock, and the cycle of birth and death never ends.

Anyway, this physical body has a beginning and an end. However much we try to guard it by our imagined state of non-action, it will not survive. So why be so greedy about this body? *Mrityu*, death, should not deter us from entering into the field of duty, whatever that duty be as sanctioned in accordance with our stature in this world of nature and of human society.

Now comes the third argument. Emotionally, you will be disturbed. If you are a renegade, a runaway, or a parasite, you would consider this life of degradation worse than death. Suppose that nobody wants to talk to you. "This stupid ass," they call you, and nobody considers you as worthwhile. You would be a nobody in this world. You would be considered as a renegade, and for a person such as yourself who has enjoyed a reputation as a respected hero, worshipped, adored, to live with this ignominy would be worse than dying.

Now, these are tentative replies, not the real reply. You cannot start replying in a positive and philosophical, mathematical, logical manner in the beginning itself. Whatever has been said up to this time is a kind of reply, as a friend speaking to a friend. "It is good, it is interesting, it is understandable, and I accept it, yes. But still, that is not sufficient." The more potent aspect and pertinent feature of this argument is that all these things that the individual trots out as arguments for non-action are based on non-understanding. What makes you conclude that non-action is a great virtue and is going to bring you great good? How do you conclude that this is the way of living? It would be the argument of many people that not doing anything and keeping quiet is a blessed way of living. "Why should I do anything? Let me be happy." Now, how do you come to this conclusion? On what grounds? This is not possible. There is some mistake in your way of thinking. Your understanding is clouded. Let alone what little things I have told you in a friendly manner from the point of view of pure common sense, but there is something more serious about it, namely, that your understanding itself is unclear. You do not know the nature of things. You have no idea as to how the world is constituted. *Sankhya* is what you lack. The great Lord has put his finger on the knob. You have no knowledge of *sankhya*. *Sankhya* means originally the wisdom of life, the knowledge of life, the art of living, and an insight into the structure of the world. This you lack. If you know what this world is made of and how you are related to it, you will certainly understand what your position is in this world. Then one need not tell you what you should do. If you know your position under a given condition, you will know what to do at that time. But you do not know where you are placed. You are clouded in your understanding of the circumstances of your very existence; therefore, yoga, which is right action, is barred from you due to the absence of *sankhya*, which is right knowledge.

You cannot have access to the field of right action unless you are equipped with right knowledge first. All right action is based on right knowledge. Understanding always comes first, and behaviour comes afterwards. You cannot move a finger unless you know how to move it, so it is theory first and practice afterwards, as it is in the case of our secular sciences also. The methodology is to be clear first. The technology has to be appreciated in the beginning. We have to be trained well in the theoretical side, the logical side, the scientific side; then we will come to the practical side. So in one way we may say that the word 'yoga' used in the Bhagavadgita, especially in the earlier stages, say from the beginning of the Second Chapter, may be considered as indicating action rightly performed; and *sankhya* is knowledge.

The word '*sankhya*' is to indicate the nature of the knowledge that is necessary to live in this world. Many explanations have been offered by teachers and exponents to make out the meaning of the word *sankhya*. *Sankhya* means 'number'. Categorisation, classification, numbering, counting – all these mean *sankhya*. And originally the system of philosophy known as the Sankhya was mainly concerned with the categorisation or the classification of the principles of cosmic evolution. From that system which was engaged in this work of the classification of the basic principles of the cosmos, the word '*sankhya*' may have got identified with the word 'knowledge', *jnana*. *Sankhya* and *jnana* mean the same thing. We may consider *sankhya* as right understanding of the operation of nature, the structure of things and the character of the whole of creation. This you lack. Therefore, you go on blabbering something, saying whatever you like, and imagining that what you said is correct. If you had an insight into the basic components of the world, you would have also known your relationship to it, and you would not have said anything. You would have known everything clearly, as in daylight. Why should anybody tell you that something is there in daylight? You can see it for yourself. But your eyes are blind; therefore, someone has to tell you something is here, something is there. Your eyes have not been opened. *Sankhya* is not here.

Now, what is *sankhya*? Without going into the metaphysical details of the classical Sankhya system, which is not essential for the present, we see what meaning we can have from the verse of the Bhagavadgita itself. The word '*prakriti*' is used in the Bhagavadgita, which is one of the terms that occurs in the Sankhya system. The whole world is made up of *prakriti*. This *prakriti* is the substance of the whole world. By 'the world' we do not mean only this little Earth. The entire cosmos, the universe, is an expression of *prakriti*. This *prakriti* is constituted of certain forces, and these forces are called *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*. *Tamas* is the inert condition of this force, *rajas* is the active condition of this force, and *sattva* is the harmonised condition of this force. In these three conditions the world can exist, and does exist.

Now, inasmuch as everything in the world is made up of these forces only, as a rope which is made up of three strands is identical with the strands, and the strands constitute the rope, similarly, the forces mentioned constitute every person and every thing in the world. Everything is just these forces. There are no

persons, no things in the world. Everything is just a permutation and combination of these three forces, *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*. In some proportion these are mixed. The proportion in which these *gunas*, or properties of *prakriti*, are mixed, and the intensity in which they are manifest, will decide the kind of thing that anything is. It may be a body of a living being, or it may be an inanimate substance.

Now, the impulsions within a human being, mental as well as sensory, are also to be attributed to the activity of these *gunas*. It is not merely the physical body that is a product of these *gunas*. *Gunas* mean the properties of *prakriti*: *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*. They are called *gunas* in Sanskrit. It is not merely the physical body that is made up of the *gunas*, but even the inner constituents of the human personality, what is called the subtle body, are also products of the *gunas*. Now, our contact with things, our longing for things and our relationship with things, in any manner whatsoever, is a wondrous dramatic activity of these *gunas* among themselves. This is a very interesting thing to contemplate.

What is meant by 'relationship'? All life is a kind of relationship of some type or the other. You cannot conceive life without relationship contact. Sensory contact and psychological contact are the principal contacts. Now, these contacts constitute what is called your earthly mortal existence, but these contacts with relationships are a play of the *gunas*. How do they play? There is a mysterious manner in which the forces of *prakriti* operate. These forces can become anything and everything.

A juggler's tricks are sometimes brought out as illustrations of the way in which the forces of nature can work. One thing can appear as many things. There are jugglers in India who perform tricks of various types. Some of the tricks are difficult to understand. You will be flabbergasted even to see them. There is one kind of trick called the rope trick, which is not easily performed these days. A magician stands there alone; there is nobody else. He says, "Now a war is taking place in the heavens. I am called there to assist the gods. I am a soldier. I will go there. How will I go? I will go with this rope." He throws the rope up to the sky. You cannot understand how a rope is thrown like that. He climbs the rope. He goes up, and he tells people around, "Now you see heads falling, and bloodshed. All this indicates a war is taking place." And after some time, you see heads falling down. You will be wondering what is the matter. From the skies, heads fall. There is blood dropping from all places. War is taking place. And then the man is suddenly found in the same place where he had been standing. There is neither the rope nor the blood nor the heads. These are interesting things. He has become the rope, he has become the heads, he has become the blood, he has become the warrior, and he is the person who is talking to you.

In a similar manner, a magical performance is projected before us, as it were. The miracle of this magic is very dramatically portrayed before us in certain great texts like the Yoga Vasishtha, and also in smaller texts such as the Tripura Rahasya. They are interesting things. You must read the Yoga Vasishtha to know what these mysteries are which make us believe that there is a world outside.

Actually, what we call the world is nothing but an outsideness in the mind. If the outsideness has vanished and is not there, then there is no world. Imagine a condition where externality is lifted up. Let the mountains be there, let the trees be there, let the sun be there, let the moon be there, let the river be there, but externality is not there. The world ceases to be, in one second. The world is nothing but externality. It is not a substance. Inasmuch as externality is necessary for experience of the world, and externality itself is not a substance, the world is considered as unsubstantial. It does not exist as a substance. This is one side of the matter.

The other side is that the forces of *prakriti* – the *gunas sattva, rajas, tamas* – in a dramatic manner become the subject as well as the object, as the magician became the performer as well as the rope on which he was climbing. Or, to give another example, in a dream you are pursued by a tiger, so you run and climb a tree. This tiger is nothing but your mind, and the space between, the distance between the tiger and the tree is your mind, the process of running is your mind, the tree is your mind, the climbing is your mind, and you have become an individual involved in this process by the activity of your mind. Such a drama can be performed by your mind by creating a spatial and temporal distance, bifurcating the seer and the seen, the actor and the acted, the tiger and the man, and so on. Likewise, the forces *sattva, rajas, and tamas* act as a subjective propulsion of sensory action, and also an objective location of things which the senses attract.

Thus, the attraction of the sense organs and the mind in respect of objects outside is nothing but the forces attracting forces, the *gunas* moving among *gunas: guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta iti matvā na sajjate* (BG 3.28). Knowing that there is no such thing as your wanting an object, no such thing as the senses coming in contact with things, but only the same force subjectively colliding with the same force objectively, as it were – knowing that even this so-called colliding or coming in contact of the subjective side with the objective side is made possible by another drama of there being a space and time in between – knowing this, the wise one is not attached to anything in this world.

You say “I shall do”, “I shall not do”. These kinds of statements have no meaning, because you are not there as an isolated person to make statements of this kind. *Prakriti* is the doer of all things. *Prakṛtis tvām niyokṣyati* (BG 18.59): Knowing that the whole world is a manipulation of the forces of *prakriti*, neither does one get attached to anything, nor does one make any statement of a positive or negative nature; neither does one love anything, nor does one hate anything. The question does not arise because there is no question of even one’s own independent existence in this world as a doer of action. You are not an independent doer of actions. Here is the crux of the philosophy of the Bhagavadgita. You are not an independent doer. The agency or independent doership that you attribute to yourself is a fallacy. It is not possible because of the fact of your involvement in the total setup of the forces of *prakriti*. The universe is doing something, and you are not independently doing anything.

So we enter into the Third Chapter of the Bhagavadgita, which is a beautiful presentation before us of our duty in this world. Some of the chapters are to be read especially with intensive concentration. For instance, the Third Chapter which explains the whole philosophy of action, the Thirteenth Chapter which concentrates more on the analytical, philosophical side of things, the Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Chapters which describe the glory of the Almighty and the magnificence of the Creative Principle, and Chapters Five and Six which hinge upon concentration and self-integration process, all these are to be especially studied. The First and Second Chapters act as a kind of introduction to the whole theme, and the actual working of the entire structure of the teaching of the Gita is now to be commenced from the Third Chapter.

Chapter 11

PARTICIPATING WITH THE INTENTION OF THE UNIVERSE

The Creator released His creation of beings with the injunction that everyone is necessarily associated with a sacrifice. This is a very famous statement in a verse of the Third Chapter of the Bhagavadgita: *sahayajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā* (BG 3.10). A wealth of meaning is hidden in this little half-sentence, as it were. Everyone is born by the ordinance of the Creator with an association with sacrifice, and is necessarily connected with sacrifice. Unconnected with sacrifice, nobody is born, which is something very strange and interesting to hear. *Sahayajñāḥ* is the *srishti*. Creation is connected, unavoidably and invariably, with sacrifice.

Wonderfully deep is the meaning of the word 'sacrifice'. Anything can be conjoined with the meaning of that word. The Sanskrit word *yajna* means 'sacrifice'. We may translate it into the English language as 'sacrifice', 'self-abnegation', 'self-alienation', 'sharing', 'parting with', 'giving', 'exceeding oneself by parting with a share of oneself', and so on. Deep is the meaning of the word 'sacrifice'.

We have a pithy statement in the Vedic lore which states *yajño vai viṣṇuḥ* (Yajurveda 6.2.9.2): The ruler of the universe is sacrifice. Vishnu is the supreme cosmic administrative ruling principle. The supporting power of the universe is Vishnu. It is identical with sacrifice, which means to say, we are supported by the principle of sacrifice. 'We are supported' means that we are enabled to live, that we exist because of this sacrifice. But for the existence of such a thing called sacrifice, existence would not be possible.

Now, this is a little hint in the beginning of the Third Chapter of the Gita. What is meant by 'sacrifice being connected with all beings'? We are all living beings, and everything is a being. It is necessarily connected with a sacrifice, which means to say, an obligation to render in respect of everything else an act of sharing and cooperating for the purpose of not only one's own sustenance but a mutual sustenance. This mutuality of sustenance is brought out in the second passage of the very same chapter. *Devān bhāvayatānena te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ, parasparam bhāvayantaḥ śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha* (BG 3.11): Worship the gods, adore the divinities and share what you have with these divinities, so that they may bless you with their grace and enable you to live comfortably and securely.

There is, in the midst of these two little verses, a complete philosophy of life, as it were. As we have noted in our earlier sessions, there is a cooperative activity automatically going on in all of nature, so that every part of creation is sustained by the very fact of this cooperative movement and sustenance. It is a balancing of cooperative contribution that gives the appearance of the existence of an individual. We exist as individuals, and seem to be living as persons independently by ourselves. Are we really independent persons? Or are we appearing to be independent? We may, in our blinded vision of things and clouded idea of our own selves, think that we are really independent individuals, but a wider vision and a deeper probe into the secret of things will reveal that we

are not independent individuals. There is a fabric of interconnected constituents which gives the appearance of the sustenance of every part. The part seems to be balanced in its position on account of energy in the form of a sustaining contribution coming from every other part. The balancing of forces in a particular manner, a type of concentration of this balancing of energy in a particular point in space and time, looks like an individual, tentative existence.

There is a rapid movement of forces – *sattva, rajas, tamas*. They never are stable in themselves. The whole universe is a movement, it is a velocity, it is an ocean of inwardly active, moving and energising elements, so that the inward activity of this threefold force called *sattva, rajas* and *tamas* in a particular or given manner, at a given moment of time, projects a kind of universe, a particular pattern or form of the coming together of these three forces, is a world. These forces can assume another pattern if the need be, and another world can be created.

Varieties of pictures can be painted with the same kind of inks. There can be only three inks, say red and blue and yellow. There are three inks in three bottles, and the artist manufactures a picture out of these three inks only, by the act of his brush. You can know and appreciate that he can bring about any picture out of the very same inks. He can paint a dog, a horse, a man, an angel, a tree, a hill, or a landscape. Any blessed thing can be created by the manipulation of these three inks only. The proportion of distribution, the intensity of the ink, and so on, will decide what kind of picture is to be presented. Similarly, varieties of worlds are there. Endless are the possibilities of space-time complexes. This is one kind of space-time complex, and one kind of picture is before us. We may think that this is the only world that is possible and no other world is possible. It is not so. It is like imagining that with the inks you can have only one picture, and not more than one picture.

The energies – *sattva, rajas* and *tamas* – can arrange themselves in any form; a particular form that they take is called a world, and we are a part of the world. Inasmuch as our mind, our consciousness, our intelligence is tethered to this particular form only, we cannot visualise any world other than this particular world. Our consciousness is tied to this body so forcefully that we cannot imagine that there can be anything other than this body. It is the only reality. In a similar way, the perceptive consciousness gets accustomed, by a vehemence of association, with this particular picture presented by a given pattern of the arrangement of these three forces, *sattva, rajas, tamas*, and makes us believe that there is only one world, that there is no other world, that this is the only reality. Many a time we are likely to imagine thus. We are caught up within a single prison, and therefore we do not know what is outside it. Infinite worlds are possible. Infinite possibilities there are of experiences, and endless are the potentialities in the bosom of *prakriti*.

Why should the *gunas*, or the properties of *prakriti* – *sattva, rajas, tamas* – arrange themselves in a particular form only, and not in any other form? This is something like asking, “Why I am born into this body only? I could have been born into some other body. What is the reason for my being what I am, and why

am I not something else?" The answer is given. The propulsion of consciousness in a given direction is the reason for the shape it takes as the body, and the total action and reaction of the cumulative, concentrated direction given by a group of individuals, a set of individualities, is said to determine the kind of shape that the *gunas* should take in the form of a manifested universe. It does not mean that the same pattern will be maintained in every cycle, though there can be the same form maintained once again, if the necessity arises. A passage from the Veda says: The Creator creates the world in the same way as He did in various cycles or eons of creation.

There are, therefore, patterns of the projection of these forces – *sattva, rajas, tamas*. The variety that we see in the world is an illusion, as the illusion of the difference of presentation is made possible by the distribution of ink, though the inks may be only a few – one, two or three. Though variety is there, the basic substance of this variety need not be so multitudinous as the picture is made to look.

Now, the painted picture gives the semblance of a wholeness. Every part of the painting is sustained in a given manner in order that the wholeness of the picture can be made possible. Every particular dot of the ink should be in a particular position only. It should not be in some other position. And the presentation is entirely dependent on the total action of these many dots. There is a mutual collaboration, contribution, made, as it were, by these little dots. Every dot of ink cooperates with every other dot of ink, and it is this cooperative accumulation of presentation that gives us the idea of a wholeness which we call the picture. Actually, there is no such thing as the picture. It does not exist; yet, it appears to be there. What is there is only little dots of three kinds of ink, and these three dots variegatedly presented by the expertness of the artist give the impression of a manifoldness and a total vision of something.

In a similar manner, we seem to have an individuality of our own. I am a man, and a complete man, not a half man or a one-fourth man. Yet, this total man that I am, this individuality that I am assuming, is a picture presented by the three *gunas*. There is nothing in me except these three forces. I have many things. Everyone feels there are many things in this body, this mind, and so on. It is a big factory of varieties of treasure, as it were, but all these contents of this wondrous factory of human personality contain only three items, nothing more – the properties of *prakriti: sattva, rajas* and *tamas*.

In the intensity of expression, in a differentiated manner, they look like various bodies – the physical body, the astral body, the causal body, or, as you might have heard, there are five layers of our individuality. These are called, in our Sanskrit language, *annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijnanamaya* and *anandamaya koshas*. The physical, the vital, the mental, the intellectual, and the causal layers are not five shirts put on by the Atman. They are a thick layer of cloud distributed in a variegated intensity of expression, as a cloud may cover the sun and we cannot say there are many kinds of cloud. Cloud is cloud, but it can be thick or thin, and it can be distributed in layers of depression and pressure. It can be dark, it can be lighter, it can be anything whatsoever. The variety in the

distribution of the density of the cloud does not mean that there are many clouds. There is only a difference in the intensity of their expression as layers, as it were. They are not even layers of one thing over the other. It is one thing only appearing as many. Likewise is the apparent distribution of the so-called fivefoldness of our five sheaths. There are not five sheaths. There is one sheath only, in the same way as there is one cloud covering the sun, but they look like five, or sometimes we call them three, because of the intensity of their expression. We have a physical body with legs and hands and feet and eyes and brain and heart and lungs and sense organs and mind and intellect. A wonderful mechanism we have in our so-called layers of expression, but they are only these three forces playing a drama, three things appearing as many things. Therefore, our so-called stability of individuality, our independence that we are assuming, is an illusion. We are not independent persons; nobody is independent in this world. The independence is a tentative, illusory presentation of a stability created by a concentration of these three forces at a given moment of time, for a particular purpose, and when that purpose is fulfilled, the pattern will change suddenly, and there will not be this particular individuality of ours. We will shed this individuality, and we will assume a new form by a rearrangement of the constituents which are nothing but these.

Hell and heaven are nothing but these three *gunas*. What a difference between hell and heaven! Unthinkably different are the conditions prevailing in heaven and hell, but there is nothing substantially different in the formation of these arrangements or atmospheres or environments we call hell and heaven. The particular type of pressure exerted by the *gunas* in a type of intensity will give us the idea of a particular world, as I mentioned. We call it a physical world, an astral world or celestial world, a nether region, an inferno, and so on. So there is no inferno, paradiso, purgatorio – nothing of the kind. There is no earth, there is no heaven, there is no sky. These are all forms taken by different pressurised expressions of the three *gunas*: *sattva rajas, tamas*. The whole world is this much – including me, including you, including inanimate objects, animate objects, and every blessed thing. *Na tad asti pṛthivyām vā divi deveṣu vā punaḥ, sattvaṁ prakṛtijair muktaṁ yad ebhiḥ syāt tribhir guṇaiḥ* (BG 18.40): In all the earth and all the heaven, there is nothing visible, nothing tangible, nothing intelligible which is not a formation of these three *gunas*.

So where do you stand as an individual? You do not exist as an individual. You are a concentrated point of these three forces arranged in a particular form. They can rearrange themselves at any time, and you are no more there. Immediately there is a distribution of the constituents. We can have another building with the same bricks, only rearranging them in a different pattern. It may look like a temple, it may look like a church, it may look like a mosque, or it may look like a dome. It may look like anything. We may call the structure by different names because of the shape taken by the very same bricks. The same bricks look like different structures, and we give them different names. Here is a temple and here is a shop, and many things are told about buildings because of the form taken by the same building material. So there are three building materials in this cosmos –

sattva, rajas, tamas. Finally, we will be told there are not even three. When we go to the later chapters, the Fourteenth, Fifteenth and Sixteenth Chapters, we will find even the threefoldness of this force is not an ultimate fact. There is something very unique and surprising that is revealed later on. Thus, inasmuch as we are not independent, inasmuch as we are constituted of powers that are also the basic building bricks of everyone else also, there is an interconnection of us with everybody else.

Now, the universe is a ubiquitous, all-pervading maintenance of balance. Even our existence is a kind of balance. If the balance is upset, we will not be here even for three minutes. Even the building is a balance of the building material. If the balance is not there, there will be no structure. It will not stand. The stability of the thing is the balance of its inner constituents, and therefore our so-called stability and perpetuation of our individuality, the imagination that we are existing as so-called Mr., Mrs., and so on, is an illusion because its existence, even for a moment, is due to the balance maintained by these inner forces. But why do they maintain this balance? This so-called maintenance of balance is also dependent on various other aspects of the very same three forces distributed elsewhere in the cosmos. If the leg is to stand erect, all the muscles of the body also should cooperate. It is not enough if only the knee bends or straightens itself. Medical men tell us that four hundred and fifty muscles are activated immediately merely by the act of standing. We do not know that four hundred and fifty muscles are working merely when we are standing. Likewise, the whole cosmos is active merely by a particular event that takes place.

There is a beautiful phrase uttered by a modern thinker: The universe is in travail at the birth of even a single event. Travail is the pang of birth, and at the birth of even a single event in the world, the pang is felt by the whole universe because the whole universe is made up of such substance as is present in the operation and activation of any event anywhere. Or, to give our old homely example, the activity of any single part of our body is, at the same time, the activity of the whole body. Thus, unless the whole universe contributes its might and cooperates in a given manner, we would not be existing here as a person. But why are we existing as this person in this particular form as an individual? It is for the fulfilment of the purpose of creation itself. There is a purpose and a tendency in the very structure of creation, and that particular intended purposiveness or structure of creation decides what kind of person we must be.

For instance, there is a Constitution of a government. It is a principle that is laid down for the administration of the whole country. That principle is the purpose behind the very action called administration. That purpose laid down in the Constitution will decide every kind of detail of the manner of the performance of personnel in the government. This person should do this, that person should do that, in this manner, in this form, at this time, and so on. The details are determined by the central thought, the original will that we call the primary ordinance of the Constitution. So the whole universe has one will, call it God's will or whatever it is. That central intention of the universal arrangement

of the three *gunas* will decide what kind of person we should be, and anything should be.

Then what is the purpose of our existence in this world? It is not to eat, drink, and be merry. Why does a particular official work in the government as a little clerk in an unknown office? It is not because he wants to draw a salary. That is incidental. He exists as a little contribution for the stability of the entire setup called the welfare of the nation. A little, single, unknown man working in a corner, in a desk, is contributing his little might as a necessary cooperation of the stability of the entire framework of the administration. He is as important as anybody else. An unknown worker is as important as a well-known advisor. So the existence of each individual in a large framework of operation is conditioned and determined by the original intention of the whole framework itself.

Thus, why do we exist? It is not because we have to enjoy things in this world. Life is not intended for personal enjoyment. You do not exist for yourself. A little participator in an administrative setup does not exist for himself or herself. That existence is conditional existence, not unconditioned existence – conditional in the sense that it is a participation in larger existence, which is also the welfare of each individual. So why do we exist, and why do we work, and what kind of work are we doing? There is no such thing as individual action. We cannot do anything. “I do.” This kind of statement should not be made. The whole world works, and when it works, it utilises our work also as a necessary operation of a little nut and bolt or wheel, or whatever it is, for the fulfilment of its purpose.

So whenever we do any little work, we are doing a cosmical work, we are doing a universal work, we are participating in the creative activity of the cosmos. It is not my work; it is not your work. Such a thing cannot be. Even in the imagination, that kind of independence of our work cannot be permitted. Even in imagination, that is not possible. Not only is it not possible for us to work independently for our own purpose, it is not possible for us even to exist as an independent person because we are a little thread in this large fabric of the spread-out three *gunas* which are this world.

So *prakriti* determines every character, and each one of us is one particular character. The whole presentation of a dramatic performance is a total picture that is presented before an audience. That total picture assumes a meaning if every actor participates in a given manner at a given moment, but if each one independently acts – I shall do whatever I like – then there is no totality of the dramatic presentation. There is a script prepared by the director of the drama, or there is an intention of the director, we may say; that script, or the original thought which is the purposiveness of the whole presentation, will decide what sort of performance is expected from every dramatic personae. Likewise, the purpose of the universe will decide what kind of work we have to do in this world. We cannot say we will do what we like. There is no such thing as our liking, and such a statement has no meaning. Our liking is nothing but a liking of the universe. So we are born with a sacrifice, which means to say that our independent existence as we assume it and imagine it is actually a position that

we are occupying in the large administrative setup of the cosmos whose building materials, or operation of powers, are the three *gunas*: *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*.

This is to explain the inner suggestiveness of that beautiful single phrase, as it were, *sahayajñāḥ*: Togetherness with sacrifice is our existence. Our existence is a togetherness with sacrifice. Therefore, without sacrifice we do not exist, and if sacrifice means cosmic cooperation, sharing with everything with which we are connected, which means to say, a universally spread out participation of ourselves, each little work of ours is the worship of the universal intention. This is the meaning of 'work is worship'. How does work become worship? It is because whatever we do is an operation through the instrumentality of our particular form of individuality as a contribution for the presentation of the total picture of the intention of the whole cosmos. Each man is a cosmic man. Every little servant of the government says, "I am the government." He is like the government. He has got authority of the government. He can summon it. So each person is a cosmic pressure point, as it were, and the whole universe, the macrocosmic existence, is microcosmically present in each person. When we say we are a *pindanda*, or a microcosm, we mean that in a miniature form the whole universe is within us. If the whole universe is within us in a *pindanda* form or a microcosm, the entire purpose of the cosmos is in the brain of each individual. In each cell of your body the universe is active; therefore, you have no individuality of your own. There is no such thing as your work, and there is no such thing as my work. It is the work of the whole purpose of creation.

Therefore, give up this idea "I shall do, I shall not do." The question does not arise. Neither can we say "I shall do", nor can we say "I shall not do". Both these statements have no significance because perforce we have to act, as a carriage attached to a railway engine is perforce dragged by the movement of the engine. "I shall move, I shall not move," the carriage does not say, because it is attached to the engine. Each one of us has this position of being attached to this central operative engine of the intention of the cosmos, and where it pulls, there we have to move. We cannot say, "I shall move, I shall not move." We have no choice.

This denial of particular choice is not a denial of freedom; it is an enhancement of our freedom. The more we participate and cooperate with the intention of the universe, the greater is our freedom. An individual has less freedom, but an individual associated with an organisation has a greater freedom. Association with an organisation implies limitation also to some extent, but this limitation is a greater freedom granted from another point of view. So the denial of individual activity and the affirmation of a universal purposiveness of things is not a denial of freedom; it is an enhancement of our freedom.

Now another point is made there that God should be worshipped, and that gives significance to our work. What that is, we shall see later.

Chapter 12

CONTROL OF THE SENSES

A wonderful message the blessed Arjuna receives from Bhagavan Sri Krishna in a brief encounter, as it were, as a response to quandaries that beset the mind of Arjuna as we have them portrayed in the First Chapter of the Bhagavadgita. Arjuna listens to all this with rapt attention and then says, "It is enrapturing indeed to hear your cosmic message, but how is it that no one seems to be in a position to make it a part of one's practical day-to-day existence? It is the same old humdrum life of toil, upset, suffering and anxiety, in spite of it being possible for any sensible person to understand and appreciate this wondrous message of cosmic solidarity that you have now bequeathed to me very briefly but touchingly."

Sri Krishna replied, "It is not that people are unable to understand things, but there is something in the human individual which is associated with this understanding. There is a great potentiality, capacity and goodness in every person, yet there is something which is terrific about the person."

There are two forces, we will be told when we come to the further chapters of the Gita. Everyone is involved in the activity of these two forces. We were discussing about the operation of the three *gunas*: *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*. Everything and everyone everywhere is constituted of these three *gunas*, these three forces that appear as forms, substances, objects, persons and things. Everything is threefold. But there is also another way of explaining this situation. The manner in which these three forces arrange themselves into a particular pattern, either as a form or as an action, is also a twofold operation. A threefold basic substance of all nature, of *prakriti*, is an impulse in two ways – the inward impulse and the outward urge. These two ways will be more elaborately described in the Sixteenth Chapter.

We have these days, in our times of scientific advancement, discoveries of an operation of forces which we may call centripetal and centrifugal. There are two ways in which one can move. Either we go inside or we go outside. Now, in a manner which is intelligible, we may identify the inward tendency to a particular aspect of the working of *sattva*, and the outward impulse to the working of *rajas*. But the inward movement becomes a function of *sattva* only when we are able to understand the meaning of this inwardness. We have only a prosaic and man-on-the-street understanding of the meaning of inwardness. For example, we are inside this room and after some time, we will be outside this room. Whenever we speak of inside or outside we associate this insideness and outsideness with some enclosure, being inside an enclosure or outside an enclosure. There is a limitation, and one can be within the limitation or one can be outside the limitation. But *sattva* is not an inwardness of that type. It is a different thing altogether. When we are in a *sattvic* state, when the condition of equilibrium, transparency and rationality operates, we are in an inward mood of appreciation of values, which does not necessarily mean we become introverts in a

psychoanalytic sense. We do not cast our eyes within our body and look into our own inwardness of physical personality. That would be to understand inwardness as we know inwardness to be something inside the four walls of a room. Even the words 'subjective' and 'objective' are not adequate to the purpose because sometimes they carry meanings which are not appropriate to their connotations.

Now, there is a goodness in man sometimes operating in a marked way in one's life, as I mentioned, yet this goodness is to be understood in its proper sense. The goodness we speak of here is the preponderance of the *sattva guna* in the person. To be good is to be in consonance with the law of nature. To be good does not mean merely being condescendingly charitable to another person. It is not showing mercy to poor people. It is not putting on an air of superiority in the midst of others who are inferior. It is not a sense of doing good to others because I have greater capacity and others have less. This would be to bring a sociological interpretation into a spiritual circumstance. Therefore, goodness does not mean a socially motivated inclination of the mind in respect of people outside in society, though goodness may manifest itself in this form also.

We are said to be good only when we are in tune with Truth, and the percentage of our attunement with Truth is the percentage of our goodness. Truth is, in a way, an inwardness of fact. It is hidden in the cave of the heart. This is how we are sometimes told about it in the Upanishads and in other scriptures. The secret of dharma is hidden in the cave. The secret of virtue, righteousness, veracity, Truth or Reality is in the cave of the heart. The heart of things is the truth of things. The heart of a person is not the fleshy heart. We sometimes refer to 'the heart of the matter'. What is the heart of the matter? It is not the physical heart that we are referring to here. It is the centrality of operation, the secret, the basic route and fundamental essence of a thing that we call the heart of the matter, and in that sense also we have to understand the inwardness of things.

A thing becomes inward in the spiritual sense when it is in harmony with Truth, as I told you. So the indication of the character of Reality or Truth may be said to be the nature of the inwardness of approach. The more are you friendly with Truth, the more are you inward. Now, 'truth', the word, has to be borne in mind carefully. The truth of things is not inside anywhere. It is not inside something. It is a ubiquitous, all-pervading, operative existence. Inasmuch as it is an all-pervading, controlling principle, it is in the heart of all things. Now in this sense we have to understand the heart of the matter. That which is pervading all things is also in the heart of all things, but it is not inside things in the sense of there being nothing outside it. The question of outside does not arise here because Truth is not something contained in space. It is not to be contained in space, and also it is not outside space. The question does not arise here because it conditions even our understanding of space and time. So inwardness, when it is associated with the reality of things, is to be understood as the specific feature of an all-encompassing something.

Our minds are not so made to comprehend what this could be. A child's mind is indeed the mind of every one of us. Spiritually we are illiterate, though we may

be very literate in a political, social or practical view of things. The understanding of spiritual circumstances, the appreciation of spiritual values, a gaining of insight into what spirituality means, is an education by itself. It is necessary to reorient our thoughts and entirely change the very framework of the operation of our understanding. We have to become different persons altogether, as it were. For some time it appears we have to cease to be what we are now in order to be what we ought to be in the light of Truth, and then we may be able to appreciate what it could be to be good and inward in one's evaluation of values, while it is at the same time a collaboration with the truth of the whole universe. This is how *sattva* operates as the reflection of divinity in all things. It is, in a way, the mirror in which is reflected the total picture of the truth of the cosmos. The whole truth is not capable of being contacted by any means available to us, but it is reflected in some way, in some degree, in some measure, macrocosmically as well as microcosmically.

So this is a tendency present in everyone. Every one of us, every created being, has this basic tendency to motivate in the direction of the finality of things. At the very root of all roots, we may say, there is essentially goodness pervading in the cosmos. The quintessential basic fundamentality of things is goodness, not evil; therefore, it is impossible for anyone not to be good at least some time in the process of evolution. When it becomes possible under certain given circumstances to work in tune with this inwardness, out of which everything has come, we become good persons, saintly persons, sages, Godmen even.

But we have another tendency also. That other tendency is the outwardness characteristic of *rajas*. It is true that we are capable of being very good; why not? We have the capacity and the potentiality to be immensely, wonderfully good. But we have also the capacity to be wonderfully devilish. That is because we live in two worlds, as it were, at the same time. Again I will repeat the same words – the centrifugal world and the centripetal world are both our worlds. We are sometimes said to be in a world of empiricity. We say this is a phenomenal world. This is what philosophers many a time tell us. We say this is a relative world. Now, what do we mean by saying that this is a world of phenomena and relativity?

The meaning is twofold here again. There is nothing absolutely and permanently valid in this world. Everything seems to be justifiable under conditions only, and nothing can be justified unconditionally. There is nothing unrelated in this world. Everything is related to something else. There is a tentative permanence of everything. An absolute permanence of anything is not seen anywhere. Now, when we speak of things in this way, when we say things are relative, transient, impermanent, not long-lasting, we imply thereby that in our understanding of the relativity of things we have already made a reference to the nonrelative, without reference to which, even the relativity of things cannot be understood or noticed. Our observation of the relativity of things is possible only on the stand of a nonrelative reference. We have some connection with a non-phenomenal and non-relative reality. If that were not with us as a point of reference, a standard of reference, we would not have even known that things

are passing. The phenomenology and the relativity of the world is recognisable with reference to something which is not phenomenal and not relative. So we are, in one sense, living in a relative world of space, time and causal relations, perishability, transiency and impermanency. This is very, very true. But we are also secretly, at the bottom of our being, rooted in something which is not transient, not relative, not phenomenal, not extrovert. So we live in two worlds: a world of invisible operations, and a world of visible activity.

Where are we actually standing now, inward or outward? Sometimes we are pulled inward, sometimes outward. Now, mostly viewing things in the light of what we see in humanity at this moment of the twentieth century, we may say there is an extroversion of attitude, an impulsion to evaluate everything in life in terms of outward appearance and external arrangement. There is no inclination of any person to view things in terms of an inwardness of values.

“So Arjuna, I am now going to answer your question, after having told you something as an introduction. This is the truth of the matter. Having known everything, yet we cannot live according to what we know, and the reason is this. Mostly people who are phenomenally involved are conditioned by phenomenal impulses.” What are the phenomenal impulses? They are vehement subjection to the requirements of objective existence which psychologically goes as desire, greed, hatred, and anger: *Kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajoguṇa samudbhavaḥ, mahāśano mahāpāpmā viddhyenam iha vairiṇam* (BG 3.37). Mostly, there is a vehemence of outward approach in the human individual. We always see outside. There is no other tendency in us, presumably. We wake up in the morning and start looking outside. All our engagements are outside. Our fears and longings and expectations are outside. Everything is outside. There is nothing but outsideness in this world. We are sold, as it were, to this world of externality. Well, literally we may say we are just what Christ describes in his great statement: We have gained the world and lost our souls. We have lost our souls because we do not even believe we have souls. We have no time to think that we have souls at all. Why think of souls? We do not have time to think that we exist at all. Only others exist. The world exists, problems exist, relationships exist, occupations exist, troubles exist; all are existing except myself. I have lost myself, drowned myself in that which is outside, as if I am not there at all. My existence is completely sold out to that which is totally outside. The world is an externality. Hell is nothing but an extreme of externality, and heaven is a tendency to internality.

Now, this difficulty of the reason why you cannot put into practice in your daily life this wondrous message of the need to participate in a cosmic purpose arises due to there being *kama*, *krodha* and *lobha* in everyone – desire, anger and greed. There is a susceptibility to long for things, though we may not be always longing for things in an obvious manner. For instance, we are seated here. We are not going on thinking of some object of longing. We may not be even aware of what we are wanting at all, but it does not mean that the tendency is absent in us. A particular atmosphere presented now in this little room is not permitting the manifestation of submerged longings of the mind. But as seeds grow in the field when the atmosphere is conducive, the potentialities for expression outside as

desire, greed and anger rise up into action and become large trees, as it were, when conditions become favourable.

Having desire, anger and greed need not necessarily mean that these forces are operating in us perpetually, day in and day out. To be desireful, a person need not go on shouting, "I want, I want, I want!" And we need not go on attacking somebody in order to be angry. It is not necessary to go on shouting, "I have this desire! I have this desire!" There is no need to say all these things. But without announcing our propensities, even without knowing sometimes that these are present at all in us, they shall be present. Our propensities, traits of this character, sometimes lie hidden and latent within us, without external manifestation, due to the pressure of circumstances. If longings do not manifest themselves openly in daylight, it is because the conditions of outer life do not permit their expression. If sometimes we are unable to give vent to our anger, it does not necessarily mean that we are not angry. It only means conditions outside do not permit the ventilation of that anger. So is the case with any trait or impulse.

Even the potential, latent, hidden impulse of this kind will act as a screen preventing the insight into our real association with the universal operation of things. Here is the answer why we cannot put into practice this open truth that we are necessary participants in the cosmic operation. Individuality is no more to be seen in this world. Nothing in the world is individual. Everything is a part of something else, but we cannot understand this. Even the reason is not permitted to think in this manner because impulses which are irrational overcome even rationality many a time. Reason fails when irrational instincts gain an upper hand.

Irrational behaviour is a temporary state of loss of reason, and at that time we cannot know how a person will behave. When irrationality preponderates and puts down all rational possibilities, a person will start behaving like a wild cyclone which does not know where to move or what to do. When thick clouds are hanging in the sky, wind is blowing from all sides and there is a downpour of rain, even midday can look like midnight, as if the sun is eclipsed totally and does not exist anymore. We will not be able even to cognise the presence of rationality in the world. We will become temporarily mad if instincts gain an upper hand. And instincts have many levels of manifestation.

These are explained in greater detail in the sutras of Patanjali. We have a potential condition; we have a tentatively thinned-out, weakened condition; we have a sleeping condition; and we have an obviously manifest condition. Four conditions of instincts are mentioned in Patanjali. So when instincts do not obviously and actively operate outside like a soldier fighting in the field, it need not mean they are not there. They can be sleeping. A sleeping snake is nevertheless a serpent. A potential thief is a thief, though he is not actually thieving at this moment. There can be an emaciated snake. An emaciated snake which has not eaten for months has the capacity to be what it is when it is fed well. There is a submerged condition, things lying in ambush waiting to find an opportunity to come up.

So our instincts need not necessarily be visible to us. In our conscious life we may not know that they exist at all. I am very fine. What is wrong with me? But the disturbances in the mind, that which we call the tossing of the mind, the inability to concentrate, a feeling of fatigue even in sitting for a while calmly in meditation and an inward restlessness that one feels are outer indications of an inward presence of these potential instincts which are irrational. These prevent us from putting this knowledge into practice.

But there is a way out. All problems are meant to be solved. Every difficulty has to be overcome. This is the picture I have presented before you of things as they are. But things have to be something else. The way out is to put forth effort in the right direction, in the right manner, with the guidance of people who have trodden the path. Gradually these irrationalities, these impulses, have to be subdued. Just as restive horses which will not easily bend and will not listen have to be controlled slowly by operating the reins in the required manner, the higher should control the lower.

Now, when we say that the higher should control the lower, it need not necessarily mean that that we should go to the highest place of support at once. The immediately higher position can be a support. The mind is superior to the sense organs. The mind is filled with instincts, no doubt, yet it is the reservoir of the force which is supplied to the senses for their actions. So you can diminish the supply of power to the senses by blocking the avenues of this supply, which is what we call austerity, *tapas*, and a life of discipline, abstemious living in a controlled atmosphere. *Sadhana*, as it is called, is one way of subduing these otherwise very strong impulses.

One has to live an austere life. Do not be too indulgent. Do not pamper your sense organs; do not feed your body beyond the limit. Even animals in a circus are very carefully managed. They are fed to the extent it is necessary; neither are they allowed to die, nor are they allowed to be ferocious. After all, the sense organs are operations within you. You cannot kill them in the name of austerity, but you also cannot allow them to be ferocious and go out of your hand. That state should not take place. The Arab has to control the camel, and the camel should not kick the Arab out of the tent.

So yoga, according to the *Bhagavadgita*, is not killing the senses. It is also not indulging in the senses. It is harmony that the *Bhagavadgita* teaches. You are not over-friendly with your sensory irrational instincts, nor are you inimical to them. You are a good teacher, a schoolmaster, as it were, a medical man, a psychologist who is not angry with the patient but understands the condition of the patient.

So here you have to be very cautious in applying a harmonious yardstick of measuring the present condition of your irrational behaviour, potential or otherwise, and your higher reason has to be applied even to subjugate the mind which supplies the energy to the senses. The *manas* is superior to the *indriyas*, or the senses, and the *buddhi* is superior to the *manas*.

How are you going to use the rationality in you? You know how you can live a life of reason. Your friendship with people, the company that you keep, the books that you read, the atmosphere in which you live, will also tell you the kind of

rationality that is permitted in your daily behaviour. Who are your friends? Make a list of all these people. What kind of people are they? *Sanga*, company is a very important determining factor in our behaviour, conduct and inner operations. While satsanga is good, *dissanga* is not good. While we condition the behaviour of other people by the emanation of forces from us, we also may be conditioned by such emanations from other people. Hence it is said that your company should always be good. Always keep company of people who are helpful to you spiritually, at least rationally. Do not be friendly with irrational minds who are instinct-ridden and brute in behaviour, who are physically oriented rather than rationally oriented. And study elevating literature which will rouse up the higher potentiality in you. Do not read trash, rubbish, journals, magazines, etc., which will distract your attention and make you earth-earthly, more and more bound. And, finally, inwardly offer prayers to the Almighty Himself, like the prayer that is given to us in the Gayatri mantra: May my intellect be directed properly. You summon the rays; you will draw sustenance from the higher powers. Finally, the great God of the universe is with you. Believe in this, and His support is always with you. "You shall succeed, my dear friend Arjuna. Don't cry," says Bhagwan Sri Krishna to Arjuna, and to every one of us.

Chapter 13

THE SUPREMELY FRIENDLY POWER

The first three chapters of the Bhagavadgita have a more or less technical character, and they are analytic in nature. Ethical, moral, philosophical are the issues that are described and discussed, and the themes get more and more pronounced in seriousness as the teaching proceeds further and further. And, at the same time, it also becomes more and more involved in different kinds of issues, almost making us feel that we are not fully confident as to where we are placed. Our placement in the context of the teachings seems to be difficult to decipher clearly, and a hard nut to crack, as it were, is presented to us in a pithy message that is bequeathed, especially through the Third Chapter. We get frightened, to some extent, because of the feeling of diffidence due to our own finitude, a secret sense of helplessness and a simultaneous feeling of doubt whether anything is possible at all.

In this wondrous atmosphere of intricate arrangements which we call the world, this universe, this cosmos, things seem to be theoretically clear and to some extent intellectually capable of grasp, but they do not appear to be anywhere near our practical life. This teaching has not yet entered our kitchen. It is only in the academy, in the university; but in our bedroom, in our kitchen, on our dining table, it is not there, and the realities are only these little things, not what we hear in the universities. So there is a fear gripping the heart of the student: What about my ability to make this knowledge a part of my program of life?

In spite of listening to any amount of teaching, the fear of weakness consequent upon limitation and finitude in every sense of the term persists. No one can forget that one is limited, finite, and weak in every field of relationship. There is socially a great limitation put on us; physically and mentally we are limited. Even in our understanding through the reason we are limited. Everything seems to be a constraint that has been put on us such that it does not appear that the superior content of this message has any vital relevance to our life.

The Fourth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita is an opening of a new avenue. A beam of light of a different character is shed on the floundering mind of the student. A new thought, a new possibility, and a new support seem to be made available to us. It is something about which nothing was mentioned earlier, something which was kept secret up to this time, as it were, the need to mention which evidently did not arise, but the mention of it is imperative in the light of a comprehensiveness of the presentation of the teaching.

There is a supremely friendly power operating in this universe. We are not likely to be aware of this fact always. We have a natural feeling, mostly, that we are totally friendless in this world. When there is trouble, we shall not receive help from anybody. We shall be left to our fate when things come to a head. We may have tentative assistances, and a type of help we may expect from human

society. We do have friends in this world, but they are conditionally arranged friends. Unconditional assistance we cannot expect.

There are occasions in life when we seem to be drowning in grief, as if death has gripped our throat and nobody will look at us except the jaws of death. At that time, we do not seem to have any kind of real relations with things. Our natural feeling is, many a time, submerged in the veneer of an outer pleasantness of human relationship. This pleasantness is an outer coating; inwardly there is the bitter pill of the medicine of the hard facts of life, which are not always available on the surface of apparent human relationships.

One need not despair. The one who gives this message, the Bhagavadgita, is a representative of the true friendship in this cosmos. Sri Krishna is considered as the permanent friend of Arjuna. Nara and Narayana are said to be inseparable brothers, inseparable friends, inseparable in every way, with Narayana representing God, Sri Krishna representing the very same thing, and Arjuna, or Nara, representing man – yourself, myself and everybody. There is an inseparable friendship that is at the base of our relationship with a secret power in this world, which is a totally outside matter for our day-to-day practical existence.

This very image of Nara-Narayana or Krishna-Arjuna as friends is given to us in another form in a passage of the Veda, and also in a passage which is repeated in the Mundaka Upanishad, that there are two birds perching on the branch of a tree. One bird is very busy with the delicious fruits of the tree, and the other bird is minding not as to what is there at all, not eating, not concerning itself with anything. The unfortunate part of it is that this busy bird eating the sweet plums is not even aware that the other bird is there nearby.

The involvement of the human mind, the engagement in human passions, desires and prejudices in the atmosphere of the world, is so intense that it cannot even be conscious for a moment that there is some super-earthly, super-physical, super-material, super-individual power masquerading in this very world unseen, unrecognised, and yet being aware of all things and ready to be of succour even to the littlest of creations. The idea behind the image of the friendship of Krishna and Arjuna perpetually obtaining, of Nara-Narayana or the two birds mentioned, is that we are not so very friendless as we may imagine in the desperate delusions of our minds, in the sorrows in which we are usually sunk. We do not find ourselves in that awakened atmosphere of it being possible for us to be conscious of there being such a thing. Like an owl which cannot visualise the light of the sun even if it is blazing at midday, the sunk mind of the bound individual cannot recognise, cannot cognise, cannot be aware even of that which is just by its side. But that is there as your friend.

So the Fourth Chapter commences with a startling and persuasive message of giving a healing and balming touch to the anxious soul that has been listening to such a complicated and difficult message of *prakriti* and the *gunas*, and their involvements, and the senses getting subjected to the operation of the *gunas*, and an apparent helplessness of the individual in this vast field of cosmic activity. That may be there; let us accept it. But there is a remedy for this apparent

problem which one involved in the cosmic operations of the *gunas of prakriti* is facing.

The touch of the finger of God can be seen in every little thing in this world. This is something we cannot even imagine in our minds. There is the descent of God in every particle of His creation. God is not a transcendent, other-worldly, unknown witness, a father, as if He has no connection with what He has created; He is intensely conscious of even the minute operations in His creation. We conceive God in the relationship He has with His creation as Brahma, Vishnu, Siva. He is not merely Brahma, the creative principle; He is also Vishnu, the sustainer. He does not merely manufacture a house, like a contractor, and leave us to our fate. He is not a contractor. He is a sustainer, a benefactor, a protector, a caretaker, a maintainer also. Therefore, the creative Brahma is also Vishnu.

Now, the Vishnu aspect is the redeeming aspect that is introduced into this creative terrific form of a God that seems to be above the *prakriti* and the *gunas*. God incarnates Himself for the purpose of setting right what may not be right under given conditions in cosmic history. Whenever there is any kind of critical moment appearing, a juncture as it is called, a *yuga*, and a catastrophic circumstance where human power utterly fails, divine power shall intercede.

There is some difficulty in our understanding the manner in which God works in this world, and the difficulty may persist as long as we remain as human beings and can think only as human beings, and in no other manner. Devotees, saints and sages are witnesses to the fact of the mysterious operation of God in this world.

Human capacity has a touch of egoism behind it. Our confidence that we can do something is not dissociated from an element of self-confidence, which is identifiable with our bodily individuality. Instances which are galore in the epics and the Puranas make out that God does help, but only when His help is necessary. It is necessary to feel the unavoidable presence of the Almighty in a given circumstance. If we feel that His presence may not be necessary, then that incarnation may not take place.

Do you sometimes feel that His presence is not necessary, that you can manage by yourself? Though this may look a fantastic position to maintain, a totally indefensible position that a man can sometimes get on even without the help of God, such a thing is not possible, and no sensible person will agree to that. But in spite of our logically and philosophically not agreeing to our own capacity independent of God's interference, the ego has its own say. There is a power of the ego which is indescribable, and it has to fail. The pride of man is humbled throughout human history. Great potentates are pushed down to the bowels of the Earth by the forces of nature, and the mightiest power on Earth is pounded down to dust today or tomorrow, but this is not easily cognised by the adamant mind of the human being. There is a kind of strength of arms, strength of personality, strength of money and strength of physique which one oftentimes assumes, which really is a chimera, which is really not there. It appears to be there for reasons beyond human understanding.

Now, while it is true that God operates even in conditions which are not cognised by the human mind, and that every operation is an operation by God only, yet it is consciously felt only when the ego opens up its gates. That conscious feeling of the coming of God into our practical life is the Avatara of God, the Incarnation, though in a way we may say there is an Incarnation every moment of time, like the rays of the Sun perpetually bathing the Earth. For the Earth there is no sunrise and sunset. All the twenty-four hours of the day the Earth receives the light of the Sun this way or that way, so there is no moment when God can forget His creation. He need not have time to come for help in respect of every event that is taking place in the world, but the value of the assistance that one can avail of from God depends much on the extent of our being able to recognise the presence of God. An unknown God is no God for us. An unconscious help is no help. It becomes conscious assistance when the ego is able to receive this inflow of assistance coming from super-human sources. Miraculously we shall be saved.

So there need be no diffidence on the part of Arjuna or any one of us that it is a hard job for us. Is this possible? Who can penetrate through this thick veil of the three *gunas*, which is as vast as the sky itself? No difficulty is there. *Yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata, abhyutthānam adharmasya tadātmānam sṛjāmyaham; paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām, dharmasamsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge* (BG 4.7-8): For the establishment of the righteousness of the kingdom of God, God Himself comes. He does not send his assistants or secretaries. There is a direct coming of the Almighty Himself. He does not send His page, or a policeman; He Himself comes.

There is a humorous story. It seems Birbal, the court jester of Emperor Akbar, was telling this kind of story: God Himself comes; He does not send an assistant. Akbar smiled, it seems, about this kind of Indian story of God Himself coming for doing even a little thing. "What kind of God do you have? He has a mighty retinue; He can send his angels or a celestial army. For a little thing, He Himself comes."

It appears this statement was made by Emperor Akbar when Birbal was telling him the story of the Gajendra Moksha, which occurs in the Bhagavata Purana. Many of you might have heard it. A crocodile was catching the foot of an elephant who had been a sage in the previous birth. He was born as an elephant due to some mistake, and had the memory of his past life. So the crocodile was pulling the elephant down into the water, and it became impossible for even the strong elephant to pull its leg out of the mire. Because of the memory of its previous life it prayed to the Almighty All-pervading Essence, and the Lord came. God Himself came.

Akbar said, "Why should He Himself come for a little thing? What is this crocodile? Even the peon of a peon can set right this matter. For a little crocodile, the whole universe is shaking, and the Almighty is coming? What kind of God have you got?"

Birbal said, it seems, "I shall illustrate the veracity of my story someday. What I said is correct. God Himself comes even for little things. He will not send an assistant or a secretary or a policeman."

“Oh,” Akbar said. He smiled, and went.

Birbal was a very humorous person. It appears that due to the fondness that Akbar had for this good fellow Birbal, he had entrusted the care of his son to him. The little child of Akbar was always with Birbal. He was taking care of him and taking him for a walk, and seeing to his security, and keeping him happy, cajoling him, and so on. One day Birbal thought, “I shall teach a lesson to this Akbar, who does not believe in the greatness of God and the mysteries of His working.” He asked one gentleman, a sculptor, to help him in this matter. He asked him to prepare an image identically looking like the child of Akbar. It should be identical to the son. And it was done. He said, “It is Akbar’s order, the Emperor’s order itself. You do it. You shall be paid for it.” A beautiful image was made, looking exactly like the son, and Birbal had arranged that this beautiful image should be kept just on the precipice of a deep well. It was there, while the real boy was kept in the house. It was dusk, when things could not be seen properly. Birbal took Akbar for a walk in that garden where there was a well near which the image looking like the child of Akbar was kept. Akbar was seated there. “Oh, my child is here. He is alone.” At that time it was so arranged by Birbal that someone would push this image into the well, and suddenly it fell down.

Birbal ran. “Oh, the child has fallen into the well, O Your Highness!”

The King rushed immediately. “Oh, my dear boy!”

The Birbal said, “Wait! Send your policeman. Send your secretary. Why are you yourself running? Why are you rushing there? You have got an army, you have got police, you have got friends, you have got secretaries; why are you, Your Highness, running there?”

He said, “This is my child. How can you talk to me like that? My child has fallen!”

Birbal said, “Your child is safe, your highness. Don’t be anxious. This is only an image. I, of course, made a cruel joke on you. I ought not to have done this, but this is an explanation, an answer to a query that you posed the other day, ‘Why should the Almighty come Himself? Why not send a secretary?’ Why did you not send a secretary when the child fell into the well? It is because it is your child.”

So is the love of God for His creation. God loves you, say the saints and the sages, more than you love God. It is difficult to understand. Saints and sages, devotees, weep day in and day out, shedding tears, remembering the love God has for themselves, for creation, for everybody. It is said in the Bhakti Shastras, scriptures in devotion, that if you take one step ahead in the direction of God, God will come running, taking one hundred steps toward you. God wants you more than you want Him. Your wanting Him is a great thing, but what to speak about His wanting you?

The whole universe wants you. You can imagine the whole universe wanting you. What could be that affection? Every particle, every grain of sand, every atom is wanting you. It loves you. It clings to you. It weeps for you. It is your friend. What could be the extent of that love which the whole universe will evince in respect of you if that can be appreciated and understood? And what is your puny love when you sit in a corner wanting to love God, the Almighty? Where comes

your little love? You are a little, tiny dust particle, as it were, in this vast spread of God's creation, and your love for that, what does it mean? What does it amount to in comparison with the total love of the whole creation for you? God's love is immeasurable, and man's puny ego cannot appreciate it.

"So Arjuna, I am here, ready to take care of everyone, and I am quite aware when that support from Me is necessary," said Sri Krishna. It is not necessary to call God for everything because He is not merely omnipotent, He is also omniscient. It is not merely that God is capable of doing everything; He also knows what is to be done at what time. And there is a further touch to it: He is everywhere. So there is no question of calling and reminding, etc. That which is everywhere, and also knows everything, need not be beckoned or summoned or told anything, "Please do this." We have only to open our hearts in gratitude. What kind of gratitude can we show to God? We look like nobodies before that mighty Presence.

I shall tell you another story. God's love for man is greater than man's love for God. This is a startling feature in spiritual history. There was a great saint living in a village who was reputed to be capable of seeing God every day and speaking to Him. In the night he encountered God, and he had a daily conversation with Him. Everyone respected him so much, that this is a person who speaks to God every day. In the daytime he had devotees around him and gave instruction, but in the night he would be speaking to God.

One lady, it is said, who had some distress of her own, was coming every day and prostrating herself before the saint, keeping in his presence a little sweet porridge in a mud vessel, offering her obeisance, and going without uttering a single word as to why she was doing that. The saint also uttered nothing. Every day this was happening. She would come and prostrate herself, keep this porridge, do *namaskar*, and go away. It appears a year passed when neither she would say anything, nor he would say anything.

After a year the saint asked, "Why are you coming every day and doing this prostration and keeping this porridge before me?"

Then she opened her mouth, it seems, and said, "Great Master, I have heard that you speak to God every night. Would you kindly convey my sorrow to him, and speak my feelings?"

He said, "Yes, I shall."

"I have no issue. I want one child. This is my sorrow. If possible, speak to God. If God wills, it shall be."

"I shall speak, yes. I shall speak to God," he said.

Eagerly the lady went, waiting for the dawn. Then she rushed to the saint and asked, "What is the message from God?"

The saint said, "My respectable mother, what can I tell you? God has said no, you cannot have an issue."

Her heart was breaking. "If God Himself is not considerate to me, who else will help me? I shall end my life today." Thus thinking, she did not return home. She ran to the bank of a river, wanting to die, to drown herself in the water. With

dishevelled hair she ran, weeping and beating her breast. "I shall not live any more when God Himself is not willing to help me."

On the way, it appears, she met a spiritual man looking like a crazy one with dishevelled hair, dirty looking. He accosted her. "Mother, where are you running?"

She did not speak. "I do not want to say anything. I am going to die."

"Why are you going to die?" he asked.

"I do not want to speak to you. Why are you interfering with me?"

Then again he asked, "What is the matter with you? Let me hear one word."

Then somehow, reluctantly, she uttered the whole story. "God has refused my request. Therefore, there is no point in my living in this world."

"What is the request, and what was it that God denied?"

"Just a simple, little, petty thing. I want to have an issue. It is not going to be."

"What is this? For a little thing you cry and want to end your life? How many issues do you want?"

"One," she said.

"You shall have two. Why are you worrying? Go. I am telling you, you shall have two, not one. Go back home and be happy," he said.

She could not easily swallow this message because how could a man say something against God Himself? Anyway, a good word is always a good word. A kind word, even from a baby, is solacing. Even if an enemy speaks to me kindly, it shall satisfy my heart. She went back home and gave up the idea of dying. She had, exactly after a year, a little child, and when another year passed, two children. Two years afterwards the lady came to the very same saint who had said that God had refused. She brought the two little babies and made them stand before the saint, with the same porridge once again.

The saint could recognise her, though she came after two years. "Oh, you have come," he said. "Who are these two little children?"

"Yours. They are your children, Master. They are your children."

"You have two children?" He could not understand how God could behave in this manner. "He has told me that it is not possible. Now how has this happened? I shall quarrel with God tonight. He has defamed me. My face has become black. What is the matter? Tonight I shall have a quarrel with God."

That night he faced God. "Lord, what have you done to me? You have made me a fool."

The Lord said, it seems, "No, my dear boy. I have done nothing. It was true that that lady could not have a child; therefore, your request was not possible. I had told a fact. I love you very much because you are after Me." This saint was after God, and therefore, God loved him. "You love Me, and therefore, I have love for you. You are perpetually after Me, but that crazy person who said that the lady can have two children was a person after whom I am. Though it is true that you are running after Me, he is the person who I am running after."

Now, how could there be anyone whom God is pursuing? We want God, but is there any possibility of God wanting somebody? You may say that you cannot understand this situation that God wants any of us, but you will be surprised that

God wants every one of us, and we shall have no problems if that great omnipotency is with us. There is nothing which He cannot do for us in critical moments of sorrow, dejection and moods of helplessness, politically, socially, or in any sense of the term, if we really want, if we feel totally helpless and know that we have no capacity of our own. 'Really' is to be underlined. Do not pretend that you want God; you must really want Him, because the question of pretension arises only when you feel that you do have some strength and if His assistance comes, it is an additional strength. That kind of thing will not work. Even before you start thinking, He will know what you are going to think, so no deception is possible here.

In all the illustrations of the lives of saints and devotees, God came at the last moment, at the point of death, as it were, though death did not take place. He will not allow us to die, but it will appear we are going to perish. The prana is going; the last moment has come. At that time a miracle takes place.

Such crucial occasions we read of in the lives of saints and devotees in the epics and the Puranas. God is with us; an Avatara takes place. Incarnation shall be the manner in which God works in this world for the the salvation of mankind. This is a very, very touching message we have at the commencement of the Fourth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita.

Chapter 14

THE COMING OF GOD AS AN INCARNATION

The role of the divine immanence in the processes of this world, which we were trying to discuss yesterday, is effected by the omniscience of this presence through its Incarnation that takes place at that moment when it is felt necessary. The phenomenon of divine Incarnation is something which religious philosophy has not been able to understand clearly. What exactly is the Incarnation? How does it take place? We shall not be able to understand what it is because no one can understand the way in which God works. The coming of God, if it is what we understand by Incarnation, is something known to God only. We may attempt, from our own side, to find a meaning in this occurrence, but however much we may stretch our imagination and reasoning capacity, its meaning will not be clear to us.

How does God come, when does God come, and why does God come? These are hard things for us. We know, as it is assured us in the Bhagavadgita and in the scriptures of the world, that God is the friend of man, the saviour of humanity, and the benefactor of the whole of creation. It is said in all religions that God is the supreme friend of every created being. The final succour of everything mortal is in its relationship to the immortal, as the extent of our life in this world is conditioned by the extent of our relationship with the vitality that is in us. As long as the vitality operates in us in a meaningful relation with our living process, we shall be alive. When this relationship gets thinned out, we become feeble; we become senile and unable to act, both physically and mentally. When this relationship is snapped, we become corpses, nothings, insignificant existences.

We have enigmatic, unintelligible but profound references to the fact of Incarnation when we hear it said that Christ is the son of God. Christ also is the son of Man. We find such references in the New Testament. We can understand, to some extent, the meaning of Christ being the son of God because he has descended from God, has come from God, was sent by God as an ambassador of God, was God Himself in one proportion of intensity. But he is also the son of Man. You would have observed that the word 'man' is spelt with a capital M. He is not the son of any particular man; it is the son of Man as such. I have heard it explained by theologians that this M has a significance, and it is never written with a lowercase m.

God's coming is an effect, a response, as it were, to the call of man as such. A crucial circumstance arises in the very living conditions of mankind. It is not the problem of any single person; it is not a little man that is calling God, it is a big man that calls. You may remember that in one of our earlier sessions we had occasion to conclude that perhaps the whole of mankind is one man, that there are no 'many people' in this world. The total man is like the organism of humanity, and the redeeming forces in the organism begin to unleash their energy when there is some threat dealt by the intrusion of elements that are

extraneous, inorganic, and toxic – toxic intrusions into the very purpose of creation.

At present, creation at the level of humanity may have to be dealt with by forces which maintain the organism in a stable manner. If a little thorn enters the sole of our foot, living and sustaining forces in the body are released into action by the organisation of the whole body. There is a governmental system, as it were, in an organism, in a living whole, and when that threat of an intrusion of any kind of extraneous element is felt, necessary forces for redeeming the organism from that kind of threat are released. The extent of the powers that are so released for effecting this remedial process depends also on the extent of the threat and the danger ahead. We do not have to manufacture a machine gun to drive out a mosquito. We have a little instrument for that. And so is the case with any kind of encounter in this world.

The coming of God, called the Avatars, especially in Indian tradition, has been in different forms. In Indian scriptures, in the epics and the Puranas, we are told that Avatars have been many. Ten of them have been mentioned as of primary importance among the many others which are said to be countless in number, and the ten Avatars are of different categories. They have not all assumed the same form, and they did not come for the same purpose. The kind of action that is expected perhaps decides the type of Incarnation that is summoned by the circumstances, and it is believed that the ten Incarnations of Maha Vishnu, the redeeming, sustaining force of the cosmos, are illustrations. Truth is, in a way, an inwardness of fact. It is hidden in the cave of the heart. This is how we are sometimes told about it in the Upanishads and other scriptures. Those who have read the background of the coming of these Avatars will know how they acted under given conditions and what were the circumstances that necessitated the coming of those Incarnations.

The cry of man will be heard by God, but it will be heard only to the extent of the intensity of the call. As I mentioned already, the need of the hour, the kind of the need of the hour, will determine the type of the coming and the extent of the help that we require. The whole sky does not fall on our head when it is only a little skirmish. The Puranas are illustrations here on this point. A threat to the solidarity of the whole of mankind need not necessarily mean that every man in the world is being threatened. When a toxin enters the body of a person, it need not enter every part of the body. From head to foot it need not come and attack the system. The threat may come from any corner, and the direction of this coming or the location of its contact with the organism is not important. What is coming is important. You can imagine the gravity of the situation when different kinds of toxic elements threaten the system. A little piece of thorn in the foot is one example, but a snake bite, even if it is on the same spot, is of a greater consequence. A scorpion sting is of consequence, though it need not necessarily mean that the entire body is attacked. We remember at once what is to be done when such an event takes place.

Thus, the threat of the welfare of mankind need not necessarily mean that the whole Earth is attacked from one corner to another corner. It may be a little part

of the widespread humanity that is threatened, but the important aspect of it is: What is it that is threatened?

A kind of threat was felt by a region of mankind, in Judea, when it was necessary for a person like Christ to come there, and another kind of threat was in Mecca when a person like Mohammed had to come as a prophet, and there was another kind of threat, as we have described in the Puranas and the epics, which necessitated the coming of the Incarnations described, said to be the forms of Vishnu.

Now, what are these threats which God would be conscious of? God would be very, very aware and very vigilant about anything that is happening anywhere against Himself because the value of the whole of creation is nothing but the value of the recognition of God's presence in creation. God is the health of the cosmos. The physique of the universe is God's presence. The strength of the whole world is nothing but the extent of the presence of this universal significance inside it. The milder is the presence felt, the lesser is the health of that organism. Materialistic forces and atheistic forces, anti-divine forces, can operate in different ways. It does not mean that there are no materialists in this world today and that there are no atheists or undivine elements, but the manner of their manifestation and the extent of the threat that they can yield to humanity's existence varies. God's presence will not be felt as a necessity unless God's presence is entirely denied or it is about to be totally denied, as the entire action of the bodily forces is summoned to operate when the whole body is threatened as if it is not going to exist at all. Then there will be an upheaval in the whole system, like the rising of a fever to a high pitch or any kind of cumulative action of the sustaining powers of the body.

Many an answer has been given by theologians, philosophers, saints, sages and mystics in regard to the nature of the coming of God as an Incarnation upon the Earth, and we have endless expositions of this facet of the coming of God, all of which mystify us and make us feel helpless about the way in which we can comprehend how such a thing can take place. We can only have analogies, comparisons, illustrations, but an actual logical explanation of it is beyond us. We can only console ourselves by accepting that the coming of God as an Incarnation for redeeming humanity to establish righteousness may be something like the working of the human body to maintain itself as a healthy totality. Whenever such a necessity is felt, an Incarnation takes place.

Now, as was pointed out, whenever it is felt necessary, the Incarnation comes, as it is told to us in the Bhagavadgita. This means to say that there is a perpetual effort on the part of God's creation to maintain itself as a healthy total, as is the case with our own physical organism, for instance. There is a sleepless effort put forth by our body to maintain itself, and certain processes of the body never sleep. Even when our mind sleeps, the vital energies in the body never sleep. The pranas, which sustain the body, do not sleep. We breathe even when we are asleep. These vital breaths that we take in and out are the sentinels that guard the whole system against the entry of any kind of adverse elements. Likewise, there seems to be a guardian of the cosmos. Who else can it be than the Creator

Himself? So there is no permission granted to the entry of any force which is adverse to the recognition by the world, by the whole creation, of an adequate percentage of the presence of this total health-giving existence, God's presence.

What we called materialism in a spiritual sense is an acceptance of a condition as adequate, totally contrary to the organic character of things. An inorganic existence is considered as adequate for the purpose. The inadequateness of this system comes into relief when we discover that there cannot be anything inorganic unless it is divested of intelligence, or consciousness. Actually, the total crass theory of materialism cannot hold water. It defeats its own purpose. A wholesale outside materialism is the doctrine of there being matter only, and nothing else. It is externality taking possession of everything else as if externality only exists, because matter is nothing but a name we give to the extreme form of externality where consciousness is dead.

Now, such a position cannot be maintained with any sensibility, but sometimes we seem to be tending towards that kind of acceptance under pressures of the organs of sense and by paying too much attention to the clamours of our passions, which insist that material existence is the only source of satisfaction and we cannot be, unless matter is. The philosophy, the doctrine, the theory that our life is totally dependent on the existence of material forces in the world to such an extent that we seem to be emanations of this material sustaining existence as if we are not there and matter only is – as if only the object is there and the subject is swallowed by the object – is a most untenable theory indeed. Such a thing is what we call philosophic materialism, but it cannot be held as a tenable system of thinking because there cannot be an acceptance of the existence of material forces unless there is a nonmaterial position which accepts such a position. It is not matter that assumes this philosophy, it is a doctrine held by an opinion which cannot be associated merely with an organic existence. How can we associate opinion with inorganic matter?

There is a subtle error in the logic of extreme forms of materialism when it is believed that matter, which is nothing but the object of perception, alone is, and nothing else can be, because if it alone is, there would be no one to hold the doctrine of materialism. There are people who may not be holding theoretical doctrines of this type, but virtually live a life of this kind. These are the practical materialists, not the academicians who hold this kind of theory. They live a life of matter, worse than animals, and behave like sluggish, lumbering vehicles rather than intelligent driving forces.

Excessive emphasis laid on economic forces, material forces, and even an excessive interest taken in only what we call a social infrastructure of existence can be identified with a kind of materialistic doctrine. Here we move too much in the direction of an object, beyond the permissible limit, and God is just what we call a universality of subjectivity. The more we deny the element of subjectivity in things, the more is God denied in that particular condition.

There are many forms of this kind of denial in our life. Our attachments to physical objects, things of sense, objects of passion, whatever they be, are tendencies to the denial of God because the subject clamours for satisfaction in

terms of objects as if that satisfaction is located in the objects only: There is nothing in me that can satisfy me. My satisfaction is only in that which is not me, in the thing I love, and in the thing which is outside. It may be gold, it may be silver, it may be land, it may be property, it may be a person, it may be a social position, it may be a political authority – anything that is not me is what sustains me, and I cannot exist without that. This is a practical kind of materialism that many of us mostly live. We may not write a thesis on materialism but we live that kind of philosophy, and to that extent, we live an undivine life. The undivinity of our practical existence is in that proportion of our acceptance of the values of the external world in comparison with the values we attach to our own soul inside. We do not seem to have any soul at all. Our soul is not there. Even if the soul is there, perhaps it has lost its vitality. It is dead. Either we have no souls at all or they are dead souls when it appears to us that our existence is hanging on the tree outside, rather than in ourselves.

Each one of us is a witness to our own kind of living in the world. We stand witness to our own selves, and there is no need for any other witness for us. What kind of life are we living in the world? To what extent are we clamouring for satisfaction in money, in land, in property, in social associations, in positions, in recognitions, in the pampering of our egos? Even a word of thanks would, balloon-like, swell our egos.

Do we not believe that we are materialists? To the extent we cannot recognise that any value is there in us at all, we are bereft of any value. Somebody else is the value; we are not the value. That somebody else is our sustenance. That belief, honestly accepted, is that belief that all values are in things other than in one's own self, that the object is the value, and the subject is not the value. The subject is not only conditioned by the objects, it seems to be hanging on the object like a satellite. This is undivinity parading in all glory on earth, and then God comes with His rod in hand. This is because such a position is tolerated to some extent. Even a very bad man can exist in this world. To some extent such persons are tolerated by the law of nature. Utter untruth also is tolerated by nature for some time. Intense wickedness is sometimes seen in this world. It appears to be tolerated, but it cannot be tolerated beyond a certain limit. Our body tolerates irregularities of diet to some extent. Fatigue, exhaustion, sleeplessness, wrong diet and other things are to some extent tolerated by our body, but they are unhealthy processes which the body will resent. To some extent the body tolerates it, but it will not tolerate it beyond a certain limit. Then the body takes the whole matter in its hands, and we are in a terrific condition of ill health. Anything may manifest.

Now, God's Incarnation is supposed to be a remedying principle that is unleashed by the powers that be for the maintenance of the purposive action of the cosmos. The Bhagavadgita verse is *sambhavāmi yuge yuge* (BG 4.8): "I incarnate myself at every *yuga*." According to the cyclic theory of creation, accepted wholly in India and to some extent in certain philosophical circles in the West also, nature moves in cycles, *yugas*, which are periods or aeons of the natural processes. There is a rising of culture and a coming down of culture,

which has been historically studied by certain stalwarts in this field such as Arnold Toynbee. His volumes are a very interesting philosophic, we may even say spiritual, study of the cyclic processes in human history and destiny. Nations rise and nations fall; cultures rise and cultures fall. Why does this happen? The reason is given.

We have the *yugas* mentioned in ancient traditions. The *yugas* are called by the names Krita, Treta, Dvapara and Kali. The Krita Yuga is said to be the golden age, the millennium when God rules the world – Christ ruling the whole of mankind, as it were, where government is not possible and existent. It is a total perfection of divine action, everywhere everyone knowing what one's duty is, with angels ruling and immortal principles operating in the mortal panorama, where external instructions, rules, regulations – whether political, social or ethical – were not felt necessary. Everyone knew what was his duty, her duty; therefore, no instruction was necessary. Nobody said that you should do this or you should not do that. There were no regulations of any kind. That is the golden age of mankind, believed to be Krita Yuga. Then there was a diminution of this kind of life when the vociferous tendencies of division began to operate in a more pronounced manner, and people lost that consciousness of duty in some percentage, and a ruler was felt as a necessity – a king, a monarch, an administration, a government. In Treta Yuga, kings came into force. It became still worse in Dvapara Yuga when there was not merely an administration, but even the necessity of war. And in Kali Yuga it is only war, nothing else. Everywhere there is skirmish, scratching, and intense anxiety of everyone in respect of everyone else; that is Kali Yuga. We are said to be in this condition, which has not yet become intense. It is said to be just on its first foot. The Indian tradition tells us that several millions of years will be the extent of Kali yoga. Only some five and a half thousand years have passed, so we have not yet become too bad. Some good people still exist in this world. Dharma is not completely destroyed, and there are a few people at least in this world who know that God exists, and they believe it honestly. They have not yet gone to the extent of total denial, but it is said that a total denial will take place one day, and there will be a cataclysm, a catastrophe. The end of the world will be the beginning of the original state of affairs. The wheel will make a complete turn, and when things go to the uttermost extreme, the other extreme will come up into action, the golden age will come again, and so on, is the story.

So the Lord says, "In every *yuga* I incarnate myself: in Krita Yuga, in Treta Yuga, in Dvapara Yuga, in Kali Yuga." Vishnu's Incarnations are said to be spread out in all these aeons. Also, philosophically, it should mean that God incarnates Himself as a redeeming, sustaining, protecting power whenever such a need is felt, which means to say, at every moment of crisis, in the same way as the health-giving forces of our physical organism are ready to act and incarnate themselves into action whenever a crisis arises in the body. So *sambhavāmi yuge yuge*: At every critical juncture in the history of the cosmos, God, the ever-vigilant sustaining power, incarnates Himself. Therefore, may we be happy. There need be no anxiety as long as we know, believe, remember and accept that God is with

us, Narayana is ever with Nara, Krishna is ever with Arjuna, and God is ever with man.

Chapter 15

SEEING THE ETERNITY IN THE TEMPORAL

Those who know the secret of the coming of God as the Incarnation are freed from the turmoil of birth and death. *Janma karma ca me divyam evaṁ yo vetti tattvataḥ, tyaktvā dehaṁ punarjanma naiti mām eti sorjuna* (BG 4.9). Here is an interesting message in itself. Those who have an insight into this mystery of God coming to the world are freed from the bondage of life in this world. So, in a way, it would mean from this proclamation that there is a lot of connection between our bondage and our ignorance of the laws of God's working.

In a Sufi statement it is said that our bondage consists not in our consciousness of the world, but in our unconsciousness of God. It is not the world that binds us. That we are perceiving the world outside as a kind of object of the senses may be considered as our bondage. But it is said that this is not the bondage. We are not troubled by our merely being aware that there is a world, but we are troubled by not being aware that there is something else also in the world. This is another aspect of the matter. That there is a world is all right; let it be there, but is there also something else?

We seem to have a perceptual capacity which can receive only certain fragments of reality, and the whole of the truth cannot be received by our sense organs. Our eyes see the world, but they do not see everything that is in the world. The world is only one abstracted fragment, as it were, of a total phenomenon which is the creation of God. This world is the creation of God, or at least it is a part of the large creation of God. But this creation, which is God's, has in it many things over and above what our senses can grasp. We do not see the entire operation clearly either with our senses or with our mind. That a partial vision alone is allowed us through our cognitive and perceptive capacities is our sorrow. Our sorrow is not that we either see things or do not see things. The problem is that we see a little of what is there, not the whole of what is there. And also, the little that we seem to be seeing is not a vital part of what is really there. It is a dissected part, as it were, so that it has lost its organic relationship with the all that is there. When we see a severed limb of a human being, we are not actually seeing a part of the human being, though to the senses which touch and see, it may look like a limb of the human being. We know very well that what we call the human being is not merely a structure of various physiological limbs. Some legs, hands, lungs, heart and brain put together do not make a man because even in a corpse these limbs are present, yet we do not say that any man is there. The man has gone.

The world that we see is something like a corpse of reality. The vital principle in it is not recognised by us, just as our eyes cannot see the man, but we can see only the body of the man. The human being is different from the physical features, but we can see only the physical features even of a human being who is alive. We infer that the person is alive by certain processes of argument, but our perceptions cannot confirm the living character of a human being. What the

senses see is only a physical structure, but not the man that is more than, over and above, the physical structure. The world, therefore, as it is presented to the senses, does not reveal the whole of reality to us.

God as present in this creation is something like man being present in the body. What do we mean by a man being in the human body? Everyone knows what it means. I am a human being, I am a man, but I cannot say I am just this body because the physical occurrences to the limbs of the body may not be equivalent to any occurrence to the man as such. The human personality is different from the infrastructure of bones and flesh. Hence, as Bhagavan Sri Krishna says in this little verse: "You cannot know Me merely by looking at My body, but one who really knows Me has an insight into Me. My coming into this world, My operations in this creation, are invisible to the apparatus of human perception which is capable of contacting only the outer form and name, the space-time complex, the externality of creation, not the vitality in it." There is life present in all creation. This is the same as saying that God's intelligence operates in every bit of even what we call the material or physical. That is one feature of this little message given in this verse.

We cannot understand this world merely by looking at it with our eyes, in the same way as I cannot understand you by seeing you with my eyes, because understanding the person is different from merely seeing the person with the eyes. But we do not do anything else but merely see the world, and pass judgment on it. Our opinions in regard to anything in this world are based on the reactions produced upon our sense organs by the physical structure of bodies, but the inner content of these bodies is inaccessible to the sense organs. That is so because of the fact that the inner essence of a thing is not in space and not in time.

The substantiality, the basic quintessence of any object, is transcendently present, but not empirically visible. The world is said to be real empirically, but ideal transcendently. Inasmuch as the ideality of the world is transcendental, it does not become an object of empirical perception. There is a double character in the world, namely, transcendental ideality of essence and empirical reality of form, as is the case with our own selves. There is a visible, tangible, physical form, but that is not the person. What we call the human person is not the tangible, physical form. So we may say the world is not what we see with our eyes, and therefore we cannot understand the world in the manner we see it. Thus, we get bound by our inadequate cognisance of the values of the world, by our erroneous perception of things, and not by the existence of the world as such.

In the Vedanta philosophy, we are instructed that the world is created by God, and anything that God creates cannot cause sorrow to any person. It is unthinkable that God can manufacture grief for created beings. This world of God's action is called Ishvara-shrishti in Sanskrit philosophical terminology. Ishvara-shrishti means God's creation. This creation of God is not the cause of the sorrow of man. The mountains and the trees and the rivers and the sun and the moon and the stars are not our sorrows. Our difficulty arises from the manner of

the reaction that is produced between our perception and the reaction produced in respect of this perception from the objects outside.

Our evaluation of things is our conditioning in life. We have a peculiar notion about this world, and we can act in respect of the objects of the world only in the light of the opinion that we form about them. Our relationship in respect of the objects of the world and our opinion, our understanding of the world, are something like the obverse and the reverse of the same coin. We put on an attitude in respect of the world outside which is determined by our understanding of the world, conditioned by our opinions about things; but who tells us that our opinions are correct opinions? Who tells us that we have properly understood the world? Then how could we actually read meaning into the objects of the world in the light of merely our fragmentary sensory perceptions and mental cognitions?

This kind of individual reaction in respect of truly existent objects is called *jiva-shrishti*, the manufacture of the individual. We have a world of our own which may be considered as the psychological world. The pure physical world is regarded as the creation of God, but we are not experiencing the pure physical world of God. We are receiving impressions of the presence of this pure physical world of God as cast in the mould of our sense organs and mind, so we have a representation of the world, not a presentation of it. This is to land ourselves practically in the great controversy of presentationism and representationism in philosophical controversies. Do we see the world, or do we see only a representation of the world as determined by cognitive faculties? We need not enter into this controversy. However, it appears that there is some truth in the judgment that much is contributed by our mind and sense organs to the manner of our receiving the nature of the world outside. Philosophers both in the West and the East have come to some sort of a unanimous conclusion that we do not see the world as it is in itself. Though there must be a physical world outside in order that it may look like an external something and it may become a content of our consciousness of perception, yet we too contribute something because the whole world has to be thrust into the mould of our perceptive capacities. In that sense, we do not see the world as it is but as it is presented to us through our cognitive faculties. Thus it is that our experience of the world is personal to some extent, and not purely objective. We do not understand the world. We try to understand it as we would like to understand it from the point of view of the structural pattern of our own psychophysical individuality.

So the manner of God operating in the world cannot become a content of the human mind because God is transcendental operation, non-spatial and non-temporal action. God's activities are not a succession of performances. It is not something being done now and something else being done afterwards: I do something today, and another thing tomorrow. There is no today and no tomorrow for God; therefore, there is no succession or one thing coming after another. It is instantaneous operation that is called God's action because God is another name for eternity, and not a time process. Hence, God's operation in the world is eternity operating in time, man as something different from his body

operating in this body. I am a whole in myself in spite of the discreteness of the limbs of my body. The many organisms that come together to form my physiological structure do not prevent me from feeling that I am one whole. What makes me feel that I am one whole is to be known by each one for himself or herself. The world is not made up of diverse particulars, in the same way as a human being – yourself, myself – are not discrete, isolated parts, but one single total.

Hence, God acts in this world as a total, as an instantaneous eternity stamping its force on apparent diversities of forms and names. He who knows this secret will not be born again. But we cannot know this secret, inasmuch as temporal sense organs cannot recognise non-temporal operations in the world. The timeless secret that is also there in the midst of time processes cannot be visualised by the sense organs and the mind, which can work only in time and space. We human beings are in time and space. Thus, we are conditioned by the necessity to see things piecemeal, bit by bit, part by part. Not only that, we are compelled to cognise everything as a physical object. But are you a physical object, yourself seated here? You will not say that you are a physical object. You are a living being. If you are a living being, why should anything else be a physical object? To my senses, to my tangibility and visibility, you are a physical object, but you will say, “I am not a physical object. I am a living being.” In a similar manner is the mistake we commit in the evaluation of things in the world. There is a living meaning in all things. Everything has an intelligent eye; every atom is a seeing ray of the consciousness that is transcendently ideal.

There is a wealth of meaning, therefore, in this little misunderstood or bypassed sentence of the Bhagavadgita. *Janma karma ca me divyam evam yo vetti tattvataḥ, tyaktvā dehaṁ punarjanma naiti mām eti sorjuna*: “After having cast off this mortal coil, he who has an insight into this mystery of My operation in this world as a perennial coming will not be reborn.” Why should the eternity be reborn? It is the temporal that gets reborn, and to have an insight into the eternity of operation in the temporal processes of the world, we should also have an element of eternity within us. We have to be spiritual. Only the spiritual eye can gain insight into the spiritual operations in this world. But our eyes are physical, and our mind is conditioned by physical action of the senses. Space and time, and even cause and relation, are physical operations as we understand them, and any understanding we have in terms of space, time and causation will also be physical. Therefore, we are barred entry into the spiritual secret of the cosmos. The perpetual dance of God’s powers is so crucial in every one of our lives.

Chapter 16

UNDERSTANDING THE ESSENCE OF THE MIND

The incarnation of God in the form of the perennial Incarnation gave rise to the consideration of the nature of action as such, what exactly action is. It appears that the matter is clear to our minds. Everyone knows what action is. It is someone doing something. But what does this mean? Who is that someone, and what is the thing that someone is doing? It is found that the question is not so easy to answer.

The web of relations, which the world is, seems to be so intricately wound that any particular instant or point in that vast arrangement cannot be regarded as entirely responsible for any occurrence. The world is not a location somewhere, unconnected with things. Classical physics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries concluded that space is like a container in which all matter is contained. By three-dimensional mathematics, the law of gravitation was found to be explicable as the plane geometry of Euclid or the ordinary arithmetic of the businessman. It was believed that matter has no connection with space, that matter is contained in space. Do we not sometimes believe in our own childlike understanding that a soul is residing in our bodies as a man is living in a house? But can we really accept that the soul is inside the body as a resident is inside the house? That does not seem to be the case. Likewise, it does not appear that the truth of the matter is that substances are contained in space.

It has taken a long time for us to gain a better insight of the circumstances of the world. We found that the substance called matter, including human bodies and organisms, is not inside space; it is coextensive with space, which implied that it is co-eternal with time. This was a startling discovery, as it were, because it is not possible to think anything which is coextensive with space and, in a similar manner, undifferentiated from the time process. We are not accustomed to think in this manner. We are not sticking to space, or hanging in time. We always believe that we are in space and in time, but there is no 'in'. That word has to be dropped. I gave the illustration of the soul being considered as inside. "God is within me." "The Atman is inside me." "The soul is inside me." These are the ways we speak, as if things are very clear to us, but the soul is not inside in such an easy manner. It is inside in a different way altogether. That also is the difference that obtains in the relation of matter to space and time.

The action of a human being is, therefore, to be analysed in the circumstance of the relation of the human being to the environment of the performance. We are used to think that the environment is not in any way related to us. It is a totally different structure into which we have entered, in which we are placed, and our movements and what we call our actions have no connection with the environment outside. "What I do is my business. It has no connection with anybody else. What has space to do with that? What has time to do with that?" This is the prosaic thought of a crude, untutored, self-centred mind which has not got that apparatus of understanding by which it can discover the endless chain of

connection between itself and the world of God, creation as a whole. The human individual, or anything for the matter of that, is not to be regarded as a totally isolated, self-centred substance.

We have heard in our earlier considerations that the world is not made up of people. It is a constitution of the forces of *prakriti*. To understand what an action is we have to understand the world as a whole, because it is in the world that an action is performed. Even when we do something inside our house, it is in the world also at the same time. The house is not outside the world. But what is the world, in which an action is performed?

We have seen to some extent what the world is made of. This universe is an arrangement of the three properties or *gunas* of *prakriti* – *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas* – but they are not three poles on which the world is supported. They are the warp and the woof, and the very substance of all phenomena. The three *gunas* of *prakriti* – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* – are not three different individual operations. They are, rather, the three conditions of a single operation. This is something more difficult for us to stomach: three different positions, as it were, assumed by a single force that the universe is made of. Hence, they are not three properties.

What do we understand from this conclusion? The world is made up of a single stuff, and that stuff is not a substance of the type of a solid object. It is best described as energy, force, potentiality, or latency to act. These are, again, some words we are struggling to manufacture for the sake of making the matter intelligible. Language is poor. We have not yet such an advanced type of linguistic operation by which such subtleties can be expressed. Our language has a poor vocabulary, so we use the well-known terms like energy, force, potentiality, and so on, but we cannot make much sense out of these words. Some sense we can make out, but not the entire meaning. By the words ‘force’, ‘energy’, ‘potentiality’, etc., which we employ in connection with the understanding of *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*, we are forced to conclude that the world is not a solidity, because the conception of solidity involves the location of objects, and the concept of force frees us from this unfortunate notion. The world is not a solid object, and it is not made up of little bits of things scattered in a space with which it is not connected. The Sankhya is the philosophy which originally tried to explain the operation of the three *gunas* – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. When it brought out this doctrine of these forces of *prakriti*, it also understood at the same time the implied meaning that there cannot be even space and time unless the three *gunas* operate.

A particular dividing capacity present in the force called *rajas* is responsible for the phenomenon of difference, distance, which we call space. Space is the distinguishing feature in our experience of anything. That which distinguishes, segregates, cuts off one thing from another, divides, distracts, is *rajas*. So *rajas* is responsible, finally, in a cosmical manner, for the apparent perception of dividedness of things, and it need not necessarily mean that there are divided objects. It is one function of the three *gunas*. It is a manner of the presentation of things by the operation of these three forces, but it is not the only manner in which they will operate.

The stability of the cosmos, the integrality of action in the universe, the system and methodology that we see in nature is indicative of the presence of *sattva guna* at the back of the operation of the dividing activity of *rajas*. Unless *sattva*, which is the equilibrating force, is at the back of this distracting energy we call *rajas*, there would not be meaning in things. Two and two will not make four because the connecting of one figure with another figure, and coming to a conclusion that the connection results in a third meaning, is possible only if there is logic among divided objects, and what we call logic is nothing but the operation of a unifying meaning in the midst of divided subjects and predicates. If there were only subjects and predicates without any kind of linkage between them, there would be no sentence, and no proposition would logically be possible. Therefore, we cannot have only divided objects and nothing more, nothing less. This dividedness of things is an apparent phenomenon; it is one of the functions of the properties of *prakriti*, but there is a basic integrating power in the very same *prakriti* which makes us see meaning in things. Otherwise, chaos would be the meaning of this world. Even to understand that there is such a thing called chaos, we must have a unifying factor within us. Otherwise, there would be no one to know that there is chaos. Chaos cannot know chaos. So there must be something which is other than chaos to know that there is chaos. Again we are forced to accept the presence of some significance other than a mere dividing activity.

So the world is made up of an intricate relation obtaining in an unintelligible manner among these three aspects of the operation of *prakriti* – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. And where are we as human beings? We are not merely witnesses of this cosmic operation. We are not enjoying the drama of God's action as if we are outside it. We are in it as anything else is. So where comes our action in this world, which is made in this manner? *Kim karma* (BG 4.16): What is action, what is not an action, inaction, and what is wrong action? Questions were raised, and it was told to us that it is necessary to know what action is, and so on. How are we to know what action, etc., is in this circumstance of a great involvement? If it is true that the world is made up of *prakriti*, a thing which the Bhagavadgita accepts as the original matrix of all things, then action, as we understand it, is a simple operation. "I have done this work today." When we make a statement of this kind, we seem to refer to the performance through our bodily organs of something which is dictated by a feeling or thought. We have nothing more to say and nothing more to consider about our actions. "There was a thought in my mind, a determination of my will, a decision of my feeling which propelled my body to move in a particular direction. That is action." But this is a simpleton's answer.

Action does not take place so easily in a localised form because this thing we call our thought, our feeling, our determination, our understanding, our will, is again to be probed into. What does this mean actually? We said that our thought propels our limbs to act or move in a particular direction, and we call this our action, but what is this propulsion? It is our mind. But what is our mind? The Sankhya philosophy is the answer once again. What is the mind? Where is this mind? We may say, "It is in me." What other answer can we give? This is an

unphilosophical answer. This was the defect which Sri Krishna pointed out in Arjuna: “You lack philosophical insight. You lack *sankhya*. *Sankhya buddhi* is not in you; therefore, you have no yoga. Where there is no *sankhya*, there is no yoga. Where there is no right understanding, there is no right action.”

Now, we too seem to be in a similar position of just saying something without properly considering the pros and cons of the matter. What do we mean by saying that the mind is propelling the body to act? Is the mind inside the body? No. The Sankhya cosmology, with which many of you must be familiar, and which we had occasion to consider in detail some time back, mentions these three *gunas* – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Again, we should not forget that they are not three different persons, or three different locations, or three different things. They are three different conditions of a universal operation. For the purpose of language we have to use these words *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* bearing in mind, at the same time, that they are not three different isolated things. These three properties – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* – congeal, as it were. ‘As it were’ is the phrase we have to use. They do not really congeal; it looks as if this happens. They become violent forces, very energetic performances, vibrations. They say the universe started with a vibration as a cyclone blowing in many directions. But this terrific movement of the powers of *prakriti* – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* – as a vibration originally responsible for the coming into existence of this phenomenal world, this vibration was not a mindless, chaotic cyclone blowing in any direction, but a well-intentioned movement. The universe is a purposive creation. This is a great subject that is discussed in all philosophical systems: Is there purpose in nature? In all texts in philosophy we will find one chapter: Where is the purpose in nature? If there is a purpose, what is it?

There is a well-governed intention behind even the vibration, into which form the properties of *prakriti* cast themselves in the beginning of creation. These vibrations condense themselves into a fivefold preparation to act, and this fivefold preparation is, again, designated in the language of the Sankhya by words known to us already: *shabda*, *sparsha*, *rupa*, *rasa*, *gandha*. The object of hearing: sound; the object of seeing: colour; the object of smelling: odour; the object of touching: sensibility or tangibility, which is the worst thing that we have because it creates the impression that there are solid things in the world; and the sensation of taste, which makes us feel that objects outside have certain characteristics such as sweetness, etc. There is no sweetness or otherwise in things. These sensations are only reactions produced by certain structures in our own physiological system in respect of operations outside, and they need not be anything we call sweet, bitter, etc. There is nothing like colour also. There is nothing like sound. But they take this form and impression when they are received by the particular formations of our system we call sense organs.

So the three *gunas* – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* – operate as a wind that blows in a fivefold manner, not this physical wind but a powerful, subtle wind like electrical wind. You have heard of solar wind. By solar wind, we do not mean air that blows. It is a term which is to be understood in a different sense altogether. This is a wind, no doubt, but a wind which is something like the blow of an

electric current, we may say, for the purpose of our present understanding. It is subtler than even electricity because electricity is much more gross. The *gunas* cast themselves into this form of *shabda, sparsha, rupa, rasa, gandha* – subtle *tanmatras*, potentials behind the physicality of objects. The potentials become the originators of all things that are subtle, including the mind itself.

It is said that these operations of the *gunas* as *shabda, sparsha, rupa, rasa, gandha* have again, within themselves, the threefold character of transparency, opaqueness and distraction, comparable to *sattva, rajas, tamas* again – children born, as it were, to the mother *sattva, rajas, tamas*. The transparent aspect of this subtle formation – *shabda, sparsha, rupa, rasa, gandha* – concentrates itself into what we call the psychic substance, the mind.

Here is the crux of the whole matter. We were wanting to know what the mind is. We thought that our actions, physically motivated, are actually willed by the mind inside, and in that connection it became necessary for us to know what the mind is. Now we seem to find that this mind in us is a little concentrated form of cosmic energy. It is not your mind; it is not my mind. Now we are in a very dangerous position. We do not know where we are actually standing. Where am I standing? Where am I seated? Which is the world I am occupying? Where is my location? We will find that our body, and even our mind, cannot be said to be in any particular place. The drop in the ocean is not in any particular part of the ocean, because the ocean has no drops. It is only a concept in our mind. The whole ocean is one drop only. We can imagine that there is a drop, but all the drops are connected to every other drop because they form one mass of existence called the sea, or the ocean. There are no divided objects in the world; not only are there no divided physical objects, but there are not even divided minds. We do not seem to have many minds, because the mind, so-called, apparently related to individual personalities and things, seems to be points in this cosmic operation – *shabda, sparsha, rupa, rasa, gandha*. These things cannot be easily translated into the English language. I have feebly tried to translate it as the potentialities for hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling, touching, etc. Even then, the things are not very clear. We cannot understand what these potentialities are. There are cosmically spread-out potentialities which make it possible for us to sense things in this manner as sound, taste, colour, touch, etc. They are not in one place, they are everywhere; and one aspect of the transparent character of the five forces – *shabda, sparsha, rupa, rasa, gandha* – becomes the psychic organ.

The psychic organ is a very difficult thing to understand. What is it? We say that we have a mind, we have an intellect, we have an ego, and nowadays we have words such conscious, subconscious, preconscious, unconscious levels, and the like. All these are names given to certain functions of what we may safely call the psyche, for want of a better word. In the yoga psychology of Patanjali the word *chitta* is used, and we have to take it in the proper connotation in which it is expressed. We use the word 'psyche' because we have no other word in English. We have to use that word only. This word 'psyche' has to be understood as the total operation of our internal being. Your intelligence, your egoism, your feeling, your willing, your memory – whatever you may consider as your interior

operation – should be regarded as one of the functions of the mind, or psyche: *chitta, manas*. *Antakarana* is a very safe term sometimes used in the Vedanta philosophy. *Antakarana* simply means ‘internal organ’. Where is it situated? Where are you living? There it is situated. Where are you? Everywhere in your body, you are. You are not in the head or the fingers or the nose or the ears. And wherever you seem to be, there the mind also is. When you say “I am”, it is the mind that speaks, it is the internal organ that speaks, it is the *chitta* that speaks, it is the psyche that speaks. Like fire entering a red-hot iron rod or an iron ball, converting itself into the shape of the iron rod or the iron ball, making it impossible to distinguish between the fire and the iron, the psyche has entered this physical form, this body, and we cannot distinguish between ourselves and this body. When I say “I am here”, it is difficult to know exactly what I am saying. The fire is saying “I am here” when it has heated the whole iron rod. We cannot see the iron there; it is only the fire we are seeing, though the iron is there. We can assume it is there because it has become red-hot. The whole body has been energised with intelligence, as it were, by the operation of the psyche, and it is saying, “I am.” Fire is saying, “I am.” It is not the iron rod that says that, but we cannot distinguish the rod from the fire because the fire has entered into every particle of this thing we call iron.

So the body has become the mind, and when I say “I am”, it looks as if the body is saying “I am”. It is not the body that says that. A thief has entered your house, and he is saying, “This is my property.” Something like that has happened to us, and the mind is saying, “This is my body.” You cannot know that this has taken place because there is a complete hypnotisation of the entire personality by the action of the psyche. I have given this illustration that is available to us in Vedantic texts of fire entering an iron rod or iron ball. You do not know where the iron ball is, where the fire is. They look one and the same. You are the body and the body is you. Just as the fire is different from iron, your mind is different from your body.

Now, in what way they are different we shall see sometime later. For the time being it is enough if we conclude that the mind that propels us to act in terms of the physical limbs is not inside the body in such a simple way as we understand it to be, like children. The fire is not inside the iron ball. We cannot use that word. In that way, the mind cannot be said to be inside the body. It has become the body. It is you that has assumed the shape. Not merely that, there is something more about it. Your mind is not merely this body, it is a congealed spatiotemporal pressure exerted by the vastly spread-out properties of prakriti – *sattva, rajas* and *tamas* – which have become *shabda, sparsha, rupa, rasa, gandha*, in one aspect of which the mind has assumed the form of the psyche. The very same *shabda, sparsha, rupa, rasa, gandha* become the active organs. They also become the substance of the body. Then you will be startled beyond your wits when you try to know who you are, what you are made of. You seem to be made up of nothing but that which is everywhere, and you are now placed in this context by a little bit of our analysis. Now tell me, who is acting and whose action is any

action at all? Then you will be able to know what is right action, what is wrong action, and what is inaction.

Chapter 17

THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF SACRIFICE

*gatasaṅgasya muktasya jñānāvasthitacetasaḥ,
yajñāyācarataḥ karma samagraṁ pravilīyate (BG 4.23)*
*brahmārpaṇaṁ brahma havir brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam,
brahmaiva tena gantavyaṁ brahmakarmasamādhinā (BG 4.24)*
*daivam evāpare yajñam yoginaḥ paryupāsate,
brahmāgnāv apare yajñam yajñenaivopajuvhati (BG 4.25)*
*śrotrādīnīndriyāṅy anye saṁyamāgniṣu juvhati
śabdādīn viṣayān anya indriyāgniṣu juvhati (BG 4.26)*
*sarvāṅīndriyakarmāṇi prāṇakarmāṇi cāpare,
ātmasaṁyamayogāgnau juvhati jñānadīpīte (BG 4.27)*
*dravyayajñās tapoyajñā yogayajñās tathāpare
svādhyāyajñāyajñās ca yatayaḥ saṁśitavratāḥ (BG 4.28)*
*apāne juvhati prāṇaṁ prāṇepānaṁ tathāpare,
prāṇāpānagatī ruddhvā prāṇāyāmaparāyaṇāḥ (BG 4.29)*
*apare niyatāhārāḥ prāṇān prāṇeṣu juvhati,
sarvepy ete yajñavido yajñakṣapitakalmaṣāḥ (BG 4.30)*

These verses that I have now recited from the Fourth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita highlight certain aspects of action, which was our subject. Who acts, actually? The question of action as performed by anyone arose out of the consideration of God's action as the Incarnation, which was the topic at the very commencement of the Fourth Chapter. We had occasion to go into the depths of this intricate subject of action, and found that there is an interconnectedness of the basic foundations of all things, insofar as all organisms, living beings, and even those things we call inanimate, are products of the permutation and combination of the forces of *prakṛiti* – *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas* – including our bodies and minds, and all our internal apparatus we call the *antakarana*, the psychic organ or the psyche proper. In light of this, we concluded last time almost with a question: Who does action?

The principle teaching of the Bhagavadgita is that there are no individual actions. It is a message of right action which is constituted in such a way that segregated, isolated, pinpointed, ego-ridden psyches cannot understand. Everyone is accustomed to the idea of action associated with oneself. It is the intention of the Bhagavadgita to remove this erroneous notion, namely, that an action can be associated with any particular individual. It is so because of the fact there are no such things as particular individuals in this web of interconnected operations of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Every particle of sand is connected to every star in the heavens. Such seems to be the hidden secret of natural operations and, if this is so, it is hard for us to accommodate our individual self-sense with the sense of agency in action. It appears that action takes place, and yet we cannot confidently declare that anyone is responsible for action. Action is a propulsion that arises from the very centre of the purposiveness of the cosmos, the original

structure of things on which every other outer formation is founded. This is to be kept in mind whenever any idea arises: Whose idea is it?

Thoughts and actions, ideas and performances constitute human history and any kind of history. But our analysis the other day led us to a startling conclusion, namely, that not merely the bodily organs, which are the instruments of physical action, but also all the inner operations of the psyche are the products arisen out of a certain arrangement of patterns of the evolutes of *prakriti*. The *tanmatras* we mentioned – *sabda, sparsa, rupa, rasa, gandha* – are the spatial and temporal objects of the sensations of hearing, tasting, and so on, which again are the rudiments out of which the whole physical cosmos is formed as we see it in the form of the five elements – earth, water, fire, air and ether – which again are the building bricks of even our physical bodies. Thus, whatever is in the outer world of nature seems to be in our physiological system, in this anatomical structure; and whatever is in the subtle potentials of the three *gunas* – *sattva, rajas, tamas* – seems to be the original substance out of which even our minds and intellects are made. If that is the case, who thinks, whose ideas are these, and who acts?

This question is an answer to itself. A person who walks in broad daylight does not require to be told what is in front of him. A beam of light has been thrown on our path by an analysis of this kind, and there is no need to be told who does the action. The very idea of action requires to be transmuted. We cannot use such words as activity, work, and the like, in regard to this peculiar operation that is taking place, which is not anybody's, and yet everybody's.

Now, it was told that action binds, but there are specific actions which do not bind. Actions which are of the nature of *yajna*, sacrifice or consecration, are liberating. Every other action is binding. In this world all action binds, other than that action which is of the nature of a sacrifice. This was discussed in detail earlier in one of our sessions. This is to be remembered once again. Every action is binding other than that which is performed in the spirit of a sacrifice, and we went into the details of the meaning of what sacrifice means. If you can remember it, well and good. If you have not remembered it, what I am saying now will have no meaning. These are hard things to remember. They are like the ocean and a sweep of every blessed thing. Unless you are contemplative and practical in your daily life, whatever has been told here will be like water poured on a hard rock. This is a continuation of what I said earlier, so it is necessary for you to remember what sacrifice means.

We are now moving in the very direction of the same subject, with a new orientation given to it. Action which is of the nature of consecration and sacrifice does not bind, and to some extent we have understood what sacrifice is, what consecration is. Now it is clinched by a few verses. He who is free from every kind of attachment: *gatasaṅga*; and one who is thus free from involvement of every kind: *muktasya*; he whose mind is rooted in this awareness of this vast operation of interconnected action, which is what we mean by 'the mind getting established in knowledge': *jñānāvasthitacetasaḥ*. It is not knowledge in the sense of book learning; it is an enlightenment or an insight into the very nature of things, a seeing into the very bowels of nature and understanding one's vital relationship

with the structure of every blessed thing. That insight is *jnana*. He whose mind is established in that kind of insight of knowledge automatically does action as a sacrifice. His action becomes *yajñāyācarataḥ karma*. Then what happens to the action of that person? It melts as waters of a river become one with the ocean: *samagram praviliyate*. It appears as if you go as a salt doll into a vast sea to measure its depths and lose yourself there, becoming one with the salty ocean.

In a similar manner, we enter into the spirit of the activity of the whole universe and we no more do, and we cannot say who does. Here, doing and being become one. Action and existence are identical at a particular level of experience. Our existence, our being, our living is different from what we do. We can exist without doing in a physical sense, in a social sense, sometimes in a psychological sense. Our existence does not seem to be the same as our activity. Even without activity, I can exist in some way, but in this sense we cannot separate existence and action in that condition of interconnectedness of all operations. That is the case because the very existence of the so-called agent of action gets united with the operation.

Many a time we have heard it said that work is worship. It is written on placards and we read it in textbooks, but the meaning of it might not be clear to all people. Unless the contemplation in the mind becomes the same as the action that we perform, worship cannot be work and work cannot be worship. Our idea and our doing have to be identical, but rarely is it practicable for earthbound human individuals to identify their contemplative aspect with their operative aspect. Doing seems to be an expression of a part of our personality. Not only do we not melt into action when we actually perform actions, but even the whole of our personality does not engage itself in action. We are not entirely engaged in action in the totality of our personality at any time. Such a kind of call never comes except when we are drowning in water, or we are dying. Normally, we never operate wholly in all the levels of our being at any moment. Such an occasion does not normally arise. So on the one hand, the whole of our personality, root and branch, does not rise into action whenever we do anything. On the other hand, we do not melt in action. We maintain our hard, flint-like personality. We are persons. I am what I am, and my action is different from what I am.

So our actions cannot be called karma yoga, they cannot be liberating, inasmuch as we have not become one with our action. Therefore, actions cannot be worship, however much we may write it on the walls. So yoga is a difficult thing to practice. It is the communion of our being with the very operation of our being. This is what is meant by saying that action and existence are identical at a particular level. God's existence and God's activity are the same. To be is to act, and to act is to be. There is no difference between these two operations. But that action is of a different nature. That is why it is liberating. It is not the action that we can contemplate in our minds, the movement of hands and feet. It has not a purposive individually motivated action in a direction given in space and time. It is a total action.

It was very hard even for a mighty mind like Arjuna to grasp what it could be, so he went on raising questions again and again as to how knowledge and action can be combined. "They seem to be different things. My mind does not feel competent to absorb this teaching. The idea of an action cannot be action, knowledge cannot be working, and thought is not the same as doing. The object is not the subject; we cannot understand how they can be identified, much less considered as having any kind of relationship between them."

The difficulty of this kind arises because we cannot think beyond our skins. The purification necessary for the practice of yoga can be well appreciated here. The minds of people like us are not purified enough. Therefore, we are unable to even receive this teaching. The meaning of it is not clear. How is such a thing possible? It is because the mind is not transparent yet; it is turbid. It has more of *rajas* and *tamas*. It is motivated by external motion and stagnation, which is *tamas*. The transparency we call *sattva* has not yet adequately manifested itself in us. Most of the time we are agitated, anxious, and confounded more than tranquil, sober and composed in ourselves. Hence, this teaching on a theme which is the pinnacle of composure cannot easily be received by a distracted mind. So the Bhagavadgita does not end here. It goes on until a stage is reached where it becomes absolutely necessary to be face to face with the entire setup of the cosmos. Until we actually see what is in front of us, we will not be able to understand the kind of life that we live in this world.

So a person is free who is capable of doing action as a sacrifice. What is this sacrifice? Though we have gone into the analysis of this matter, the final word about it is now said in a single verse. *Brahmārpaṇam brahma havir brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam, brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahmakarmasamādhinā*: The wave in the ocean is the ocean. Another wave in the ocean which collides with this wave is also the ocean. The force that compels one wave to collide with another wave is also the force of the ocean. The end result of the coming together of two waves in the colliding of two waves is also the ocean. The rising of the waves is the activity of the ocean. The subsiding of the waves is also the activity of the ocean. Everything is the single body of this one substance called the ocean.

The performer of the action is not you, is not me, is not anybody. It is so because the performer is the psychophysical organism, normally speaking, but we have now understood that neither the psyche nor the body is anybody's property. It is a borrowed value, as it were. It is part of all things in this world. Hence, it is something like all the bricks in a building being shaken when one of them is shaken. Much more is the connection here than the connection of one brick with another. It is difficult to analogically explain what the circumstance is. Imagine that there is a living connection between one brick and another in this building. Actually, a living connection is not there between one brick and another; there is only a mechanical connection, but we have to imagine for the purpose of this context that there is life operating between one brick and another. If you shake one brick, naturally the whole building shakes, so the operation of a single brick is the operation of the whole building. Thus, the performer of the action is not any person, is not any individual, because the

motive force for any action which is either the body or the mind, or both put together, comes from that of which the psyche and the body are made, that out of which everything else is also made, that which is the matrix of the cosmos. Therefore, you may say that any movement of any particular individual, any event that takes place anywhere, is the action of the whole universe.

The result that may follow from the performance of an action is also a redounding method, process, adopted by the very same performer, which is not you, which is not me. And the force that is responsible for the operation of this kind is also that very same matrix constituted of the three *gunas*. The offering, the offerer, the process of offering, the consequence of offering – all these are one single mass of operation. Therefore, there is no individual performer of an action. Hence, it is unbecoming on the part of anyone to expect the fruit of an action for one's own self. Here is the crux of the matter of the whole teaching of the Bhagavadgita. You cannot expect the fruit of an action, because the fruit is not the result of the performance of any particular individual. It is the total outcome of the exuberance of total action; therefore, in the same way as the action is not yours, the fruit also is not yours.

Now again, I come to the point. All these are hard nuts to crack. Our brains are not so made as to remember all these little things. This is the essence of this verse, *brahmārpaṇam brahma havir brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam, brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahmakarmasamādhinā*. In a ritualistic fashion, as it were, this verse is framed. The oblation is Brahman, the Absolute. The offerer of the oblation is the Absolute. The consequence, the result, the fruit, if any, is the Absolute. The entire process is the Absolute. And to make it a little homely, I brought the illustration of the ocean rumbling within itself. Every little shake of a ripple on the surface of the sea is due to the action of the very bowels of the whole ocean, and this illustration will give some idea as to how the cosmos acts.

Now, the great teacher becomes more and more realistic as he proceeds further. As a very good psychologist, a very good schoolmaster, he does not want to bore you with very tough teachings, metaphysical doctrines and scientific expositions. He comes to certain simple, intelligible and homely examples of right action, *yajna*, sacrifice, meditation, yoga.

Daivam evāpare yajñam yoginaḥ paryupāsate, brahmāgnāv apare yajñam yajñenaivopajuvhati. When you worship a god, it is work that you do, and conversely you may say, your work is the worship of your god. All persons in the world cannot think identically. Though the aim of all life is a common goal, the ways or paths leading to this common goal may not be a single beaten track because of the variety in the inner constitution of the minds of people. So different types of *yajnas*, sacrifices, performances, right actions are now delineated in a few of the forthcoming verses.

When you contemplate a god, a divinity, in the fashion of a religious devotee, you are working, and you are also meditating, and also you are performing a sacrifice. Or when you contemplate yourself as a Self of all people, you are doing a meditation and also performing a sacrifice. When you withdraw the sense organs from the objects outside in the process called abstraction, or technically

pratyahara, you are doing a great sacrifice and also a worship at the same time. When you see one Divinity present in all things, the one substance, the water of the ocean being seen everywhere and all the parts of the ocean – wherever you cast your eyes, you see the same substance everywhere, thus beholding a uniformity of basic structure in all things – and when you move your sense organs in the direction of objects, then also you are performing a sacrifice and you are doing a yoga. You are actually performing a worship.

When you restrain your breath by the process of inhalation, and also restrain it during the time of exhalation, these are what are called *kumbhakas* in yogic language. *Kumbhaka* is the retention of the breath. It can be done after inhalation or exhalation, or without either. When you perform these deliberately, you are also performing a sacrifice. And when you give in charity to a deserving person in a proper manner, in a proper place and in circumstances which are conducive, you are doing a sacrifice. When you live an abstemious, austere life, taking from the world the minimum facilities and not indulging in sensory or mental satisfactions unnecessarily, as an austere *tapasvin*, you are performing a sacrifice. And when you concentrate your mind on one thing only and never allow the mind to think anything else, that is also a kind of sacrifice. When you study a holy scripture and betake yourself to that kind of holy exercise every day, that also is a sacrifice. When you behold no externality – no space, time and objects, and not yourself also – and melt yourself into the sea of the cosmos in an insight into the totality of things, you are performing a sacrifice. And when you live the frugal life of a simple person, not demanding any notification by people or even recognition or a word of thanks, wanting nothing from anybody, when you are satisfied with the circumstances in which you are placed, satisfied with anything that comes of its own accord without begging and asking, everything makes you content and you are the most satisfied person in the world under any given circumstance, you are doing a great sacrifice.

Now, inasmuch as these little things are also sacrifices, they are steps to God. They are graduated processes of melting down individual personality and egoism, and communing it with the substance of the whole cosmos. In any manner, you may perform your sacrifice. No one can be happy in this world unless one performs some sacrifice. Selfish people cannot be happy here. It is so because the world is not meant for selfish people. Again, it is so because the world is not selfish. You are a citizen of this universe. You are vitally connected with the entire operation of the universe. As the intention, the purpose and the motivation of cosmic activity is entirely unselfish, there is no place for selfishness in this world. A selfish person is a misfit here in this creation. He will be cast out by the winds of righteousness and justice. The righteousness of the kingdom of God will operate. You will be kicked out in one minute by this justice of the cosmos. So anyone who is not capable of being even a little unselfish is totally unfit to live in this world. This world is not meant for the person who is selfish. You cannot even live on this earth. You cannot be alive in this world by being selfish, what to speak of gaining entry into the heavens.

So the world, whether of this visible panorama before us or of the invisible realms, or any world whatsoever, is not for you. You become unfit everywhere, a nobody, a nothing and good for nothing, if your stand is selfishness. Why is it so? Because you know very well the world does not operate on the principle of selfishness. This is so because individuality is not the rule of law of cosmic operations. Hence, the Bhagavadgita rings this message into our ears that to the extent it is practicable under the circumstances of our knowledge and capacity, we have to perform sacrifice. We have to be unselfish. We have to give not only what we have, but also give ourselves away, which is the real sacrifice. We give ourselves away to such an extent that we no more exist as what we are. We exist as That which really is. This is the culmination of the sacrifice to which we will be led by the forthcoming messages of the Bhagavadgita.

Chapter 18

RECONCILING KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION

It was mentioned that there are varieties of sacrifice, and the mode of this sacred performance has been pointed out to be as variegated as the possible approaches of man to reality. How many kinds of sacrifice are there? As many as there are ways of approach to the Supreme Being. How many kinds of yoga are there? 'The same' is the answer. How many types of meditation? As many as there are human beings. No two minds can think alike in every respect. Therefore, identical forms of reaction to reality are not contemplated. The generality of approach may be of a uniform nature as we are all human beings, but each one is different from the other in details of thought, opinion, aspiration and performance. So while the foundations of human approach to reality may be a common ground, the superstructure, the tapering and completing of the edifice vary according to the individual relationships to the otherwise-uniform reality.

Now, our relationship to reality is the crucial point here in our understanding of the manner of our reaction to it, which is called sacrifice. Our attitude to God is called sacrifice, to put it more plainly in religious language, and inasmuch as the face of God is shining through every form of creation, our attitude to anyone is a sacrifice. Thus, the whole life becomes divine, transformed in an instant. Life becomes a worship and a yoga. Life becomes a karma that is liberating, not binding, because of the fact that the liberating karma is the same as the person's attitude to reality.

There is no necessity to get involved in binding action because the face of God cannot bind anyone and there is nothing, not even an atom, which does not let through its apertures at least an eye of God. Nevertheless, our relationships are manifest in different degrees of expression, which we considered earlier on a different occasion. We have a social relation to God if we consider the variety of creation, including humanity, as a manifestation of God's performance. We have a material and a physical relationship, if we regard our own selves as bodies and the world as a constitution of matter. As physical embodiments, we react physically to the physical nature, but we are also psychic beings. We are minds, intellects, feelings, volitions which react to the inner psychological components and the living secrets hidden in nature. And finally, at the root of our being, we are the ray of the universal Spirit itself.

So when we speak of sacrifice as our reaction to reality, we naturally have to consider it from various levels of the expression of our personality, to which correspond the correlative of these degrees, namely, the levels of being in the external universe. The layers of our personality, individually speaking, correspond inch by inch to the cosmological levels outside in all creation. So it was said that there is material sacrifice, social sacrifice, sensory sacrifice, vital sacrifice, psychological sacrifice, intellectual sacrifice and spiritual sacrifice. *Dravyayajñās tapoyajñā yogayajñās tathāpare, svādhyāyajñānayajñās ca yatayah*

saṁśītavratāḥ (BG 4.28). In one verse all types of possible sacrifice on the part of a human being in relation to reality have been delineated.

Yet, the more subtle is the sacrifice, the better it is in the production of permanent result, or effect. *Śreyān dravyamayād yajñāj jñānayajñāḥ param̐tapa, sarvaṁ karmākhilam̐ pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate* (BG 4.33): Knowledge is superior to material possession, a thing which we have yet to learn in our modern culture. We do not pay much respect to knowledge. There is respect only to material property, house, wife, land, husband, money, status and social position. All these are materially oriented values which have preponderated to such an extent that there is today a threat of matter engulfing spirit, externality swallowing the subject, the winds of undivine forces threatening the very existence of the little spiritual voice of man. Such a state of affairs the world today is appearing to land itself in, and this is not a happy state of affairs.

The world is not made up of material substance. We have discussed earlier in our previous session that the world is not made up of substances. Therefore, it is futile on the part of anyone to imagine that material relationship is the proper relationship. The world is constituted of subtle energy, subtle force – vibration, finally. We made reference to the properties of *prakṛiti* called *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. We have to remember once again these properties are not conceivable, much less perceivable substances or things. They are subtler than even electric energy, which linguistically cannot be explained. It is a force that exerts some pressure, and therefore it cannot be located in a particular place. Electricity is not in one place because of the fact that it is not a substance, but a force. Physical substances can be located; energy cannot be located. It is coextensive with its environment. Today in modern physical science we have been told that the location of an atom or an electron can be determined not independent of the environment which it occupies, but in relation to the environment. The atmosphere of an electron is conditioning the very structure and the movement of the electron, so that we may say the electron is not an individual but a social unit in the sense that its environment conditions, determines and even decides its operation and existence.

But what is the environment of an electron? It is not one inch outside it, not one foot, one kilometre. The whole universe is the environment of even a single electron, which means to say, a little particle cannot be considered independent of the operation of the environment, which is as vast as space and as long as time itself. This is the way in which we have to understand energy. An electron is not a particle. It has not a little sand-like location. The language is such that it somehow compels us to wrongly think of the location of something which is not a particle. The word ‘electron’ is only a symbol for conceiving, inadequately, the pressure-point of a particular conceived location of universal energy. So, in this sense, the environment of a thing is as vast as the space-time complex itself.

Thus, we cannot consider the universe as material. Energy is the substance of the cosmos. Whatever subtle, adequate and careful word we use to describe the substance or the reality of the universe, we will fail in understanding it properly, because even when we think of energy or force we are likely to think that it is

some permeating substance. It is not like air that is moving. Even air is a material substance. We cannot humanly conceive of what energy is. It is only a symbol that we use for something that the mind cannot even think.

However, the point that we are made to understand here is that the world is not made up of material substances, and also it is not made up of located objects here and there, spread out like items in a zoo or a museum. It is a difficult to understand position of every inch of movement conditioning every other spread-out form of that very same energy. The Bhagavadgita tells us that when we conceive of ourselves in our relation to reality in the degrees of expression of which it is capable, we have to understand that the nearer we go to it, the better it is for us. The nearness here consists in the proper and adequate conception of it, the inwardisation of it in the proper sense of the term, and the reaction in respect of it as would be befitting its true nature, not in terms of the appearance which it tries to put on in its phenomenal presentation through the web of space and time.

Thus, matter is not reality. Hence, material possessions are not a safe value in our life. Therefore, we are very, very foolish in imagining that materially possessed people are rich people really. They can be dispossessed more easily than those who are not so possessed. The rich man has a greater danger of falling into oblivion and sorrow than the person who is not so materially rich. Thus, sacrificial offerings may be of a material character such as charity of money or gifts of material value, which are good enough, but they are poor in comparison with subtler values, which are the real values.

Human life is not a material existence. Likewise, any existence is not finally material. We are not physical bodies. We may be physically well fed, but we may be deprived of every other value in life. We would find this life to be equal to death. Each one can think of this matter for one's own self. Let us imagine that we are physically well placed but mentally completely deranged, socially kicked out and put in a state of utter insecurity. We do not know where we stand, yet we are fed well, robust, and we have material wealth to burn. We will find that all this material wealth will not count if other values are taken away from us. Self-respect is also a value which cannot be seen. It is not a substance. People hang themselves for want of self-respect. They jump into wells; they kill themselves merely because they have lost recognition in society, which is a chimera, actually speaking, a word, an idea, a notion which cannot be seen with the eyes. The loss of an unseen so-called self-respect can kill a person, in spite of all the physical wealth and the mountain-like gold that one may have. Even in our day-to-day existence we see that material values do not count much, and our value is to the extent of the comprehension of reality with which we are endowed. Therefore, knowledge is superior to material values. *Dravya yajna* is good, but *jnana yajna* is greater – *śreyān dravyamayād yajñāj jñānayajñah*.

Now, here again we have to properly understand what is meant by 'knowledge'. It is not a professor's learning that we are speaking of here. Just as values in life do not mean a material collocation of substances and relations with them, knowledge does not mean acquaintance with information of the structure

of the outer world. Today, unfortunately, that is called education. We have only information of the existence of things, but not contact with things. We may know how many kilometres the sun is away from us, we may know its diameter, we may know its intensity of heat and the physical reaction it produces; nevertheless, we have no control over the sun. It is as it was. We may know the length and breadth of the cosmos, but it matters little for our daily life. And our learning today of a professorial and academic type is far away from the personal life of the person who seems to be acquainted with it or possessed of it.

The personal existence of the origin of knowledge, the learned man, is different from the knowledge. This is again a matter of personal investigation and self-analysis. The knowledge of the academic type, the bookworm type, the informative type, which is called the modern educational process, has no direct connection with the existence of the person. His existence is like anybody's. He is like a beggar as far as the person is concerned. He can be threatened by even a little mouse moving in his house. His knowledge is vast, but the knowledge has not become his being. Philosophy is supposed to be love of wisdom, but it is much more than that. It is possession of it.

The knowledge that we are contemplating has a connection with its content. Knowledge means 'knowledge of something'. It is an awareness of something, an acquaintance with something, a connection with something in our consciousness, but what sort of connection? That is the crux of the whole matter. Knowledge as we have it today in the form of learning is an external relationship of consciousness with its content. We have no possession of the content of knowledge. We are only theoretically acquainted with the structure of that object. Therefore, knowledge does not help us. We do not seem to be really happy with our knowledge.

We have been told that knowledge is power, knowledge is virtue and knowledge is happiness. Each learned person may close the eyes and brood over himself or herself: "I am a learned person. I am a person with knowledge." Can you be sure that today's embodiment of knowledge is also an embodiment of power? You will find that power does not go with knowledge, it does not go with virtue, it does not go with happiness. The learned man today is not necessarily a happy man, not necessarily a powerful man, not necessarily a virtuous man. That means to say, the characteristics of knowledge are totally absent in present-day knowledge. Here we refer to another kind of knowledge which is identical with its content. It is possessed of its object.

Yoga is said to be the identity of knowledge with being, consciousness with its content, subject with object, man with God, and the percipient with that which is perceived. This knowledge which is vitally related to its content is also a master of that content. Knowledge becomes power because of the fact that its content is not dissociated from it, as is the case in ordinary learning. Hence, knowledge is superior to external performance and material relationship. Any kind of thing that we do with an instrument outside is inferior to that which we do merely with thought. Thought moves the whole world. Ideas are behind every performance. We are today not in a position to understand the secret of this great

doctrine of ideas being superior to material possessions because our materially involved mental process has not extricated itself from the clutches of matter and the bodily weight so that it may appreciate the apriority of a subtle non-material power conditioning operations of even material bodies. Even a mountain, even a solar system can move by the internal force which is the conditioning factor behind it, and which is not at all material.

Therefore, the Lord says: Knowledge sacrifice is greater than material sacrifice, social sacrifice, or any other kind of sacrifice that requires externalised relation. The highest kind of sacrifice is universal relation. Hence, it is a force that can destroy the adverse results of actions which are otherwise binding. *Sarvaṁ karmākhilam pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate*: All binding reactions cease to operate when knowledge arises, because action cannot produce reaction in a given condition. In other conditions, every action produces a reaction. What we call *karma-phala*, or the nemesis of action, is the reaction produced by action, and the reaction is nothing but the reverberation produced by the external atmosphere in respect of a content which is the subject thereof, which imagines that it is dissociated from its external environment. The conditioning factor in respect of an individual performer of action arises due to the imagined situation that this condition is outside. The world is external, and the percipient thereof is a content inside.

Then there is the nemesis of the action, but action will not produce any result and there will be no reaction to the action if you yourself are the action. The action is not something that proceeds from you as an external emanation or exudation. It is you yourself operating. Yesterday I mentioned that in our day-to-day actions, generally we do not operate. We are hard-boiled individuals maintaining our self-identity in the same manner that we were earlier, even during the performance of action. So we are not wholly unselfish in our performances. We maintain our individuality. But in unselfish actions, we lose our individuality. We become the action itself. How can a person become the action?

First of all, you must understand what a person is. If you think that you are the body, naturally you cannot become the action, you cannot melt the body in action. But you are not the body. This is what we are dinning into the ears of everyone. You are a status, a consciousness, an awareness, an idea, a concept. This must be accepted first. This we have already understood to some extent when we considered this issue a few minutes before. Therefore, your engagement in action does not mean the body getting engaged – yourself getting engaged. And what are you? Just consider what you are. You are an ideal, an idea, a sense of being, a consciousness, an attitude; you are something very ethereal, as it were. You do not seem to be a solid person, even to your own self. You are something different from your body and, as I mentioned just now, bodily relationship does not count much. The body is practically nothing in comparison with ideological issues which are the life and death of everybody.

So, *brahmārpaṇam brahma havir brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam* (BG 4.24): When the person, which is the real person I am speaking about, becomes

identical with the process – when the performer becomes the performance itself, when the performance does not become an exterior occurrence on the skin of the performer – then action being one with the performer, there is no question of its getting motivated in the direction of an exterior result, because the result also is a part of the person’s relationship with reality. Therefore, action does not produce reaction, and it is not to be considered as an action at all. It is a kind of play: *lokavattu lilākaivalyam* (B.S. 2.1.33). It is a joy to act. It is a satisfaction to work, because you are moving within your own self. Work does not mean drudging. It is not a slavish mentality. You are not working for somebody’s sake. This idea of ‘somebody’ is the great sorrow of man. There is no somebody here. You yourself are in your cosmical relationship, and again remember, not in a material sense but in a wider, deeper, profound, universal sense.

So you are in a friendly world, you have friends everywhere, and you see yourself everywhere. In this visualisation of the structure of the universe in its relation to you, you will see the God of your creation in the littlest of your actions. You will see yourself in the Almighty, and the Almighty in yourself, which is another way of saying you will see the universe reflected in you. The macrocosm is scintillating in every little microcosm, and vice versa, in the microcosm you will find the representation of the cosmos. Hence, every action becomes a yoga.

Yogasamnyastakarmāṇaṁ jñānasamchinnasamśayam, ātmavantam na karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanamjaya (BG 4.41): By renouncing all deleterious aspects usually connected with individual action, and rooting that purified action in knowledge, about which we made reference just now, and establishing the self in the Self, karma does not bind.

Action cannot bind, because action is not anybody’s action. It is an interrelated cooperative society, as it were, which this universe is. In a large democratic setup, we may say, which this cosmos is, no one is the owner of any particular property. The whole universe is a self-contained system where each one participates in the performance of this great duty of the purposiveness of creation, and we need not have any property. It is not necessary to possess anything. The idea of possession is a disease of the human mind. No possession is necessary. Why do we want to possess? Why is there so much greed? And what can we possess? It is not possible to possess anything here because nothing is outside us, and we are also not anything that is outside something else. Inasmuch as externality in space and time is a mistaken perception of reality, the idea of possession also is mistaken. Hence, we get detached automatically from the sense of involvement in the so-called externality of objects. That is called yoga, the art of non-attachment.

Non-attachment, or detachment, does not mean abrogating physical relationship with the objects. It is not a social kind of *tyaga*. It is an inward acceptance of the non-relation of oneself with anything because of the absence of externality itself. That is called *jnana*. Therefore, *jnana* and yoga go together. After some time we will be told that *sankhya* and yoga are one and the same thing, not two different things. Knowledge and action are not two different things. Yoga and *jnana* are the same.

Therefore, with this idea, with this thought, with this acceptance and conviction of an inward detachment consequent of the natural realisation of there being no such thing as externality in creation, and again consequently establishing oneself in the Self of all things in the world, we begin to see ourselves in the whole universe and we begin to see the universe in ourselves. This is to see God in man, and man in God. With this astounding message, the Fourth Chapter concludes.

But as human beings, we will again go on putting questions and more questions. Knowledge and action are impossible to reconcile. We cannot be reconciled even with our own brother and our neighbour. There is always a suspicion and an irreconcilability of attitude even with a partner in business, what to talk of God who is the biggest partner in this business of relationship. We cannot get on with Him, and we cannot get on with anything. There is always difficulty. We cannot get on with anything for a long time in this world. That is our problem. How can knowledge, which is supposed to be an awareness of something, be capable of reconciliation with that which it knows?

The whole of philosophy, whether in the East or the West, has been a harangue on this great question of the relation of knowledge to content, thought to action or idea to reality, the relationship of subject and object. We have systems of philosophy – realism, idealism, materialism, subjectivism, objectivism, metaphysical idealism, representationism, presentationism, and whatnot. All these are attempts of the mind of man to probe into the mystery of the relation between the knower and the known, which also, incidentally, is the relation between knowledge and action, which again, incidentally, would mean the relation between ourselves and anything.

Our problem is the question of relation. In what way am I connected with you? Please tell me. You will not be able to give an answer. You cannot say that there is no relation, nor can you say what sort of relation it is. Do you possess me, or do I possess you? Are you outside me, or am I outside you? Is the world inside you, or is the world outside you? It does not appear to be inside, it does not appear to be outside, and any kind of conceivable relationship between one and another does not seem to satisfy the logical inquisitive attitude of man. This is so because of the fact that the question of relation arises on account of our thinking in terms of space and time.

I have mentioned to you something about the quandary of relation on an earlier occasion, which I shall repeat in a few words now for the purpose of your remembrance. It is impossible to solve the question of relation because a relation is that which connects the subject with the predicate in logical propositions, or any thing with any other thing. Now, the connection that we call the relation between A and B has to be different from both A and B. If the relation between A and B is identical with A, then there would be no relation between A and B. If that relation is identical with B, then also there will be no relation between A and B. This peculiar thing called relation cannot belong to A, and it cannot belong to B. Therefore, it must be some independent thing altogether, neither connected with A nor connected with B. If that is the case, it cannot connect A and B. Then how

can we think of a relationship between A and B? What is my connection with you? Nobody knows, because we cannot understand what a relationship is. But why do such difficulties arise? These difficulties are imaginary, and they are conceived in our mind due to an involvement in an impossible position, namely, that there is such a thing called connection at all. It does not obtain.

The relationship of one thing with another thing is a question that arises on account of thinking in space and time. Now, space and time is the ultimate relationship of all things. But we forget that our thought itself is conditioned in space and time. There is no such thing as thinking space and thinking time. You cannot conceive space in your mind because to conceive space in your mind, you have to convert it into an object or a content of your thought. It cannot become a content or an object of your thought because thought operates only on the basis of there being such a thing called 'space'. The very thought operation is conditioned by space. Therefore, space cannot be thought by the mind, and space and time go together like brothers. Where the one is, the other also is.

Hence, the thing called relation cannot be imagined by the mind. It cannot be so because all relation is spatiotemporal, and to think of relation or to imagine, to attempt to understand what relation is between one and another, we are trying to understand what space and time are. That is not possible because even our thought is conditioned by space and time. The mind that tries to understand relation in terms of space and time is already conditioned by space and time. Therefore, no one can understand what relationship is. The world of relation seems to be an illusion. This is what some great philosophers concluded finally, and we have reverted to this theme sometime earlier: how the world is an inexplicable concatenation of causes and effects where each cause seems to be an effect and each effect seems to be a cause because of the organic structure of things.

Such is the great subject with which the Fourth Chapter ends, and which becomes the initiator of a question by Arjuna as to how we can reconcile knowledge with action. I gave a little answer how this can be reconciled. Whatever I spoke a few minutes ago is the answer to the question of how knowledge and action are reconcilable, and they are one and the same thing. This the Bhagavadgita will tell us in the coming chapter.

Chapter 19

KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION ARE ONE

In the Bhagavadgita, the words *sankhya* and *yoga* occur a number of times, and these terms have a meaning which is of a crucial nature. Sometimes words which apparently convey an obvious meaning are used in different senses, and two such expressions are *sankhya* and *yoga*. Students of philosophy who are versed in Eastern thought would know what the schools of Sankhya and Yoga are. They associate Sankhya with the system attributed to Sage Kapila, and by Yoga they mostly mean the system of Sage Patanjali. The Bhagavadgita does not use these words in this sense. We are not speaking of Kapila's Sankhya or Patanjali's Yoga here, though we can infuse these systems into the wider concept of these terms, in the light of which expressions of this kind are used.

Because of the difficulty in properly deciphering the connotation of these words, questions arise as to the proper relationship between *sankhya* and *yoga*. Right at the very beginning of the Bhagavadgita, in the Second Chapter itself, the words *sankhya* and *yoga* have been used. "You cannot be a good yogin because you are deprived of the knowledge of *sankhya*," says Bhagavan Sri Krishna in his message recorded in the Second Chapter. There, during our discussion of the theme, we found that one cannot be an expert in action unless one is also clear in one's thought.

The concept of any kind of performance determines not only the nature of the performance, but also the result that may follow from it. Bungling in action and getting defeated in one's enterprises, then repenting because of adverse consequences that follow from otherwise well-intentioned actions arise on account of the absence of *sankhya buddhi*, an improper conceptualisation of the pros and cons of the field of action. Such was what we could make out from the words *sankhya* and *yoga* as they occurred in the Second Chapter. The very same thing is said again subsequently.

Is *sankhya* different from *yoga*? Is knowledge different from action? We have here again the controversies of the schools of thought, the Purva Mimamsa school of action, which is the traditional protagonist of karma or action, ritual and the like, contradistinguished from schools which emphasise the pre-eminence and the supremacy of knowledge in one's life.

Now, karma as used in the Bhagavadgita is not to be identified with the karma of the ritualistic Purva Mimamsa School, though reference to rituals can be found in the Bhagavadgita also. We will find that the Bhagavadgita uses terms which are used in other schools of thought, yet are not actually meaning what these schools of thought wish to convey through those terms. The intentions of the different schools of thought seem to be familiar to the Bhagavadgita because reference is made to these different opinions of the various schools of thought, and sometimes it looks that terms used by these schools of thought are employed in the Bhagavadgita itself, yet intending something transcendent to the usually well-known concepts of the schools, though including everything that they say.

Knowledge and action are usually contradistinguished, and even in our own minds just now these things do not seem to be properly clear. We have had occasion to analyse the concepts involved in the terms *sankhya* and *yoga*, and it was found that in one condition, one circumstance, at one level or degree of expression it appeared that knowledge and action are indistinguishable. But the particular level where it appeared to be like that was so lofty and so far removed from our normal thinking that often we find that this teaching of the Bhagavadgita is not a proper daily guide for us in our workaday existence. It is not humanly possible for our brains to conceive that fine, ethereal, rarefied state where it is possible for knowledge to be indistinguishable from action, because we live a life where knowledge is not action. I mentioned briefly yesterday that a person with knowledge need not be an active person, and an active person need not be a learned or knowledgeable person, taking knowledge and action in the usual sense. But the usual sense is one thing, and the proper sense is another thing.

Arjuna also thought like every one of us. It was understood by him in the usual sense only, that knowledge and action do not seem to be the same. When I understand a thing, I do not at the same time act. I may understand; I may not act. But the Bhagavadgita is of the opinion that there is a specific type of understanding which is necessary for a safe and meaningful life in the world, which cannot be separated from action. Knowing and acting are one and the same thing. They are not two different things. In fact, the more we know, the more is our capacity to act, and here we would agree that knowing is not academic learning. A person who has vast academic knowledge or acumen need not be endowed with a correspondingly wide capacity to work. There are handicaps in doing anything even in the case of a very learned person, a master of the sciences and the arts from a theoretical and academic point of view. He will be suffering in the world due to problems of a practical nature, though his theoretical acumen is superb. So academic learning is not what is intended here by *sankhya*, because it is said that *sankhya* and *yoga* are not two different things. Knowledge and action are not to be distinguished.

Now here we have to ponder awhile before we proceed further. Under what circumstances can we say that knowledge and action are the same, and what are those circumstances which compel us to feel that they cannot be reconciled? We know very well the conditions which compel us to feel that they are two different things. What are those circumstances? They are the circumstances in which we are living today. We have the problem of means and ends, so to say – the difficulty of bringing together causes and effects, means and ends. Is action a means to an end, or is it an end in itself? You have to open your eyes and open your ears to contemplate this problem. Do you do anything because it will bring something else other than itself, or do you believe that the work that you do is itself your satisfaction? Here is a doctor in front of me who seems to be doing work merely because the work itself brings some satisfaction. He does not do it because it brings something else. Nothing comes to him through that action. It is itself a satisfaction. The performance itself is an end; it is not a means to an

ulterior end. But in our case, we find that such a thing is difficult to conceive. How could you do something imagining that the doing itself is the purpose of doing it? Who can be so foolish as to imagine that?

Now, it is difficult for us to understand this circumstance of action because we live in a world of duality where means and ends are cut off. The process is not the same as the end result. Walking is not the same as reaching the destination. But here, there is a condition in the mind of the author of the Bhagavadgita where the movement and the destination are the same. How could man conceive this state? The path and the goal are identical. How can human minds, which know that the path is different from the destination, ever except that the movement towards a destination is itself the destination? Then only one can know that action is the end.

The problem arises due to the relationship that obtains between the universal and the particular. There is what is called universal action and particular action. We are used to particular, individual, sophisticated, egoistic action, and we are not acquainted with universal action. We are not universal persons. The whole problem here hinges on that. We are so-called particular individuals. We are this, and not more than this. That which is this cannot be that. Hence, we cannot absorb into our localised individuality circumstances which are transcendent to the individuality, which is another way of saying that we cannot be really friends of anybody in the world. No man can be a real friend of another person as long as that person ceases to be endowed with an element of universality and is shackled within the shell of bodily individuality only.

So as long as one thinks in terms of a physical individuality or even a psychic individuality, action will look like a process that is directed towards an exterior end in space and time. This is the reason why we are after the fruits of action. No one can think of an action which will not bring any fruit. Why should I do anything if it will not bring any advantage to me? This is how we generally think. We think in terms of advantage, profit and loss. A commercial attitude is employed by us even in our activities which are otherwise good, noble and sublime. A work, a karma yoga, a sacrifice, a sacrament, a dedication can be divine only to the extent of the universal present in it. You are a good man only to the extent you are impersonal and universal. You are a bad man to the extent you are a particular, individual, localised ego. So the goodness and the badness of a situation can be judged from the magnitude of the inclusiveness or exclusiveness of the universal principle in any particular event, location or circumstance. Now, this is how we may try to solve the problem of *sankhya* and yoga, knowledge and action – whether they are really capable of relation, or they are totally exclusive.

There is a marked difference in God's action and man's action. Though the author of the Bhagavadgita does not expect every person to be God at the very outset, the intention is to make man into God Himself, finally. Man has to become a superman. Sri Krishna himself was the ideal superman who spoke this ideal gospel for the supremely ideal situation of life in the world. The intention of the Bhagavadgita is to make every man a superman, which means to say, to pave the path to God for every particular individual in the world. The Bhagavadgita does

not expect every person to be capable of this attainment at once. Every saint and sage and prophet and teacher is aware of this difficulty. But every teacher, every Incarnation, every sage expects that the teaching has relevance to that apparently remote expectation of the ideality of human existence in supreme divinity, because the Bhagavadgita is a gospel of freedom. It tells us how we can be free from the bondage of reactions of actions. The whole of the message is only this much. It is the philosophy, the gospel and teaching of freedom, ultimate freedom, unshackled, untrammelled, unlimited freedom. But such a freedom is not possible except in the universal. And what is limitation to freedom? It is the presence and the operation of something outside. Any person outside you is a limitation upon you, and anything that is taking place external to you puts a barrier on your operation. The operation of B is a limitation on the operation of A.

Now, in that sense, there cannot be freedom in this world if freedom is to be untrammelled, unlimited and supreme. Inasmuch as our intention is to be supremely free, which is called moksha, liberation from every kind of limitation, it follows that establishment in a universal inclusiveness alone can bequeath to us this kind of freedom. Every step that we take in the direction of this achievement also can be said to be a movement towards freedom. The more you are approximate to the solar orb, the more is the heat that you will receive from it. The more you are juxtaposed to the Universal, the more you are free. It is not only the more you are free, but the more you are strong and powerful, the more you are good, the more you are righteous, the more you are capable, the more you are free from the fears of life, the more you are free from death itself. But no one can be free from death as long as one is limited and is located in a finite position in space and time. Birth and death are processes of the reshuffling of the finitude of individuals for the purpose of enhancing their dimension of being; therefore, birth and death will never cease until the Universal is attained, as the writhing and the wriggling and the roaring of the rivers cannot cease until they reach the ocean.

So in that state where freedom is complete and unlimited, you cannot imagine action which is towards some other end. The Universal is a name that we give to that condition of inclusiveness where ends and means are identical, work is worship, action is existence, the means is the same as the end, and the performance is the same as the result.

Now, the satisfaction of having understood this doctrine in our daily life will be also to the extent of our having made that doctrine a part of our daily life. To the extent we are ego-ridden individuals, and in the magnitude of our affirmation of our bodily individuality, we cannot but think in terms of actions bringing some results from somewhere else. The fruit comes from outside because there is something called 'outside' to an action that we perform.

Yesterday we briefly thought that in our actions we do not actually enter wholly into it. We do not melt into the action; we do not become the action. Our soul is not in the action; therefore, it cannot be called an unselfish action. And therefore, it brings a result which is extraneous in its nature. Work can be a

satisfaction by itself only if it is the expression of yourself, if it is not a commercial dealing. You do not expect anything from your own self. You may expect something from outside, but an unselfish action is not action done by outside means and ends; rather, it is a movement of yourself, so that you expand your dimension. The field of activity is the area covered by your own larger self, so that you are moving within yourself, as it were, in performance of unselfish action. "See yourself in the deed, see the Self in people, see the Atman in the whole atmosphere of action." This is what the Bhagavadgita tells us, and in that sense you see yourself in the deeds that you perform. You are happy because you are there in what you do. Therefore, you do not want anything else from the action that you perform, in the same way as you do not expect anything from your own self. How hard is this doctrine, hard because we have never seen what universality is. We can never conceive what it can be because we cannot believe there is any reality outside the body. "All reality is within me, in this little body only; I am what I am as this little puny individual, and every satisfaction of this localised bodily individuality is all that matters for me. Let the world go to hell." This is what any man would think when he is driven into a corner. But the Bhagavadgita is a solacing message of healthy living, not this morbid existence of a bodily individuality.

So here again we come to this point of *sankhya* and yoga. It is knowledge, and that knowledge is the same as action. *Sankhya* is not different from yoga. *Sāmkhyayogau pṛthag bālāḥ pravādanti na paṇḍitāḥ* (BG 5.4): Only unlettered, untutored, illiterate persons speak of *sankhya* and yoga as two different things. Wise ones do not say that. But who are the wise ones? Those who are established in the Universal. And here we may be charitable enough to accept that all those may be said to be also in the Universal even when they are moving towards the Universal, just as we say a person is educated whatever be the state of his education, whatever be the degree of his enlightenment. Whatever be the class he is studying in, he is in the process of education. Likewise, you may say you are living a spiritual life whatever be the degree of the universality that has become part of your daily life.

But to the extent it has not become part of your being, action looks like something different from knowledge. Therefore, knowledge and action are different in one state of consciousness, but they are not different in another state of consciousness. Where are they not different? They are not different where knowledge includes the field of action, where knowledge is not merely an acquaintance with facts as a sort of information but the imbibing of the very substance of the content of knowledge, where knowledge is Being and not merely knowing something outside, where Chit is the same as Sat, to put it in a more technical way. Chit is Sat, Sat is Chit. Ananda is said to be the name of perfection. That means to say, Chit is Sat. Consciousness is Being; knowing is the same as Existence; to be aware is to possess.

But in our daily existence we find awareness is not possession. If we are aware that we have a hundred dollars, we do not possess a hundred dollars. This is the case because of the isolation of our awareness from the content of

awareness. But here is a meditation taking place simultaneously with action, and karma yoga is at once meditation. It is contemplation and action combined. It is the soul operating when karma yoga is being performed, and the soul is the greatest satisfaction. All satisfaction is the operation of the soul from inside. The more is the soul active, the more are you happy. But most of our souls are dead, or they are asleep at least. They are not working at all, and hence, we are never happy. We are scrambling for a little bit of satisfaction in the darkness of ignorance where we grope for satisfaction but we cannot find it because the souls are asleep. Why are they asleep? Because they are shrouded by the thick clouds of unfulfilled longings – the karmas, as they are called, *sanchita*, etc., unfulfilled longings lying embedded as thick layers of the psychic accumulations we call in the language of psychology the unconscious, and so on. These act like thick curtains over the radiance of the soul, and it does not appear to operate at all.

All joy is the manifestation of the Atman from inside. Joy, satisfaction, does not come from material objects. Even when we seem to be possessed of a satisfaction in terms of a material possession, it is actually the soul that is operating from inside. We have the old example of a dog licking a bone with some splinters, which cause a wound in the tongue of the dog, and blood oozes from the wound. It licks the blood more and more, thinking that it is coming from the bone and not from its own tongue. That is how we feel attracted to objects outside, imagining that the satisfaction is in the objects though it has actually emanated from our own selves, as a dog imagines the blood to be oozing from a bone while it is dripping from its own tongue that is torn by the splinter. These are difficult things to imagine for a consciousness, a state of mind, which is embodied in this physical tabernacle.

So *sankhya* and yoga are not two different things where yoga is karma yoga, and not merely ordinary action. The ordinary action that is of a binding nature is that which has a result outside it. The karma yoga is that kind of action which has the result inside it, so that there is no question of the karma yogin expecting a result coming from outside. The moment the concept of outside arises, exclusiveness takes place in consciousness instead of inclusiveness. The universal element is cut off from that concept of action where the end result is outside the action. There is exclusiveness of the result of the action in ordinary binding action, whereas in liberating action, which is karma yoga, the result is included in the action itself.

However much we think this, we will find it is hard for us to imagine. How could I be in my action? We have to be in the action in order that it may give meaning. The painter has to be in the painting in order that it may look beautiful. The poet has to be in his poem in order that it may be meaningful, significant, absorbing. Even in architecture and sculpture, the artist is wholly present in his soul, and that is why it gives beauty. If niggardly, half-heartedly, cursingly we do an action, it produces no good result. Even charity done niggardly is no charity. Our soul is outside the action, so the action is dead action; therefore, a living result cannot follow from it.

Hence, *sankhya* and yoga are identical in one sense of the spiritual concept of the Universal being present in karma yoga, divinised action, but in other actions which are of an embodied nature, they are two different things. So Arjuna's question has a point, and Sri Krishna's answer also has a point.

Yogayukto viśuddhātmā vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ, sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā kurvann api na lipyate (BG 5.7). We are afraid of the binding effect of action. Karma binds, we say, and the world binds, and everything we do seems to be a limitation to our freedom because we neither know the meaning of yoga, which is liberating action, nor do we know the meaning of knowledge, which is inclusive awareness.

A person who is endowed with the consciousness of right action is *yogasamyukta*, the word used at the end of the Fourth Chapter. He is also one who has removed every kind of doubt from his mind: *jñānasamchinnasamśaya* (BG 4.41). Because of freedom from every kind of doubt, having been *jñānasamchinnasamśaya*, and having freed himself from every kind of attachment because he is *yogasamnyastakarma*, he is established in the true Self: *ātmavan*. Such a person is not bound: *ātmavantam na karmāṇi nibadhnanti*. It is only the soul that cannot be bound; everything else is subject to bondage. Now, to the extent we are a soul, to that extent we are free. Each one of us should know how far we are souls, and to what extent we are not souls. We are every blessed thing other than a soul; therefore, we seem to be enmeshed in bondage of every kind. There is trouble, trouble, trouble, everywhere; there is nothing but that because we are phenomenal beings more than noumenals. We are involved in externality more than in universality. We are not *ātmavans*, not *jñānasamchinnasamśaya* or *yogasamnyastakarma*; therefore, knowledge and action are totally different things. We are more traders, commercial beings even in the performance of our actions, rather than souls operating for our own freedom.

Yogayukta is one who is united with the principle of yoga. The word yoga is again used in many senses in the Bhagavadgita. We shall now conceive of it in one sense: the unitedness of the performer with the performance. The other senses we shall think of later on. The harmony that is there between the performer of the action and the action itself, that is yoga. Such a person is purified: *viśuddhātmā*. Such a person is automatically self-controlled: *vijitātmā*. His self is controlled by the Self and his sense organs are restrained by the mind: *jitendriyaḥ*. Such a person sees himself in every other soul: *sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā*. His soul has become the soul of all beings. That is because the soul cannot be in one particular place. One who works through the soul works through the universal principle in all things. He is established in God-consciousness in one degree, and so he is the only person who can do real good to people; otherwise, it will be ordinary, fragile action which will bring fragile results. Many have come in the world, and many have gone. So many things have been done, yet the world is the same. It is not changing because brittle action produces brittle results. Living action produces living results. Life is only in the soul, and in the non-soul there is no life.

Hence, the Bhagavadgita exhorts us to act on the basis of the soul within us, whose consciousness is called *sankhya*, and it is at the same time an establishment in the Universal because the soul is universal. In that state, knowledge and action are the same. Everything that you do is a joyous self-expression, a liberating performance. You are ever in a state of bliss.

Chapter 20

THE ARISING OF THE CONCEPT OF UNITY

We are in the Fifth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita. In a way, we may say, the Fifth Chapter acts like some sort of a link between the subject treated in the Fourth Chapter and the one that is to be dealt with in the Sixth. The Fifth Chapter does not take up any new theme for discussion. It has some features of the Fourth Chapter, and also a little connection with the subject of the Sixth.

Jnana karma sannyasa – renunciation, nonattachment produced by knowledge and right action. The Fourth Chapter was full of these discussions of knowledge and right action, and the cumulative effect bears fruit, as it were, in the direct disciplinary systems described in the Sixth Chapter. Actually, the seed of the Sixth Chapter is sown at the end of the Fifth Chapter, as we shall see.

There was a lot of emphasis on non-attachment in all the things that were told us. That is why some exponents of the Gita, such as Mahatma Gandhi, feel the proper name of the Bhagavadgita would be Anasakti Yoga, the yoga of non-attachment. That is the subject of the Bhagavadgita: Never be attached to anything. Says the Upanishads: This Great Being is non-attached, and the characteristic of this Great Being is reflected in everything that is divine in this world, everything that aspires for union with this Great Being, and every step that we take in the direction of the experience of this Great Being. So non-attachment is not only the quality of God; *vairagya* is said to be one of the features of the Almighty, and not only that, anything that is connected with God also is related to a kind of non-attachment. There is an intense concentration of spirit in anything that is connected with God, even if it be a ritualistic worship, a holy reading from a scripture, or any religious exercise.

The nature of detachment is specially emphasised in this chapter. A famous verse of the Fifth Chapter has some relevance to an aphorism of Patanjali, though in a different context. *Ye hi saṁsparśajā bhogā duḥkhaṇā eva te, ādyantavantaḥ kaunteya na teṣu ramate budhaḥ* (BG 5.22): All contacts of the senses with their objects are wombs of pain; therefore, the wise one does not delight in the satisfactions of the senses. Full of meaning is this *śloka*. There is a beginning and an end for everything that we can expect in this world. It comes, and therefore it must also go. That it comes shows that it was not there before it came. Hence, the joy that has not yet come, that is yet to come, creates an anxiety in the mind of one who expects it, an anxiety which is not different from pain and sorrow – namely, the thing that is desired has not yet come. That which I want has not yet come; therefore, my desire has not been fulfilled, and the non-fulfilment of a desire is agony of the spirit. It is sorrow of the person. It is grief unadulterated.

Now, when it comes, it must also have an end. The temporal character of anything is indicated by its coming and going. Because it has to come, there must have been a time when it did not come, so it must have been a source of sorrow. Even if it has come, it shall not be a perennial source of security. It creates

another anxiety: that it shall leave. The sutra of Patanjali in this context is *pariṇāma tāpa saṁskāra duḥkaiḥ guṇavṛtti virodhāt ca duḥkham eva sarvaṁ vivekinaḥ* (Y.S. 2.15): Due to certain characteristics inseparable from contactual experience through the senses, the world is full of misery. The world is misery embodied. It is only sorrow. There is no joy in this world. The doctrine of Buddhism says *anitya dukkham anatmam*: This world has nothing permanent in it. It is *anityam shanikam*. Momentary concatenation of causes and effects is said to be the picture-show of this world phenomenon; like the connecting pictures in a cinematographic projection, little bits are joined together as little pieces of organic cells are arranged in a pattern to make our body. There is nothing that can last and maintain its self-identity even for one moment. This is the philosophy of Buddhism, attributed to statements of Buddha himself. Even for a moment a thing cannot maintain its self-identity, and that such an identity happens to be visible in objects, personalities, and the like, is to be attributed to an illusoriness in perception.

We need not enter into this metaphysical theme of Buddhism. However, that the joys of life are momentary is something well known. There is a sorrow in the beginning, and a sorrow in the end. When it has not come, it is a source of sorrow; when it goes, it is a source of sorrow. This is *parinama*, the consequence of enjoyment through sense indulgence. And it need not be imagined that for a short duration we may enjoy it even if it is to go after some time, because no one knows when it will go. It does not guarantee that it shall be with us for a long time. Hence, the imagination that one can possess and enjoy a desired object for even a temporary period should be considered as an unjustifiable position.

Now, just imagine, or take for granted, that it shall endure for a short time; even then it is not joy. We are under an illusion. The so-called joy of sense contact and possession of sense objects cannot be considered as a joy even for a moment, let alone for a long period, because it is, again, an illusion. All joy is an illusion. It is a psychic illusion, as we have optical illusions. What is the illusion? The *gunas* of *prakriti* are responsible for this operation called sense experience and its acceptance by the mind. All satisfaction is a beam of the ray of the light of *sattva*. *Prakriti* is all things. The whole universe is *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. There cannot be a reflection of the state of balance in *rajas* and *tamas*.

Meanwhile, we may remember that joy is nothing but an experience of balance. When there is a sense of equanimity, we feel elated. We feel buoyant in physical health when there is equanimity of the forces of the physiological organs, and also when there is equanimity of the psychic functions. They are set in a state of equilibrium. The mind does not undulate with ups and downs of waves of distraction, because these waves of psyche arise due to the operation of *rajas*. In *sattva* there is no such undulation, no such wave-like movement of the mind. When there is a temporary flash of this equilibrated condition called *sattva*, we feel elated as if something has been experienced of the nature of blissfulness.

But *prakriti's* forces are like the movement of a wheel. A moving motorcar never allows the wheel to be in a particular position for even a moment. There is

a continuous change of the position of the wheel due to the movement that is precipitated by the pressure of the whole structure of nature. Hence, it is not possible to expect the static and stable operation of *sattva*, or any kind of *guna*, for a long time. There is a perpetual, we may say a simultaneous, action of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. There is an opposition of the qualities of *prakriti*: *guṇavṛtti virodhāt*. One opposes the other; one pushes the other down like the spokes of a moving wheel. We may say the spokes oppose each other – that which is down is up, and that which is up is down because of the compulsive movement of the wheel.

Dharmachakra pravartana is an analogy in Buddhist parlance. The law of the universe is dharma. It moves like a wheel, and it will not be stable in position. Therefore, every experience of any connection with any spoke in this wheel is a momentary experience. We shall not have a permanent possession of anything in this world. Even the possessor cannot exist for a long time. Neither the possessor as a subject of contact of objects, nor the object, can have enduring value in this world. They are like the moving waters of a river, like the surging flame of a lamp. There is continuous movement, and therefore there is no possibility of enduring satisfaction in this world.

It has already been said in the Third Chapter of the Bhagavadgita that all contact is *gunas* moving among *gunas*: *guṇā guṇeṣu vartante* (BG 3.28). The three *gunas*, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, in the form of the sense organs collide with the objects outside in space and time, which are also constituted of the very same three *gunas*. Then there is a final deciding factor in all operations in life. We have no particular, personal say in any manner. Therefore, no one can say, “Let me have this for some time.” Neither the one who says that has any permission to stay beyond a certain limit of temporal duration, nor the object which is so expected can endure in a similar manner. There is anxiety, there is *tapa*, sorrow, always; and, as was mentioned already, there is *tapa*, anxiety, in the beginning because it has not come, in the middle because of the anxiety that it may go, and sorrow in the end because it has gone. It if it has not come, it is sorrow. When it has come, it is sorrow because there is a fear it may go. When it goes, it is hell itself. So when is it a source of real joy free from anxiety? When are we free from anxiety in this world? Never, not for a moment. *Duḥkham eva sarvaṃ vivekinaḥ*: For a person endowed with discrimination, this world is nothing but sorrow embodied. *Anityam asukhaṃ lokam* (BG 9.33); *duḥkhālayam aśāsvatam* (BG 8.15) says Bhagavan Sri Krishna himself: This world is *anitya*: temporary, full of anxiety and heartburning and sorrow. It is the abode of grief: *asukhaṃ*. It is impermanent: *duḥkhālayam*; it is *aśāsvate*.

It has to be so. It cannot be but that because all experience in this world is a tentative juxtaposition of the nature of the subjective side and the objective side. Do you see waves in the ocean maintaining a steady position at any time? Rock-like, they never stand. They are all movement, all movement, all movement. It is continuous movement that seems to permit a tentative perception of a steadiness of the crest of a wave. Only movement and no steadiness is there. So is this body,

so are the objects of the world, so is experience contacted by the senses in terms of objects.

So, *ye hi saṁsparśajā bhogā duḥkḥayonaya*: All *bhoga* – *bhoga* is enjoyment – all enjoyment born, engendered, by contact of any kind is a source of sorrow. Here is a very crucial statement before us. Any contact is undesirable, and we have nothing in this world but contact, if at all we have any sensation. All sensation which we call experience is born of contact, and all contact is like the coming together of logs of wood in the ocean, says the Mahabharata: *yathā kāṣṭam ca kāṣṭam ca sameyātām mahodadhau, sametya ca vyatlyātām tadvad bhūtasamāgamaḥ* (M.B. 12.28.36). “I am your friend, my dear friend,” we say. You are my friend, and I am your friend. How long we shall be friends? We shall be friends in the sea of life in the same way as logs of wood floating on the tempestuous ocean sometimes meet each other and become friends. One log may shake hands with another log. “My dear friend, I am happy to see you.” But the wind blows in another direction and the log is thrown somewhere else. We say, “Bereavement has taken place. Oh, my friend has gone.” Neither is that your friend, nor is that bereavement caused by any factor related to you. There is another, supernal operation which brings things together and separates them. Hence, it is futile on the part of any person to exult on the occasion of a temporary contact with a person or a thing. It is like logs of wood meeting. Fate brings them, and fate takes them away. We may call it fate, we may call it the law of karma, we may call it the purposiveness of the *gunas* of *prakriti*, or the will of God. We may call it by any name.

Hence, all contact is dangerous because it brings about attachment. Attachment is caused by a sensation of joy in contacts of senses with the objects. We lick a drop of honey which appears to ooze from the object which is contacted by the senses. But dangerous is life. The jaw of death is wide open like the crocodile’s mouth. It shall swallow everybody. The whole world it can swallow. *Kala*, time, is called the world eater. It eats everything, and nobody can be spared.

In the Mahabharata there is a story. Vidura gives this story to the weeping Dhritarashtra and Gandhari who beat their breasts, hit their heads on the floor, and sobbed bitterly at the death of all their children after the war. “What is this life? Misery and misery and misery,” says Vidura. This story is repeated in the Buddhist scriptures also. Some say that originally this story is found in the Buddhist writing; but we find it in the Mahabharata also. It is up to you to find out whether the Mahabharata was written before Buddha or it came afterwards. We need not enter into this historical controversy.

However, it occurs in the Mahabharata in the context of Vidura’s teaching at the close of the war. He says, “Our fate, our life, our condition is really pitiable, like the man who fell into a well in the wilderness. In darkness a man fell into a well in a thick jungle, and perchance he caught a hold of a root of a tree on the precipice, hung on it, and did not fall into the water. When he looked down, what did he see there? He saw a crocodile with open mouth. Oh God, my dear God! It was a crocodile gazing at him. He looked up. He saw a tiger with an open mouth. It was looking at him from the top. He cannot go up because the tiger is there, and

he cannot go down because the alligator, the crocodile, is there. In this condition he is hanging. But the worst thing is to be told now. A rat was munching at the root which he was hanging on to, eating it little by little. After some time, what will happen? He will be down on that alligator itself. Into its mouth he will go. But in this condition of terrific precariousness – the tiger above, the crocodile below, the rat eating the root on which he was hanging – he found some drops of honey falling from the bent branch of a tree on which there was a beehive. From the beehive overhead, drops of honey were falling. He put his tongue out to catch the drops of honey because it was so sweet.”

Which idiotic person will try to drink honey at that time? But was sweet. Death is at the elbow; it does not matter, because honey is sweet. This is what man thinks. And this is not an instruction of Vidura to Dhritarashtra and Gandhari, or Buddha to any of his disciples. It is a scientific fact of nature. Death embodied is this phenomenal world. At any moment, anything goes. Anything can be crushed down by the relentless law of the world which has no pity, we may say. Though, of course, we cannot attribute ethical sense to the impersonality of nature, from our own point of view it may look that cruel is the hand of nature. Such is this world. And in this condition we try to eat the delicious fruit of this dangerous product of the forbidden tree of life.

Covet not anything in this world with the senses. They are sorrow breeding: *samsparśajā bhogā duḥkḥayonaya*. “They have a beginning and an end. Therefore, no wise man will go near them,” says Bhagavan Sri Krishna in this famous verse occurring in this chapter. We have to control our impulses even before we die. It is worth doing this. We should not wait for the moment of death for wisdom to dawn in us: *śaknotīhaiva yaḥ soḍhum prāk śarīravimokṣaṇāt, kāmakrodhbhavaṁ vegam sa yuktaḥ sa sukhī naraḥ* (BG 5.23). Before the shedding of this body, we should go with a satisfaction that we have achieved something worth the while for which we have come to this world. The impulse of *kama* and *krodha* should be restrained. He who is endowed with the strength to restrain, to withhold, the impetuosity of the forces of *kama* and *krodha*, desire and anger, is always liberated. Such a person is always in a state of yoga. Such a person is happy: *sa yuktaḥ sa sukhī naraḥ*. This has to be effected gradually, day by day, by various methods which have been told us in different contexts.

The impetuosity of the sense organs is understandable. They are like that because they have a cosmic backing. The little wave in the ocean has the support of the whole ocean. The entire body of the ocean is pushing it, and therefore the wave is up like a little hill on the surface of the water. Similarly, a little sensory desire has a cosmic push at the back. The whole sea is at its back, and therefore it becomes impossible to restrain the sense organs. We are nobodies, actually. We have no strength to control the senses. It is said in the Bhagavadgita that *prakṛiti* will have its say. *Prakṛtiṁ yānti bhūtāni nigrahaḥ kiṁ kariṣyati* (BG 3.33): Natural forces will act naturally. No individual action is here indicated. When it is said that the impulses of desire and anger have to be subdued, it is not meant that you and I can work it independently. Individual effort is not sufficient.

But what is individuality but these impulses only? These impulses make what we are as individuals, and who are we to control them? It is like the wave wanting to control itself. A superior attunement may be called for. We do not know what this superior attunement is. Some sort of a thing was suggested at the end of the Third Chapter where it was made out that the senses are no doubt very powerful. They are so strong that they will carry away your whole personality as a boat is carried away by a tempestuous wind. *Indriyāṇi pramāthīni* (BG 2.60): Terrible is the strength of the sense organs. They carry away even the intellect of a person.

But the suggestion briefly made in the verses occurring at the end of the Third Chapter is, which we have already covered, that the senses may be strong, but the mind has a greater capacity than any of the sense organs. *Indriyāṇi parāṇy āhur indriyebhyaḥ param manaḥ, manasas tu parā buddhir yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ* (BG 3.42): Reason is superior even to the sentimental and instinctive mind, but higher than that is the Atman. The suggestion seems to be that we have to resort to the Atman for support in order that the reason may stand stable. *Yadā pañcāvatiṣṭhante jñānāni manasā saha, buddhiś ca na viceṣṭati, tām āhuḥ paramām gatim* (K.U. 2.3.10) is a verse in the Kathopanishad. When the sense organs, five in number, stand united with the mind as if they do not exist at all, this is called *pratyahara* in the system of Patanjali. The sense organs melt down into the mind, and the mind is rooted in the reason, and the reason is unflickering; this is called yoga.

How are we to resort to the Atman? Is it a possibility? Until this is achieved, we do not seem to be wholly safe in this world. Even the reason is unreliable finally if it is to stand by itself independently without any support. After all, it is an individual faculty which has no cosmic support. It has cosmic support in one sense, but for all practical purposes it seems to be tethered to our bodily sentiments. We argue in justification of our cravings, many a time. So the universal Atman is to be our root.

Succeeding in spiritual life is a miracle. We have to call it a miracle, and there is no other word for it. We cannot say it is entirely our effort. Who are we to put forth effort? Wherefrom does the strength come? We are embodied in terms of impulses only. It is said that good actions that we did in the previous birth, *purvapunya samskara*, the effect of meritorious deeds of the past, fructify at a certain moment of time, and then they act as accentuating factors in our onward movement in spiritual life.

It is not logically and scientifically possible to give an answer to the question of how we succeed. *Īśvarānugrahādeva puṁsāmadvaitavāsana, mahadbhayaparitrāṇā-dviprāṇāmupajāyate* (Avad. Gita 1.1) says Dattatreya in the Dattatreya Gita, the Avadhuta Gita. You do not know how the concept of unity arises in your mind. You never see unity anywhere in the world. Everywhere there is dissection, separation, isolation. How can you say that there is such a thing called unity? There is an idea, a concept, a notion, an acceptance on your part that there is such a thing called a unifying force. How did this idea arise in your mind? It is a wonder that discreet particles of physical matter and fickle

thoughts which run hither and thither in different directions, which have no character of unity at all, may permit such an idea of unity. Ishvara's grace, God's grace, operates. Sage Dattatreya says that it is perhaps God's grace. We do not know. We have nothing to say except that. We have to humbly admit that it is some miracle. And the great logician Sankara found himself in this quandary when he posed this question to himself in his great commentary on the Brahma Sutras: How does knowledge arise in the individual? It cannot be said to be the effect of individual effort, because effort in the direction of right knowledge cannot arise unless there is some knowledge already. The question is: How did this knowledge arise at all? Who impelled you to move in the right direction? That impulsion in the right direction should be due to some knowledge. But how did this knowledge arise? Nobody knows. It is God's grace.

So, the Atman is the support, finally. It has to be taken as the resort. *Yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ*. There is a friend who will support us. *Suḥṛdam sarvabhūtānām jñātvā mām śāntim ṛcchati* (BG 5.29): "Know Me as your friend. You shall be relieved of all anxiety if you accept that I am your friend." The great Lord gives this solace, this promise. *Suḥṛdam sarvabhūtānām jñātvā mām śāntim ṛcchati*. We shall shed tears of joy if we are really to accept the meaning of this promise of the great Lord. "Know Me as your friend." Who can tell you like that? Nobody in the world will say, "I am your friend; believe that I am your friend." But here is one who tells you, "Believe I am your friend. I shall be at your beck and call. I shall help you": *suḥṛdam sarvabhūtānām jñātvā mām śāntim ṛcchati*. Also, at the end of this chapter there is, as I mentioned, a precise and concise statement of the theme of the Sixth Chapter, about which we shall see later.

Chapter 21

THE TWO WAYS OF YOGA

The Fifth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita is a broad discussion of varied themes connecting the philosophical disquisitions of the Third Chapter with the profound concentration laid down and many other similar issues of the Fourth Chapter, and also relating this entire theme to the most practical issue that will be taken up in the Sixth Chapter.

Tadbuddhayas tadātmānas tanniṣṭhās tatparāyaṇāḥ, gacchanty apunarāvṛttiṃ jñānanirdhūtakalmaṣāḥ (BG 5.17). Introducing the subject of the Sixth Chapter, as it were, here is a pronouncement: Non-return to this mortal coil will be the blessing of those whose understanding is perpetually rooted in That, whose entire soul is fixed in That, who have That alone as their sole foundation in life and who have no other goal to aspire for except That. These persons, the blessed ones, the exalted ones, the purified souls who are burnt and burnished in the fire of knowledge with all dross removed from them, they attain to that condition of non-returning to the finitude of life, to mortal existence, to the sorrows to which man is held.

We can be rid of all sorrow; we can be free from every problem. What sorrow can be equal to that sorrow of being compelled to come and go frequently in this incessantly moving cycle of metempsychosis, the push of nature, the urge of evolution, the compulsion of abjectivity and the helpless state of affairs when we have to hang on other things for our existence? But this sorrow can be removed by gradual purification of ourselves, by basking in the sun of this Supernal Being. What that Being is, we have not been told yet. Very little reference is made here in the chapters that we have already traversed to this reference of *tat*, or That. Some indication is casually made here and there. "Fixed in That, one is free" or "Fix your mind in Me". Such little suggestions are available, but we have not yet been told specifically as to what 'That' is, or what this 'Me' actually suggests. "Fix your mind in Me, root yourself in Me, and remember Me." Who is this 'Me'? It is not yet explained.

Now the 'Me' has been replaced by the word 'That', *tadbuddhaya*: intellect entirely fixed in That. Our intellects are not fixed in any particular thing. Our present state of understanding is something like a judicial that sifts evidences that come from outer sense operations. A new qualitative knowledge cannot arise from such kind of judgment which is nothing but a synthesising agent, a coordinator of issues, a promulgator of ideas which are a logical outcome of material that is already available. New material the intellect of man cannot manufacture. Hence, though there is this internal independence which our understanding, or reason, exercises in being able to cast into a unity of purpose and synthesis the diverse evidences come through the variety of sense perceptions, in this sense we may say that the reason has an independence of its own, an independence which is revealed by its capacity to unify the diversity of sense perceptions which have practically no relation one to the other.

The intellect in man is a passport holder of two kingdoms, as it were, belonging to this world and also to another world which is ruled by a different law altogether. On the borderland of two kingdoms is this intellect located. We have a very crucial, intriguing faculty in us: the understanding, the *buddhi*, the deciding factor which decides issues. On the one hand, it does not appear to be anything more than a mediator of the actions of the senses. It is like an umpire in a game, yet it maintains its relationship to the parties upon which it is to hold an opinion. In quality, in its individual frame of makeup, it does not seem to be far different from that to which it is related. The intellect is directly connected with this world. It is with the help of our intellect, our understanding, that we are able to know what this world is about, what is to be done here and what is not to be done, and what meaning we are to make out from the knowledge communicated to us by our senses. This work the intellect does. But it does not seem to belong entirely to the sense world.

Philosophers find in this reason of man a transcendent element, apart from its empirical authority which it exercises over the sense operations. It is empirically related to the sense world but transcendently placed on a high pedestal of an insight into a trans-empirical super-sensible experience, which is the philosopher's stock phrase: apperception rather than perception. The intellect apperceives, it does not simply perceive, so they call it transcendental apperception instead of empirical perception. The capacity to turn back upon oneself is the apperceptive faculty of consciousness. It can turn back upon itself and know itself, and not merely know what is outside it.

The sense organs cannot know themselves. The eye cannot see itself, the ear cannot hear itself. The eye can see what is outside it. While the senses can know what is outside them, and the intellect also has this capacity to understand what is outside, it has also an additional prerogative of the ability to concentrate itself on itself. This feature it exercises by its great power of a new kind of judgment, which is the recognition of unity in things and not merely getting dispersed in the particulars of perceptions. If the intellect were just like the senses in its framework or makeup, it would not have been able to connect the various sense perceptions into a single 'I'. I see, I hear; I am that which sees and hears and tastes and smells and touches. This 'I' is to be identified with a transcendental element operating in the intellect, reflected through the intellect. In Indian philosophical parlance we call it *chidabhasa*, a reflection of the Atman, the Universal, reflected in this particular medium of the intellect, the reasoning capacity in man.

Now, in this Bhagavadgita verse the word *tadbuddhaya*, rootedness of the intellect in That, suggests that our faculty of judgment through understanding or reason, which has this dual capacity of objective judgment and subjective self-recognition, should be further enhanced in its capacity of insight. Here is the beginning of yoga practice, actually. While it is necessary to synthesise diverse sense perceptions into a single operation of recognition through understanding, and incipiently this unifying capacity seems to be inherent in the intellect, yet in spite of our synthesising the particulars of sense perceptions, we do not seem to

be so much engaged in that which causes this insight in the understanding as in the objective particulars of the world.

Our understanding is outwardly turned, mostly. It is potentially inwardly turned, but practically outwardly turned. Latently we have a universal element operating in us, but patently it is not operating. The patent observation is of an external something, based, of course, theoretically and latently in something which is not of this world. Philosophically we may accept that there is a transcendent element in us, taking philosophy as a theoretical concept, not as a practical experience. But practically this theoretical concept has not become a guideline to us.

The Bhagavadgita wants us to raise this potential in us to a practical operation in our day-to-day existence. This is yoga. The potential has to become the practical. This unifying capacity of the *buddhi* which is borrowed by it from something which is lying at its background should not simply lie at the back of it as a propelling medium. It should also become its daily contemplated object. The universal element, which is the reason behind the intellect's capacity to synthesise sense perception, should also become its own object of perception, so that we should visualise the universal in our understanding as clearly, distinctly and concretely as we are visualising the so-called objects of the world. Such people are rooted in God. They are those whose intellect is rooted in That. The word 'That' implies the universal God-being in us. In That our whole soul has to be fixed. 'Whole soul' means everything from top to bottom, from head to foot. Whatever we are and whatever we have, all this has to be mustered in into a single focus of attention on this, which alone gives value to our life, and without which we would be shreds of little bits of matter and isolated particulars. There would be no unifying sense in us. I would not even know that I am if this unifying factor were not to operate.

Now, this unifying factor has to rise into conscious action. It should not be lying back in the unconscious level. The whole Atman, the whole Self, the whole being, the entire faculty – understanding, willing, feeling, volition – everything should come together into a single activity, not diversified action. This is to fix the understanding in That, the *buddhi* in That, the intellect in That, the reason in That, and the whole soul in That: *tadātmāna*.

Tanniṣṭhāḥ: We have taken a vow to observe this discipline of recognising That, bringing That into the conscious level of our daily life, and concerning ourselves only with That. This is *niṣṭhāḥ*. *Niṣṭhāḥ* is a kind of discipline, like the *purāścārāna vrata* of *japa*. *Niṣṭhāḥ* is a *tapas*. It is a dedication, a policy that we adopt in our life. It is a vow that we take; it is a holy sacrament. There is nothing for us to think except That, and we want nothing but That. That is *tatparāyaṇāḥ*. We will no more say, "I want this. I want that." We shall find all that we want there. Inasmuch as all that we seek here will be found there, there is no point in saying, "I want this. I want that." So that is our aim, that is our objective, and we are bent upon moving in that direction for that experience only. Such purified ones who are capable of living this kind of life of intense spiritual discipline shall

not come back to mortal suffering. *Gacchanty apunarāvṛttim*: They attain moksha, salvation in God.

Yoga is the way to this experience. This will be explained in the Sixth Chapter, but an introductory remark is made at the end of the Fifth Chapter itself which clinches the issue of this whole concentration which is yoga. *Sparsān kṛtvā bahir bāhyāṁś cakṣuś caivāntare bhruvoḥ, prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā nāsābhyantaracāriṇau* (BG 5.27); *yatendriyamanobuddhirmunir mokṣaparāyaṇaḥ, vigatecchābhayakrodho yaḥ sadā mukta eva saḥ* (BG 5.28): Liberated indeed is that individual even while living in this world who can undergo this discipline that is now going to be described in these two verses. Shutting out all externality from perception is the first requisite. *Sparsān kṛtvā bahi*: Let the externality in perception be shut out from connection with consciousness.

Our perception of an object involves a dual operation. This is described in detail in Vedanta texts such as the Panchadasi, and in many other scriptures in philosophy. When we perceive an object, the mind is said to be cast in the mould of the shape of that object. But the mind is insentient, basically. It requires to be illuminated by a light from inside. The form of the object into which the mind is cast in the perception of an object is to become self-conscious action. It is not merely the fact of cognising the form of the object, but also converting that cognition into an experience in the form of 'I know this object'. This is a retrospective action of consciousness which attends upon the movement of the mind in respect of the object outside. Unless consciousness charges the mental activity in terms of an object outside, there would not be perception of an object. Just as a copper wire can be electrified by a generator, without which charge it is like any other wire on which one can hang cloth, the mind is dead matter practically, it is one of the evolutes of *prakṛiti*. As we have noted earlier, it is also of the *gunas*: *sattva, rajas, tamas*. It has no consciousness of its own. It is something like a mirror, which has no light of its own but can reflect light if it is cast on it.

Consciousness is independent of externality. *Bahi* means 'outward'. The mind is nothing but outwardness of consciousness. We cannot know the actual connection of the mind with the Atman. The Yoga Vasishtha goes into details of this issue of the structure of the mind in its relation to consciousness which is all pervading, sometimes making out that the mind is nothing but restricted consciousness, restricted in the sense of pointedness in a particular spot in space and time. It gets converted, reflected, distorted, becomes topsy-turvy in its operation when it is pulled out of itself. In a way, we may say, to be more specific, the mind is not something independently working outside consciousness. It cannot be outside. It is an unintelligible operation in consciousness itself. This is beyond human comprehension, practically. It is an impulse of what we can call externality, forcing consciousness to be out of itself for the time being. 'Self becoming not-self' is sense perception. Self becoming not-self, the I becoming not-I, the subject for the time being temporarily getting transferred into the form

of the object, and tying itself to that object. This is bondage, this is samsara, this is world-experience.

But in yoga practice, careful attention is bestowed on this perceptive operation of consciousness. A very subtle operation is this. Generally, we get muddled up in our perceptions. When we look at a thing, we do not know who actually is looking at the thing. "I look at it." We make a glib statement, but it is not so simple a matter as that. When we say 'I look', who is looking, and what is it that is looked at? We will find there is an interfusion of various layers of confusion in every act of perception of an object.

The perceiving consciousness can never be other than what it is. This means to say, it cannot move out of itself, which again means to say that it can never become an object; it cannot be pulled in the direction of something outside. Such a kind of thing it cannot subject itself to, yet it seems to be doing something like that, which is unthinkable, as we have it in dream, for instance – the self becoming the not-self, a phantasmagoria presented in an externalised picture of a largely projected universe of dream, which is not possible on the very face of it, and yet it has become possible. We see it as a concrete reality.

The world is a dream. It is an illusion. We are sometimes told that it does not exist at all. If the world is nothing but the outcome of the externalised operation of consciousness, the world should be an illusion indeed because externalisation of consciousness is not possible. It cannot be externalised. That would be to make the Self other than what it is. So if we want the world to be understood in the sense of a topsy-turvy operation of the Self, that is not possible. If that is the case, the world cannot exist. Perhaps it does not really exist. Yet, it is made to appear as if it exists because of the compulsion of consciousness to believe that this topsy-turvy position is the real position. It is standing on its head. The top has become the bottom; the bottom has become the top. The inward has become the outward, and the outward has become the inward, like our face being reflected in a mirror. We see it as if it is outside though it is inside, and it is also distorted. The right is looking left; the left is looking right. This is the world.

But in yoga practice, this force which compels consciousness to move out of itself in an external fashion should be shut out. This is, incidentally, equivalent to shutting out *kama krodha*, desire and greed. *Kāmakrodhaviyuktānām yatīnām yatacetasām, abhito brahmanirvāṇam vartate veditātmanām* (BG 5.26) was said earlier in this chapter. *Śaknotīhaiva yaḥ soḍhum prāk śarīravimokṣaṇāt, kāmakrodhodbhavam vegam sa yuktaḥ sa sukhī naraḥ* (BG 5.23). These are all practically the same things being said: The impulsion of consciousness to move out of itself in the form of the so-called object outside is to be attributed to what we otherwise call *kama krodha*: desire and greed and anger, propulsion, which is most unjustifiable finally. So shutting out all these impulses, be cautious in this process of *pratyahara*, abstraction of consciousness. *Bāhyām*: Let the outward be outward only. How can the universal become outward? That is called creation. If the universal can become an external, creation is possible. Inasmuch as such a thing is not possible, perhaps creation has not taken place.

Well, yoga is conscious of this predicament. *Sparśān kṛtvā bahir bāhyānś cakṣuś caivāntare bhruvoḥ*. Here is a very technical point mentioned. It is to say, literally translated, concentrating one's attention in the middle of the eyebrows. Many people physically look up and gaze at the point midway between the two eyebrows – the *ajna* chakra, as it is sometimes called – which is said to be the seat of the mind in the waking state. It has a literal significance and also a mystical suggestiveness. Literally, it is good to concentrate the mind on the point midway between the two eyebrows. This is because the mind is said to be located in the brain. Sometimes it is said to be actively operating in the eyes, more properly in the *ajna* chakra, the point between the two eyebrows. That is the seat of the mind. To concentrate the mind on its own seat would be to bring the mind back to itself. The mind is in the throat in dream and in the heart in deep sleep. Now we are in the waking condition, and therefore it has to be brought back from its external impulses, which may be the reason why here the instruction is given that attention has to be bestowed on the point between the two eyebrows.

Also, it may mean that consciousness has to be brought back to its source. Many a time a suggestion is made to meditate upon the heart. In deep sleep, in samadhi, supreme communion, the mind is said to be lodged in the heart. The heart is the root of the mind. When the mind is in the heart, we go to sleep or we are in an intensely meditative mood. But if it is not in the heart, it is a little above, then we dream. But if it is in the head, we wake up and we are conscious in this world of outward perceptions.

The consciousness has to be brought back to itself. This is the whole business of yoga. It is moving outward, going anywhere, meandering in all the things of sense. It has to be brought back. One of the methods of bringing it back to its own source is to bring it to this particular person which is the subject of perception. My consciousness is in me. I always feel that my intelligence, my reason, my consciousness is emanating from me; and when I look at a thing, it has gone out of me and it is somewhere else. Now, when I do not think of anything outside me, it is in me; I am thinking of myself. This is one peculiar kind of meditation.

This has many expressions in actual practice. One of the methods people adopt is concentrating on oneself. Though this self is not a physical body – it is well known that when we speak of 'oneself' the reference is not to the physical person – yet, the physical person is very important. This body is a very delightful possession of every person. One loves one's own self, no doubt, in a very important sense spiritually; but physically also, one loves one's own self. This cannot be ruled out entirely. "I am the most beautiful person. Others are not so beautiful as I am." Each one thinks like that, and each one has to see one's face in the mirror.

Now, this seeing oneself in the mirror also is one kind of meditation called *darpana* yoga. Go on looking at your reflection in the mirror, and do not look at anything else. See yourself. Go on looking at your face in the mirror. You will be very happy because you are seeing yourself. Nobody is more attractive than yourself. Nobody is more beautiful than you, or more interesting, more valuable. "The greatest treasure I am," each one thinks. The idea is not to concentrate on

the body. The suggestion mentioned in this verse is to bring the consciousness from outside objects into oneself through the aperture of this body, and then take it further inward, from the outward perception of totally alienated objects in space to the internal object which is this body, and then bring it further inside into the real me, which is not necessarily this body. The meaning that there is in my face or in my body is imparted to it by something else inside it, which is the real me. My mind is beautiful, not the face which is physical, and I am seeing my mind rather than my body.

Prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā is also mentioned. In this act of bringing consciousness back, we have also to take into consideration the role that is played by our pranas. The prana is the battery. It is the electrical cell which generates force. It is the powerhouse, the dynamo that pumps energy outward continuously and never allows the mind or consciousness to rest in itself. The prana is outwardly motivated always; therefore, in our attempt at bringing the mind back to the Self, the subdual of the impulse of the prana also is necessary.

It is a controversy in yoga practice whether the prana is to be controlled first or the mind is to be controlled first. Hatha yogins especially feel that the prana should be restrained, and then the mind automatically gets restrained. But raja yogins and more philosophically minded people think that if the mind is controlled, the prana also gets subdued.

The prana is vehemently moving due to the desires and the distractions of the mind. The mind is agitated, and therefore it imparts this agitation to the prana, the vital force. So it heaves up and down. The equidistribution of the prana, which is otherwise necessary for the health of the body, is prevented by distractions of mind. A person with externally motivated passions and desires cannot maintain even good physical health, because physical health has something to do with the equidistribution of vital force, the energy of the prana throughout. A child is very healthy, and looks beautiful because it has no desires. It is all beauty. Every child is beautiful. Whether it is a beggar's child or a king's child, it makes no difference. All are beautiful. Very, very attractive are children, small babies, but they become different when they grow older due to the particular centralisation of psychic and vital energy in objects of sense, in objects of greed and passion, hatred and liking and other things, and particular sense organs. And when a particular sense organ becomes very strong, the prana is actively operating there. It will be very sensitive. A very sensitive sense organ which is craving for a particular object of its satisfaction will draw all the energy to itself, and other parts of the body will be deprived of that force. This is sickness. So a person filled with unholy desires, passions which are concentrated in located finite objects, will be physically sick. And in yoga, of course, we need not mention that the tendency of the mind to cast the prana in the mould of objects outside should be prevented.

The Yoga Vasishtha mentions that both practices are permissible. "O Rama," says Vasishtha, "there are two ways of yoga. One is control of the prana; another is control of the mind. For the destruction of this propelling, externalising activity of the *chitta*, two ways can be adopted. Yoga and *jnana* are the two ways." By

yoga here Vasishtha means *yogaś-citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ*: the subdual of the *vṛttis* of the mind together with the uneven activity of the pranas – *prana, apana, samana, udana, vyana*. That is yoga. According to this verse, yoga means the restraining of the *vṛttis*. *Vṛtti* means the activity of the mind in terms of some external object. Thinking some object is called *vṛtti*, and this has to be withdrawn. That is yoga. This is also the yoga of Patanjali. But *jnana* is equally perceiving the same thing everywhere. You do not see many things; you are seeing the same thing. Wherever you cast your eyes, one thing only is seen. That is *jnana*.

Now, we can control these impulses either by pranayama or by mental concentration. It is sometimes compared to the action of stopping the movement of a clock. If I want to stop the movement of a clock, I will go and hold that pointer. The needle must be held, and then it will not move. Then inside, the mechanism also stops. That ticking will stop immediately when we go and touch the hand of the clock and do not allow it to move. That is one way of stopping the mechanism from inside. Otherwise, we will catch hold of the cog inside, the central wheel, and not allow it to move. Then the outer pointer also will not move. So we can stop the inner working of the *vṛttis* of the mind either by catching hold of the external activity of the prana, which is something like catching the pointer here outside, or by stopping the cog inside, the central wheel which is the mind itself. Either way it is permissible. The best way, according to Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and such uniformly altitudinous yogis is that we must have a proportionate distribution of attitude to both. Both are necessary. Take advantage of both the values: a little bit of exercise of the prana by normal breathing, and also at the same time, a simultaneous wish to withdraw one's desires.

So *prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā nāsābhyantaracāriṇau*. This is a technical subject here again. The breath flows through the right nostril and through the left nostril, sometimes through the right and sometimes through the left. I do not want to go into the details of all this. The intention is to harmonise them in such a way that the breath does not flow through any particular nostril, either the right or the left, but gets distributed evenly in such a way that it looks as if it has stopped. That is called *kumbhaka*. With this I close today. This subject will continue tomorrow.

Chapter 22

THE INTEGRATION OF SANNYASA AND YOGA

The concluding verses of the Fifth Chapter were under our consideration. *Sparsān kṛtvā bahir bāhyāṁś cakṣuś caivāntare bhruvoḥ, prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā nāsābhyantaracāriṇau* (BG 5.27); *yatendriyamanobuddhir munir mokṣaparāyaṇaḥ, vigatecchābhayakrodho yaḥ sadā mukta eva saḥ* (BG 5.28). All this has been observed yesterday. The act of self-restraint is summarised here in these two verses. Self-restraint is shutting out all sense contact by extricating the conscious element from externalised perception and enabling it to return to itself, which is the process of *pratyahara*, and regulating the process of breathing so that the alternate movement of the breathing process through the nostrils gets stabilised and concentrated into a single flow, looking as if the whole body is filled with energy, as if immense strength has been pumped into the system due to the striking of a balance between the alternate currents of *prana* and *apana*, which is what is called *kumbhaka*.

We feel filled up and feel a satisfaction that a large content has been poured into us. Together with this experience, there is the retention of the functions of the mind. Together with the restraint of the senses, there is a spontaneous settling of the waves of the psyche. *Yatendriyamanobuddhi* is the expression. *Yata* means restraint, control, subdual, withdrawn, sublimated. It is the past participle of the very same root that is also the background of the word *yama*. *Indriya* and *manas* and *buddhi* should stand together.

This is also told in a similar manner in the Kathopanishad. *Yadā pañcāvatiṣṭhante jñānāni manasā saha, buddhiś ca na viceṣṭati, tām āhuḥ paramām gatim* (Katha 2.3.10). *Yadā pañcāvatiṣṭhante*: *Pañca* means the five senses; that is *indriya*. *Manasā saha*: together with the mind, *indriya manas*. *Buddhiś ca na viceṣṭati*: When the apertures of the senses, which conduct energy outwardly in the direction of objects, are blocked, there is an inward flow of that energy, like water flowing in a pipe. There is a descending tendency in water, which rushes outward in a conduit pipe. It flows in the direction of the open tap, or anywhere it may be directed. If the tap is closed or if the opening is blocked, the water retains itself and goes back to the source, as it were, raising its level and thus increasing the potency of the content of water in the reservoir. In a similar manner, the energies that usually flow through the conduit pipes of the sense organs are withdrawn back through these channels. The mind is the reservoir, the senses are the pipes and the objects are the opening taps, which must be closed. Then the energy flows backwards and the mind becomes very strong. As overconsumption of electric force depletes the capacity of production in a powerhouse and the energy content there rises to a high pitch if all consumption channels are closed, in a similar manner, the powerhouse of the mind raises its capacity to think and act. Its energy rises to a high pitch, the concentration increases, the memory becomes acute, the understanding becomes

perspicacious, the body become strong. All the organs act with tremendous capacity merely because our strength is not wasted in sense contact.

Much of our energy flows to the objects outside in all acts of perception. We may remember here the caution exercised by Patanjali Maharishi in his Yoga Sutras. We have two kinds perception. This is not a matter concerning the Bhagavadgita, but it is relevant to it. There are two types of perception: emotional and philosophical, rather, purely cognitional. Generally, we do not look at things without some kind of an emotional content attached. We also have a feeling attached to the act of perception of an object. We do not merely see a thing and become aware that a thing is there; we attach a value of some type to the object that is noticed. The value that is associated with an object that is otherwise merely cognised or perceived is due to the association of our emotion and feeling. "Oh, wonderful, how beautiful!" "How bad, how wretched, how ugly!" "This is good; this is bad." "This is necessary; this is not necessary." "This is mine; this is not mine." These ideas of a personal association with the objects of perception are called *klisha vrittis* in the sutras of Patanjali, operations of the psyche which cause unnecessary trouble and sorrow. It is so because we get involved in the perception. Let the object be there; what does it matter? But it is not like that. It is not merely that the object is there. I am also there in that object, wanting to have some opinion about it, and get stimulated, stirred up in thought and action in respect of that content which may lead to attachment, aversion, and many other things. In this manner, a lot of energy is poured on the object of affection or hatred, *raga-dvesha*, which causes intense anxiety engendered by the possession associated with the object. There is always anxiety associated with the objects that are possessed or objects that are said to cause fear. Either way, we are kept alert in our emotions, and the emotions pump energy out in the direction of that object which is our beloved possession or our object of dislike. We cannot even sleep properly with such thoughts. We are out in a dreamland, as it were, thinking of things outside. We have meandered out of our own body and personality into the world of perception.

Not merely that, which is bad enough, but even a philosophical cognition of the reality of an object outside, the acceptance of a so-called outsideness in things, is also considered as an obstacle in the intentions of yoga practice. So it is certainly necessary for us to be emotionally detached from all objects. I see a garden, I see a tree, I see a person, I see this, I see that, but I should be undisturbed by the perception of that, as if it matters not whether it is there or it is not there. But mostly we are perturbed by the presence of something, in some way or another. This is emotional content getting directed outwardly to that particular given object.

But yoga is still superior to even emotional detachment. Even if we are emotionally detached, we may not be in a state of yoga. Yoga is, as we have noticed earlier, a more advanced attunement of ourselves with fact. Yoga leads to samadhi. Finally that is the aim: communion, and becoming so united with the object that it is not there as an outside something. This is the aim to which we shall be taken finally. So the sutra of Patanjali in another context tells us that

emotional determination and evaluation of an object is very bad because it shows that we are an attached person, an involved person, which is, of course, a matter of great concern; but even if we are free from such kinds of crude emotional involvements in things, we may still believe in the reality of the world outside. "This world is there. I may not be perturbed by it, but I believe it is there." Even this belief that it is really there outside is an obstacle. Yoga is a transcendence of that.

So after the senses are inwardised and the flow of the current of energy through the sense organs is turned inward by reversion of this strength, and having made the mind intensely strong – which is a great achievement indeed, hard to achieve normally – yet, there is something more to be achieved. The mind has to contemplate on pure intelligence. It should not brood over the objects of sense. Even if the senses are not actually in contact with the objects, mental contact of the object is also a contact although physical contact may not be there. Actually, physical contact is not the source of bondage. It is mental contact that matters. Our connection with an object is not necessarily physical. There may be something sitting on my lap, yet I may have no mental contact with it. But I may have intense connection with it even if it is a thousand miles away, for another reason altogether.

Thus, contact referred to here in the field of yoga practice is not only physical contact. Actually, that is the least aspect of the matter. The more serious aspect of it is the association of the mind with the juxtaposition of the object in some way. We may be really attached to something even if the thing is far, far away or invisible to the physical eyes, and that is bondage. So the mind and the reason, the *buddhi* and the *manas*, should stand together, like the President and Prime Minister working in unison without any kind of difference of opinion among them. The apparatus of management, the Cabinet, is the sense organs, and when the Cabinet, the Prime Minister and the President are thinking one thought only, it will be a very powerful government. Such a thing is to be attained in yoga.

Again the Kathopanishad has a similar passage making out the same meaning in another context. *Yacched vāñ manasī prājñas tad yacchej jñāna-ātmani jñānam ātmani mahati niyacchet, tad yacchec chāntav-ātmani* (Katha 1.3.13). Yoga is summed up in this one verse of the Kathopanishad. The senses have to be rooted in the mind. *Yacched vāñ manasī prājñas*: An intelligent person should stabilise all the actions and activities of the senses in the mind itself so that the mind acts, but not the senses. But how will the mind act? Will it think of some object outside? No. *Tad yacchej jñāna-ātmani*: That restrained mind, enhanced in its potency by the withdrawal of the sense organs, should be rooted in understanding. What is understanding? This has been explained in the earlier chapters of the Bhagavadgita. *Sankhya* is the right understanding. "Arjuna, you lack *sankhya*. Therefore, you cannot be in a state of yoga," said Bhagavan Sri Krishna. So here *buddhi* should be understood as *buddhi yoga*, to which reference was made earlier in the chapters of the Gita. Thus, in right understanding this controlled mind is to be rooted: *tad yacchej jñāna-ātmani*.

Now the Bhagavadgita will go further on the subject of right understanding. During the study of the Third and Fourth Chapters, we found that this right understanding is connected with cosmic operations. Our existence is not an individual existence. We are not individual performers of action. Agency is not to be attributed to us. All action is performed by *prakriti*, the three *gunas* – *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas* – which universally operate uniformly everywhere so that if this is a requisite of *sankhya buddhi*, right understanding, it takes us to a cosmical level. This is also the point made out in this verse of the Kathopanishad. Even if the mind is rooted in the intellect and right understanding, it is to be once again noted cautiously that it is simultaneously cosmically oriented: *jñānam ātmani mahati niyacchet. Mahat tattva* is cosmic intelligence, *mahat brahma*.

If the reason, the understanding, the mind, is not to contemplate an external something, what will it contemplate? What will the mind think then? What will the reason argue about or the understanding understand? The understanding will understand itself only. This understanding reverts to itself. As I mentioned, some people call this a transcendental category of apperception, which is nothing but consciousness turning back upon itself. This is the state of the universalisation of the content of the otherwise empirical understanding, which is usually turned in the direction of objects. *Mahat tattva* means ‘cosmic intelligence’. It is to be accepted that when it is made clear to us that our very existence is conditioned by the *gunas* of *prakriti* – *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*, which are universal – our understanding also has to be universally oriented. So what are we going to think? There is nothing for us to think except the wide range of the very substance of our makeup, physical as well as psychological, material as well as rational. The so-called outwardness has now become a widely spread-out expanse of an expression of the universal. So the *mahat tattva* is not somewhere far off from our brain or our understanding. It is the larger self of the little selfhood of our reason.

In the beginning of the Sixth Chapter, which we are going to study now, it will be told that the self is the friend of the Self. This is another way of saying that the little understanding of ours, which is the little self of ours, should be the friend of the larger self, which is the cosmical Self, *mahat tattva*.

The verse of the Kathopanishad goes on further. *Tad yacchec chāntav-ātmani*: Mysteries these are. We people who are so much engrossed in material perceptions and social problems cannot actually understand what these Upanishads are saying. Yet, they have something to say. As a loving mother and a very affectionate father, a parent, the Upanishad speaks to us, whether we understand it or not. There is something more than even a cosmical understanding. That is the peaceful Self, the supreme state of Godhood or Creator, Chit, the Universal resting in itself, not being even conscious of the fact that it is a universal something. It rises above this universal Self-consciousness. As this is not the subject of our study at present, we shall leave it at that.

However, the verse of the Bhagavadgita continues. *Yatendriyamanobuddhi* (BG 5.28): Thus restraining the senses, the mind and the *buddhi*, the reason, the intellect, the understanding, one becomes silent. He becomes a *muni*. ‘Silent’

means ‘completely self-controlled’. It is not merely a silence of the speech, it is the silence of the sense organs. It is the calmness of the Pacific Ocean, with no turbulent waves anywhere, and it is the silence of the mind. It has nothing to think because there is nothing outside it. Therefore, the mind is *muni*; it is silent. It is observing *mauna*. One who observes *mauna* is called *muni*, and *mauna* is silence. It is silence of every kind of extrovert activity whether it is sensory, psychological or rational. So the *manas* is *muni*. The *buddhi* also is *muni*. What happens there?

Mokṣaparāyaṇaḥ: Engaged only in the large magnificent expectation of liberation, there is nothing that is expected. Like a servant waiting for salary on the first of the month, this attuned understanding is waiting for the descent of the grace of salvation. There is nothing else that attracts. All the joys of the world have been seen through. They cannot any more pull me. The delights of sense have been probed into, threadbare. They cannot attract me anymore, and I have now known the structure of the whole atmosphere in which I am living. I am not living in Rishikesh; I am not living on this Earth. I am living in this universe. What a grand conclusion! Where am I living? I am living in the universe. You will feel this by a sincere acceptance of the meaning of this statement that you made. Sincerely you should accept the hidden meaning of this little statement: “I am living in this universe.” You will find that you become a different person in one second. You will not be this little puny person. Your hair may stand on end due to a comfort, due to a peculiar kind of strength that seems to seep into your body through all the elements outside. “I am living in this cosmos.” Why should you not feel that? That is expectation supernal, supreme. *Vigatecchābhayakrodha*: There is no desire, no longing of any kind, no other expectation except this supreme expectation of the melting down of this particular in the largest universal, the supreme creative principle, God the Almighty.

Yaḥ sadā mukta eva saḥ: If this thought can be entertained in our mind, we are already liberated. The passport is already in our hands. The plane is to take off any day, and we need not bother about it. When our plane is booked and the date is also decided, why are we worrying? This conviction which we have been considering in these few minutes is the satisfaction that our passport is ready, our visa is granted, and our plane is about to take off. Therefore, we are already free. We are already liberated from this world. Even if the physical body is lumbering here for a few days, let it be there. It is like a person whose date of departure is already fixed. The mind has already gone out. It is not here. “Yes, I know I am out.” Physically you are here for a few days, but really you are not here because you know that you are not to be here. Practically you are not here, even if for some days you are physically here. Therefore, such a person is already liberated, a *jivanmukta puruṣa*. Living, you are free.

Bhoktāraṁ yajñatapasāṁ sarvalokamaheśvaram, suhṛdaṁ sarvabhūtānāṁ jñātvā māṁ śāntim ṛcchati (BG 5.29). God, like a loving parent, tells us, “I am with you, my dear children. Don’t cry, don’t weep! I am your friend, I am your caretaker, I am your protector, I am your father, I am your mother. I shall bring

whatever you want. I shall secure everything. You shall be taken care of by Me. Why do you bother about yourself?"

"Why think of the morrow?" said Christ. "Why are you thinking of the morrow? Look at the lilies in the fields, and the sparrows so freely moving. Are they not taken care of by the Almighty Father? Do you think you are less important than the lilies in the fields and the sparrows and the birds which sing so beautifully? Why is this lack of faith?"

"O ye of little faith, if you have as much faith as the size of a mustard seed, tell this mountain to move and it shall move; it is cast in the ocean." This is the great master Christ speaking, a very heartening promise of a Godman. It is the promise of God Himself.

So here is the promise in the Bhagavadgita. Bhagavan Sri Krishna, as the great master yogin, speaks, representing the Almighty here. *Bhoktāraṁ yajñatapasāṁ*: I am the receiver of the fruits of every celebrated performance. Any offering comes to Me. *Sarva deva namaskaram kesavam prati gacchati*: All prostrations go to the Supreme Being. In any direction you prostrate yourself, and it goes to that Supreme Being only. You are offering prostration to that. All the rivers go to that ocean. Wherever they may move, they shall find themselves there. The river shall find itself in the one ocean.

The holy effect of your religious and spiritual exercises, *tapas* and *yajna*, all these go to that One Being. He consumes everything, as the master consumer. He is also the master producer. You are not the doer of actions. This has already been told. So you are not the producer. He is the master producer, and the master consumer: *bhoktāraṁ yajñatapasāṁ sarvalokamaheśvaram*. Here is the Lord of the universe speaking. The Supreme Master of all creation here speaks. What does that Master say? "Friend of all am I." Touching is the statement, which will melt your hearts. The contrite heart, the hardest flint-like heart, shall melt at this glorious, motherly, touching, balming statement of the Almighty: "I am your friend." *Suḥṛdaṁ sarvabhūtānāṁ jñātvā mām śāntim ṛcchati*: You shall attain to peace having known this.

It is a beautiful conclusion, a grand culmination, a magnificent promise, and we shall be purified even by listening to these great thoughts. Even by thinking these thoughts, our sins are destroyed. Thousands of *yajnas* or manifold dips in holy rivers cannot equal this purification that can be effected by the entering of such thoughts as this. Every cell shall be purified. Iron that is this body shall become gold, lustrous. With this wondrous message, the great Lord, the Friend of all, our Father and Mother, speaks in such a tender voice. With this, the Fifth Chapter concludes.

The Sixth Chapter is called The Yoga of Meditation, *dhyana* yoga, which is a concentrated presentation of whatever Patanjali tells in his sutras. *Anāśritaḥ karmaphalaṁ kāryaṁ karma karoti yaḥ, sa saṁnyāsī ca yogī ca na niragnir na cākriyaḥ* (BG 6.1); *yaṁ saṁnyāsam iti prāhur yogāṁ taṁ viddhi pāṇḍava, na hy asaṁnyastasaṁkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana* (BG 6.2). This *jivanmukta lakshana*, this liberated stage even while living apparently, is the life of a sannyasin, the life of a yogin. But who is a sannyasin, and who is a yogin?

Anāśritaḥ karmaphalaṃ: not hanging on that so-called fruit of an action that is performed. There should not be that psychological hangover of slavish dependence on a product that may be reaped out of something that we do. It is improper for us to expect for our own personal benefit the fruit of any action. All this has been told in large detail already. We need not reiterate it. The actions are not your actions; they are not my actions. They are the actions of that Great Being who spoke just now. So no individual apparently living in this body can be justified in thinking of an object outside as a fruit coming from an action performed. Therefore, we should not hang on or depend upon a result, or a fruit of an action, because no one has complete control over the result that can be produced by any action.

All action is basically impelled by a cosmic purposiveness; therefore, individuals cannot decide what sort of result will follow from this particular channelled motivation called individual action. Not only that, the fruit, which is the so-called effect produced by a cause which is the action, is identical with the cause in the cosmos. So either way, there is no point in thinking that there is a fruit of action. Therefore, one does not unnecessarily and foolishly depend on a so-called external fruit of an action, *anāśritaḥ karmaphalaṃ*, yet one is doing action.

“If there is no fruit coming, why should I act?” This idea should be dropped in light of the knowledge that we have now acquired by traversing this large gospel in the earlier chapters. There is nothing expected from the performance of an action, yet action is performed. Action is to be performed because that is the duty of every part that belongs to the whole, which cannot expect anything except the satisfaction of the whole. *Kāryaṃ karma karoti yaḥ*: He who performs action diligently, without any motivation towards an externalised fruit of an action; *sa saṃnyāsī*: he is a sannyasin. He is a yogi: *ca yogī ca*. Sannyasa and yoga mean the same thing. *Ekam sāmkyam ca yogam ca* (BG 5.5) it was said. Earlier it was said that *sankhya* and *yoga* are the same. Now we are told that *sannyasa* and *yoga* are the same. They mean practically one and the same thing. We may say that what is *sannyasa* is *sankhya*; what is *yoga* is, of course, known.

Na niragnir na cākriyaḥ. ‘Sannyasi’ does not mean a non-active person, an idler; a physically silent individual is not a sannyasin. A sannyasin is one who does duty, does work intelligently, perfectly, precisely, because it is a necessity under the scheme of things, and not because something comes from it. Nothing will come to the sannyasin. He is a pauper physically speaking, but he is the richest of people. A sannyasin has nothing, but yet the sannyasin has everything. He has nothing because he is not an individual person owning some property from outside. But he has everything because the whole world is with him. His thought is his action. He is the yogi also: *sa saṃnyāsī ca yogī ca*. He is united with the facts of creation. Therefore, he is a yogi. He has no attachment to anything; therefore, he is a sannyasin.

So one who is united to the reality of the cosmos is a yogi; one who is detached from any kind of craving for external results of action is a sannyasin. Merely not lighting a fire and not performing *agnihotra* like a householder – not

touching this, not touching that physically, and sitting idle without doing anything – that is not sannyasa, that is not yoga. It is an internal unifiedness of spirit with the purpose of the whole of creation. That explains both sannyasa and yoga. This is the first verse of the Sixth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita.

Chapter 23

INTRODUCTION TO THE SIXTH CHAPTER

The Bhagavadgita, in its Sixth Chapter, is the yoga of meditation, *dhyana yoga*.

The gospel, the teaching of the Bhagavadgita, gradually tunes itself up to high concentration as it moves onward and forward. In the initial step, at the very beginning of the First Chapter, we have the presentation of the picture of political turmoil, the worst of things that one can have in the world, a field of battle with high-strung nerves of people ready to pounce on one another. Tension is the name of that condition. This is the Mahabharata. The First Chapter of the Bhagavadgita gives the description of an intensified scene at the onset of this battle. Warriors are arrayed from both sides in a large field of conflict, with each one disliking the other, wanting to root out the other, to exterminate the other completely. They hate the other, and have no consideration for the other.

In this situation of the event of an impending conflict we are placed in the First Chapter of the Gita. It was all emotion, all nerves and readiness to action. It was, no doubt, a preparedness to act. There cannot be a more concentrated action than the act of battle or fighting, and people were prepared. They had girt up their loins; soldiers they were, and the human in the person became the soldier in the field. Each one was a soldier there – everyone, without exception. To be a soldier is to be entirely a potentiality for action. It was all action, and nothing but that. It was only to burst forth into its concrete manifestation of conflict onslaught.

But though it was a preparedness for action, a preparation to do something vehemently, it lacked the direction of requisite understanding, which was highlighted in the personality of a great General in the army, Arjuna. So while the worst kind of conduct, which is action as battle, was the picture of the Mahabharata and of the First Chapter of the Gita, it did not end there. The layers of human nature are revealed stage by stage as we rise higher and higher along the rungs of the ladder of the teaching.

In the lowest level we are politicians, which is to say, we shed the personal character of our human figure and convert ourselves into contending units of an administrative field. Every human being is also a social unit, a part of human society, but there is a differentiating character in being a political individual. While a political individual also is in human society as every human being is in human society, there is a distinction between a social person and a political person. This does not require much of an explanation or commentary. There is a greater artificiality of the placement of oneself in the field of action in politics than in human society, and as we know very well, politicians who either are thrown out of the field or are fed up with that work become social workers. They say, “We are fed up with politics. We shall do some good work for people.” So a political individual reverts to the state of a social individual under the impression that it is an inwardisation of himself, from the extreme externalisation of himself as an individual in political circles.

Now, we are political units and social individuals, no doubt, but we are not merely that. We are independent persons. We are persons, not merely units in a huge crowd, and so the instinct of self-regard, in whatever sense the self may be considered under a given condition, asserts itself when a person is cornered, and a politician may get fed up with his work and become a social leader; he may get fed up with even social work and would like to live an independent, secluded life. "I shall mind my business. I have tried everything in the politician's circles and also in the social field. Finally, I find it is a dog's tail. I shall confine myself to myself." So we come back inwardly to our own self and we are the greatest value finally, not our relation to others in the social field or even the political field.

Arjuna's arguments were both social and political. Sometimes they were even personal. But we do not describe ourselves fully even when we consider ourselves as individuals or persons as we regard ourselves normally in the commonsense way of looking at things. We are not politicians really. We are also not social units really. But we are also not persons really. There is something more about us, so more and more is to be learned about ourselves as we become more and more inward in our outlook of life. In the crudest form of behaviour and enterprise, we are totally extrovert. We are immensely busy bodies, as if the world outside alone is, and we are nobodies at all. Our existence becomes pronounced as we grow and mature in our life, and we recognise the subjectivity of experience in greater and greater forms of intensity than the objectivity of life. We consider the world as an object, as if the subjective element is totally absent. We will see gradually that the Bhagavadgita takes us to deeper secrets of subjectivity – secrets, hidden potentialities and reservoirs at the back of subjects – and not merely the physical, physiological or anatomical subject.

When we are business people, traders, politicians, soldiers or even social workers, we seem to be outwardly motivated more than contemplatives on the subjectivity of experience, on the assumption that life is an outwardly spread-out externality, a field of external action. The world is a Dharmakshetra and a Kurukshetra, a field of action, a field of operation by an individual subject or a group of subjects. The importance is more to the external field than to that which works in the field. This is an overemphasis we sometimes lay in our enterprises and social occupations. There is a very important factor which is generally missed in human experience, namely, the extent of importance that can be given to the subject: How far are we valuable? To what extent is there meaning in our individual existence, our existence as a person? Are we important, or do we have no importance at all? The whole philosophy, the entire occupation of religion and the striving of spiritual life, is a study in subjectivity finally, and the meaning of the word 'subject' has to be properly grasped here.

In the earliest stages, it appears as if the subject is insignificant and the object is all significant, as in politics, in state affairs, and in social fields, in business and trade, in activities which are of an outward nature, even if it is in the scientific field. It is all objectivity, externality. The individual does not seem to have much meaning there. It is all the world outside, all space, all time, all the earth, all planets, and all business. We seem to be little crawling individuals performing

something in this terrifying outward field which demands everything from us and sits on our heads as the master.

The subject is ruled by the object. Is this true? Can the object rule the subject? It looks as if the world is such a terror of objectivity that we as individual subjects look like nobodies. What are we before this mighty world? We know the powers of nature, the powers of the planets and the solar system and the winds and the waters and the fires. Nobody can stand before them if they become ravaging. The world is all power, and man has no power at all before the power of the world. This is what we may feel in our total involvement and identification with this physical frame. If we are only this physical body, which we seem to be and nothing more, what else are we except this little body? That is all. If this is the case, we are done for. We can expect nothing from this world. The world can swallow us as an elephant can munch a butterfly. In this world of such a relentless and mighty operation, we may better not exist. Our life will have no meaning.

But is this true? The question is raised: Are we like that, like little grasshoppers, butterflies or mosquitoes in the mouth of the huge giant of power which is nature? Sometimes we seem to be like that when we cry under the weight of responsibility and the crushing pressure of the demands of the external world. All these sorrows, sorrows manifold galore, multifaceted and painted in all colours, were vented by Arjuna who said, "I shall do nothing in this terrible field."

But this is to miscalculate the position of oneself in that atmosphere to which expression was given by a person like Arjuna. To speak like this in this language, and to narrate the story of one's life in the world in the way mentioned, would be to miscalculate one's relationship with the world – to misunderstand, not to have proper insight into what is there at the root. There is a complete overwhelming of oneself by the distorted picture presented by the sense organs. Like misleading ministers and disloyal attendants, the senses give us an erroneous picture of our life in this world. They tell us, "You are nobodies, fools. The objects are everything. Go and fall on them. They are your masters."

We feel that the world is our master, that the objects of sense are our masters. Our life is in the objects outside. "I am living because of what I possess. My property is my life. I am myself nothing. I have no value if I possess nothing. My wealth is my value." Do we not think like that sometimes? The senses tell us, "This is your position. You are nobody in this world. Whatever meaning there can be in you is due to the possessions that you have, your gold and silver and dollars and rupees, your house and land, your friends and relations, and your position in society. Otherwise, what are you?" You sometimes seem to feel, "Yes, I am like that. I am a man who is not wanted. I shall sink down and do nothing, my Lord. I shall throw down my weapon in this field of terror." Thus, Arjuna threw his weapon down and said, "I shall find no meaning in this world where nothing seems to be decisive, and everything is precarious."

Sri Krishna's answer, which is briefly stated in the Second Chapter, is: "This is not a proper way of thinking. What you have said is the outward picture, but not a proper understanding of the picture. You have painted the picture, but you have

also to read the picture properly with an understanding. You have to find a meaning in this presentation that you have placed before Me. A mighty, terrible picture is there; yet, of course, you must have some time to think over the position that you actually occupy in this relation of yours to this picture. It may be a jungle, it may be a war field, it may be hell itself. Well, let it be, but what is your connection with it? In what way are you related to it? What is the outcome of your connection with what you are speaking of? This is to exercise another faculty, which is called understanding, different from mere sense perception. Mere sense perception – a dependence entirely on sense reports – presents a terrifying picture of the world, but that is not the only faculty you are supposed to exercise. Why are you hanging on the senses so much? There is another faculty which will speak to you the truth of the matter. That is the understanding, the *buddhi, sankhya*. *Sankhya* is the faculty of reasoning, understanding and proper judgment. Without this, you are speaking in this manner.”

And what this correct understanding is was explained in a beautifully precise manner in the Third Chapter. Your relationship to this so-called terrifying picture of the world where you seem to be helplessly placed has to be understood. How will you understand it? That method of understanding this so-called terrifying field of action which is this world is the theme of the Third Chapter.

But the world is not all, and your relationship with this outward world is not all. It does not mean that there are only two contending parties, yourself and the world, and there is nothing else. In the beginning it appeared the world alone was there and you are practically nothing. Then it appeared as if you have a vital connection with the world: You are a member in the parliament of the government of the universe, a high position indeed, rather than a thrown-out individual in the streets. Well, even that is not sufficient. It is not that you are just connected in a mechanised manner with the world, and somehow you are getting on with it like a wheel stuck to a vehicle or a nut or bolt in a huge machine, which, of course, has the status of belonging to this large machine, and it is not so much terrified of the machine because it belongs to it. Well, that is good enough, but that is not the whole truth of the matter. There is something more.

There is an intelligent life operating, a supreme will that is deciding, and a comforting satisfaction and joy at the heart of all things. Machines have no joy. Though there is a beautiful collaboration between the parts of the machine – very friendly is the relation between the parts of the machine and its entire makeup – yet, there is no soul. We cannot say that the machine is enjoying its work. It does not know what it is doing. But the world is not working in that way, like a huge machine set up for no purpose. It is not a lifeless, automatic action that is taking place. It will look as if this great action of *prakriti* in its operation of the three *gunas*, which are its constituents, works like a huge mechanical setup. Though it is precise and very perfect and exact in its action like a machine, of course, yet there is no use being merely mathematical and exact without a soul inside.

There is a supreme soul operating in this cosmos. We are not living merely like a nut and bolt of a huge machine of *prakriti's* mechanisations. God is operating everywhere and at all times, controlling even the littlest movements in

creation. This was given us as a message in the beginning of the Fourth Chapter. In the Fourth Chapter we learned how we can satisfactorily, soulfully, not soullessly, participate with great joy and fulfilment of purpose in this wondrous creativity of the cosmos, which is not merely an exact machine of *prakriti's* three *gunas* but a supreme soul blissfully redounding upon itself, playing with itself, as it were, the great joy of God thinking Himself in these vast creative forces. In this vast creative blissful process of God's creation, your participation is a *yajna*, a sacrifice, a duty, and to live is to work, and to work is to worship, and to worship is to be in tune with God. All this was mentioned to us in the Fourth Chapter.

You automatically get detached from all objective attachments, likes and dislikes, when this knowledge dawns in you. *Vairagya* in the true sense of the term becomes your possession, your enlightenment, your education and your virtue. This enlightened person in this educational career described, placed in this context of a governance of a supremely benignant God, wants nothing in this world because that person is no more a person. That person is an imperson. A participant in a living universality is no more an isolated nobody. There is, therefore, no desire for anything. There is no desire for anything because everything is mine; everything is everybody's. The whole abundance of God's creation is at our disposal; therefore, why should we ask for anything? This is the tone of the Fifth Chapter, karma sannyasa. There is sannyasa in karma. A detachment, a renunciation, an abnegation of all external contacts otherwise effected through the senses is considered as totally unnecessary. We do not require this operation of sense contact at all in order that we may be joyous. Our joys are not necessarily the outcome of sense contact. It was mentioned precisely in a verse in the Fifth Chapter: *ye hi saṁsparśajā bhogā duḥkheyonaya eva te, ādyantavantaḥ kaunteya na teṣu ramate budhaḥ* (BG 5.22).

Now you have become a purified person after having passed through this stage of spiritual education. You are not a crude, slavish, helpless and frightened soldier in a vast field where nobody knows one's fate. You are not merely that person. You have now been placed on a high pedestal of participation, rather than subjection. It is not merely participation, but something more than that, as if you are on the lap of the Almighty Himself. Such a status has been bequeathed to you. Here you are in a highly concentrated state of Self pervading the whole personality. Now the Self seems to be sleeping in most people, in many of us. It is not pervading the whole of our being. Our senses overwhelm us; our instincts also demand their food and their daily meal. Our emotions, our vague volitions and our physical cravings, weaknesses galore, do not permit the pervasion of our soul through every cell of our personality. We are bodies, we are pranas, we are sense organs, we are whatnot. The soul is there as a light, as a lamp, as a life-giving root within us, no doubt, but it has not taken complete possession of us yet. We are too much of a body, too much of a physicality, too much of an external relation, and very little of the Self.

The Bhagavadgita, in the Sixth Chapter, makes us a concentrated self, ready to face God the Almighty face to face in a direct encounter. This body cannot face the Almighty. Who can stand before Him? With this little bone and flesh we cannot

stand there. We have to become spirit before we try to stand before the Supreme Spirit. Only spirit can stand before Spirit. A fire that is like a conflagration is the Almighty's radiance, and brittle matter cannot stand before it. We have to be prepared for entry into the kingdom of the Almighty. This preparation reaches its culmination in the exercise that is provided to us in the Sixth Chapter, which is meditation.

Meditation is the art of rousing the soul into conscious action, not subliminal action, not potential action, not as a possibility but in actuality. In our case, the soul is a possibility. It is there. It can rise into action sometimes. The whole of the soul very rarely operates in us. We have no occasion for such an experience. Even our reason does not function entirely many a time. Sometimes the senses work partially, sometimes the emotions work, sometimes the intellect works, sometimes we are half sleepy, as it were, and the soul has no occasion to speak. The demand of life has not been so exigent as to rouse the whole soul into action. Very rarely does it happen. Sometimes it happens, but not always.

But it has to come to the level of conscious action. Unconsciously it should not be at the back of these psychic operations. There should not be a cloud of the psyche over the sun of the Self. There should be only bright sun in clear sky, and not a little struggling sunlight through the darkness of heavy clouds.

The meditation that will be described in the Sixth Chapter is the yoga of concentration of the whole self of a person, wherein we are aligned in every layer of our being – physical, astral and causal, outward and inward. The extrovert and the introvert blend together into a single focus of attention. Meditation is a little difficult matter. It is not thinking something outside. When you think something, it need not necessarily mean that you are meditating. That is a kind of meditation like a crane meditating on a fish. *Baka dhyana* they call it. Cranes generally stand on the edge or a precipice of a tank, concentrating on a frog coming to the surface or a fish slowly and lazily coming up, to pounce on it and eat it. This is called *baka dhyana*, the crane's meditation. It is a meditation on one's prey. It is a meditation of the burglar, of the thief, of the dacoit, of anyone who is entirely engrossed in what is totally outside. This is also a concentration, no doubt, but this is not self-integration; this is self-alienation.

We mostly live a life of self-alienation in our daily life. We are mostly other than ourselves, other than what we are, a fact which each one knows to the extent it is manifest in each one. Our sorrows are in the percentage of our self-alienation, and our joys are in the percentage of our self-integration. The more we are not, the greater is our grief. The more we are what we are, the greater is our joy. It is necessary for us to be what we are. This is meditation.

Now, what do we do in meditation? The Sixth Chapter will have something to tell us. To renounce all things and to be a holy man in a monastery, living as a recluse, as a monk or a nun, that is the step that one takes when one thinks of religious meditations. "I take to sannyasa, I become a holy man, a saint, a renunciate, a hermit. I live in a chapel or a temple. I do nothing. I shall have contact with nothing. I shall meditate." Here the Bhagavadgita has some word to say. Are these the appurtenances of meditation?

*anāsrītaḥ karmaphalaṃ kāryaṃ karma karoti yaḥ,
sa saṃnyāsī ca yogī ca na niragnir na cākriyaḥ (BG 6.1).
yaṃ saṃnyāsam iti prāhur yogaṃ taṃ viddhi pāṇḍava,
na hy asaṃnyastasaṃkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana (BG 6.2).
āruruḥṣor muner yogaṃ karma kāraṇam ucyate,
yogārūḍhasya tasyaiva śamaḥ kāraṇam ucyate (BG 6.3).
yadā hi nendriyārtheṣu na karmasv anuṣajjate,
sarvasaṃkalpasamnyāsī yogārūḍhas tadocyate (BG 6.4).*

Here, in these few verses, we are given a caution, lest we be overenthusiastic emotionally and stirred up into the erroneous moods of behaviour under the impression that we have become extremely religious and spiritual. To understand the world is difficult, and in our becoming true persons in the context of cosmic operations, which is actually the purpose of meditation, we have also to remember where we are placed in this world. When we go to the Sixth Chapter, it does not mean we forget the Fifth Chapter or the Fourth Chapter or the Third Chapter. It is a sublimation of the teaching of the earlier chapters that is presented to us in the Sixth Chapter. We do not suddenly go into some new subject. There is no new subject. It is all a gradual growth into larger and larger dimensions of intensity.

So when we take to the life of meditation, it is necessary for us to remember all the fields that we have crossed already. What were we told in the First Chapter, what were we told in the Second, what were we told in the Third and the Fourth and the Fifth? Gathering all the harvest of the earlier fields, we now enter into this new field of the Sixth Chapter for meditation. We are well prepared now. We cannot afford to make mistakes because we have already been guarded, well educated in the art of living in this world. So in our renunciate attitude of a meditative outlook of life, we may not suddenly forget the earlier teachings of our organic connection with things. We cannot easily renounce things like that.

There is nothing that you can renounce. Nothing belongs to you here. You have no property. It was told in the Third Chapter, and in the Fourth Chapter also, that there is no belonging. You own nothing in this world. So when you say 'I shall renounce', you should be cautious in your statement. What are you renouncing? It is necessary to renounce to become a spiritually purified person, this is certainly true, but what are you going to renounce? A property? This property does not belong to you. It was told that in this placement of yours in the operation of the three *gunas* of *prakṛiti* you do not own anything. You do not even do anything, let alone own anything. Then what are you going to renounce? Fire, hearth, cattle and land and building – is this the thing that you are going to renounce? No. *Na hy asaṃnyastasaṃkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana*: Unless the will to live and the will to possess – the consciousness of possession or the desire to possess – is not eliminated, and the taste for things has not gone, one cannot be considered as a renunciate.

The crucial point here is to understand what it is that we are expected to renounce. Sannyasa is the life of renunciation, but renunciation of what? Here the

Bhagavadgita has to say something novel, not easily available anywhere. We have a traditional explanation of all renunciation. We have Hindu sannyasins and Christian sannyasins and Jain sannyasins and Buddhist sannyasins and Sikh sannyasins, and every kind of religious life has the esoteric and renunciation aspect. There is the Sufi renunciate in Islam. In every religion there is the renunciate, as different from the extroverted workaday labourer in the field of hard living. Now, this is something known to us very well. But the Bhagavadgita tells us, "I shall also tell you something over and above what you already know. Sannyasa and yoga are not two different things. To renounce and to be united are not two different things. Yoga is union, and sannyasa is renunciation. Union with reality may be considered as yoga; renunciation of all attachments may be considered as sannyasa. You have to unite and also to detach."

Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to quote a passage from Saint Kabir. People used to ask him, "What are you doing, my dear friend?"

"I am doing nothing but attaching and detaching," Kabir said. "I attach and detach. This is the only thing I am doing." 'Attach' means to be in a state of yoga; 'detach' means to be in a state of sannyasa. Now, to what will you attach yourself and from what are you detaching yourself? This subject will be highlighted in the Sixth Chapter.

Chapter 24

SANNYASA AND YOGA ARE ONE

Chapter Six of the Bhagavadgita, which is called *dhyana* yoga, or the yoga of meditation, is also known as *atma samyama* yoga, or the yoga of self-restraint. In some editions of the Bhagavadgita we will find the concluding colophon worded as *atma samyama* yoga, while in others it is termed *dhyana* yoga because *dhyana* is the height of *atma samyama*. Meditation is the crowning point of self-control.

We were referring yesterday to the terms sannyasa and yoga, which appeared to suggest or indicate two different approaches to life, sannyasa meaning 'abandonment, relinquishment', *tyaga* meaning 'renunciation, non-attachment or non-possession of anything that is of the nature of a belonging', and yoga meaning in one context 'right action, rightly motivated conduct and behaviour, or communion with Reality'.

It is possible that the human mind, which is accustomed to think in crude ways and in a prosaic manner, accustomed to take things for granted in the way they are formally presented in the world, taking the letter for the spirit mostly, such a mind is likely to see no vital connection between yoga and sannyasa. Bhagavan Sri Krishna makes out at the very outset that sannyasa and yoga mean one and the same thing. *Yaṁ saṁnyāsam iti prāhur yogaṁ taṁ viddhi pāṇḍava, na hy asaṁnyastasaṁkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana* (BG 6.2): What is called sannyasa is the same as yoga, and what is called yoga is the same as sannyasa.

In a more homely way, we can say that freedom from illness is health, and health is freedom from illness. Sannyasa is freedom from illness, and yoga is health. What is the difference between these two conditions? We may say there is a difference because in freedom from illness we are engaged in or have achieved non-contact with something, whereas in health we are established in something. But we have to exercise our subtle understanding here to appreciate that non-contact is the same as self-establishment. They cannot be two different things. Self-establishment gets vitiated to the extent that there is external content, and to the extent that we are free from any kind of outward contact, to that extent we are in our own selves. Therefore, there need not be much of a difficulty in accepting that health and freedom from illness are not two entirely different things. So sannyasa, which is non-contact – and therefore non-possession, non-craving, non-longing and non-association, nonattachment – cannot be entirely different from union with fact.

The fact of the matter, with which union has to be established by the practice of yoga, is the main subject of this chapter on *dhyana* yoga, meditation. That which engenders the spirit of contact with external things, rather, making one feel that there is a total dependence of oneself on external factors, is the creative will of the individual. It is called *sankalpa* in this verse that I recited just now. *Sankalpa* is a determination of the will in respect of an external achievement and the fulfilment of a wish. This must be done, this has to be obtained, this situation should prevail. Such are some of the features of a creative volition, or will. But it

is here mentioned in this verse that no one can be a yogi with this kind of creative will. *Na hy asaṃnyastasaṃkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana*: One cannot be oneself and also another at the same time. Either we are somewhere else, or we are here. We cannot be in two places at the same moment. Any creative projection of consciousness in the form of a wish for satisfaction from outside sources is an alienation of the Self. An alienation of oneself is a movement of oneself from oneself into something else which is not oneself. So if yoga is union with Reality, we shall be told shortly that the Self is the greatest reality; therefore, to be in the state of yoga, which is to be in union with Reality, would be to be established in the Self, and that would imply the non-association of consciousness with anything that is not itself.

Now, incidentally, it will be learned that the Self is consciousness. There is the identity of what we call consciousness with the fact of selfhood. There is nothing that can be called a self except consciousness. Consciousness is that which knows, and it cannot become the known object at any time. It cannot become other than what it is. It cannot become an object. It cannot move out of itself. A question of consciousness moving out of itself would imply the possibility of consciousness becoming other than what it is, and consciousness becoming other than what it is would mean consciousness becoming unconsciousness, because that which is not consciousness, that which is other than consciousness, is unconsciousness, non-consciousness, externality, materiality and spatiality. Such a thing is not possible because the term 'self' is applied to that position which cannot brook any interference from outside, and a self cannot become a non-self. That establishment of the Self in itself is the ultimate yoga. Hence, sannyasa goes with it. Attachment cannot go with yoga because union with oneself, which is the fact of yoga, cannot be at the same time a union with the contrary to it. One cannot be a non-sannyasin and at the same time be a yogi.

Here the Bhagavadgita uses the word 'sannyasa' in a specialised sense, not in the usual socially-interpreted traditional sense of an isolated life of retreat, socially speaking. These are external forms taken by the retreat of consciousness into oneself. However, the Bhagavadgita wants us to be very cautious here. The prescription here by the Bhagavadgita is extremely precise – namely, that renunciation and union are not two things, which is to be understood and borne in mind carefully. With what are we going to be in union in the state of yoga, and from what are we going to detach ourselves in sannyasa? Most people – every one of us, I should say – will one day or the other come a cropper in probing this theme. None of us can be so sure that the matter is very clear. It may look that it is clear for a moment, but suddenly a cyclonic dust may blow over our heads and our vision can be blurred, and it would not be easy to make out what exactly is required of us in leading a spiritual life, which we call the life of yoga, and incidentally, the yoga of renunciation also. We are likely to commit a mistake, and a mix-up is likely to be made.

It was mentioned briefly in the Second Chapter itself that *sankhya*, which is right understanding, on which yoga, which is right action, is based, is a clarity of intention in regard to everything in the world, namely, one's association with

things, one's relation to things. We may be unrelated to things physically while in a state of physical retreat. If we are on top of a hill, we are in a state of retreat with no contact whatsoever with apparently attractive things in the world. But the Bhagavadgita tells us that this is not the way of looking at things. Contact with an object does not necessarily mean non-physical contact because the bondage of the spirit, which is engendered by contacts of various types, is not to be connected with a physical juxtaposition of things.

The person is there wherever the person's mind is. Wherever our mind is, there we are sitting. We are sitting here, but if our mind is not here, we are not here, because we are not the body. It is easy with a little bit of investigation to accept that the so-called 'I' is not this physical frame only. The great status that I am maintaining as the me or the I or the myself cannot be wholly associated with the physical body. My requirement is not necessarily a bodily requirement. Hence, where I am is not to be decided by the position of the physical body. Therefore, the freedom and the bondage of a person is not identical with associations which are entirely physical. Non-contact with the physical objects may go hand in hand with psychological contact. An abstemious person may be physically unconnected with the things of the world, but that person may be psychologically connected. Taste for things is one thing; absence of contact for things is another thing. There can be absence of physical association with things with the taste for the very same thing from which one is away, and the sannyasa that is spoken of, and to which reference was made here as *sankalpa tyaga*, is the absence of taste for things, and not a physical isolation, because it matters not where the body is, but it matters very much where the mind is.

Hence, the term sannyasa used here is to be understood in a highly elevated spiritual sense. It is not a ritual. It is not something that is done outwardly. The whole system of the yoga of the Bhagavadgita is an inwardisation, gradually, stage by stage, of what we have to call selfhood. Outwardly, the bound man's self is in the objects to which he is attached. The self of the mother is in the son or the daughter, the rich man's self is in the money, the proud man's self is in his power and position and authority, so the self can also be somewhere outside the physical body, as in the instances cited, because the self, for all practical purposes, is in that location of the mind of the person. So wherever the mind is seated, the self projects itself there. The consciousness animates psychological operations, and we become totally alienated persons in our day-to-day life of humdrum occupation.

So *na hy asaṁnyastasaṁkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana, yaṁ saṁnyāsam iti prāhur yogaṁ taṁ viddhi*: To be healthily established in one's own self is to be detached from everything that is not oneself. Hence, yoga and sannyasa are one and the same thing. *Yadā hi nendriyārtheṣu na karmasv anuṣajjate, sarvasaṁkalpasamnyāsī yogārūḍhas tadocyate* (Gita 6.4): That person is to be considered as established in the state of yoga who is inwardly unconcerned with actions performed, or with the objects of sense. Attachments are psychological and also physical. We may be sensorily attached to corresponding physical objects or we may be psychologically attached to a kind of self-respect that we

maintain, an egoism that we have, a recognition that we assume for our own selves, or a status that we seem to be occupying in our own eyes. This is also an attachment.

In the practice of yoga, therefore, the Bhagavadgita makes out here that a careful, detached attitude should be maintained not only in respect of one's psychological operations, but also in respect of one's sensory actions. Action is psychological as well as physical, and contact also is of this nature. *Nendriyārtheṣu na karmasv anuṣajjate*: When we are not helplessly tied down by the bonds of attachment to the works that we do and the objects that are around us, we are free from that binding inward conduct called psychic or creative willing: *sarva sankalpa sannyasa*. Such a person is automatically established in the state of yoga.

Now, what does one mean by saying that there is such a thing called 'establishment in yoga'? We have to go slowly here in making things a little clear. Gradually the theme will be unfolded as we move forward. It is the same as establishment in the Self – restraint of the self for the sake of establishment in the Self. This is, again, a little intriguing position and description. We restrain that, the very thing on which we have to establish ourselves. The self has to be controlled in order that one may become the Self. That which troubles us is the Self, and that which shall bestow freedom on us is also the Self. Our sorrow is caused by a kind of self, and our joy also shall be in the Self. What is the kind of self that troubles us? What is the kind of self in which we are going to be established when we are said to be rooted in yoga?

The 'self' is used in various significations in the language of the Bhagavadgita. The physical body is considered by us as our self. "I am coming just now." When we make statements like this, we mean that the body is coming. "I am hungry, I am feeling cold, I am feeling thirsty, I am tired." These are statements associated with the physical self. Or when the mother says that she is dead because her child is dead, she does not refer to her physical self. It is another self altogether which she was considering as her son or daughter, or some child. Or a rich man says that he is dead because all his wealth has gone. The wealth is dead; therefore, the person himself feels he is dead. So here is one kind of self which exclaims, "I am gone!"

What has gone? A kind of self has been in a state of affairs which is inexplicable to that experiencer. The loss of a property looks like the loss of selfhood; the loss of respect looks like the loss of selfhood. We have varieties of selves, and these are the selves that give us trouble. Money-self, wealth-self, respect-self, property-self, son-self, husband-self, wife-self, daughter-self, land-self, building-self – these are all selves only. They are the self because anything that happens to them appears to happen to one's own self. There is a trouble of the self and the whole building cracks, or the land goes, or there is a cataclysm which wipes away everything. It looks as if the self of the person has gone, and great sorrow descends. This is an externalised self, an artificial self, a concocted self; nevertheless, it is a self, and we are living in that self only. This is a binding self, a grief-giving self which has to be restrained gradually; and even the bodily

self and the psychological self is not the real self, because it is oscillating, it has a wavelike motion. All these selves have to be restrained for the sake of establishment in another self altogether.

There are gradations of the dimension of the self; there are degrees of self. There is an external self, an internal self, and finally there is the universal Self. The only dependable self is the universal Self. All other selves are tentative walking sticks; they are crutches on which we seem to be hanging somehow, but they are not ourselves. The crutch is not me, the walking stick is not I, yet it appears as if we have some connection with these.

The Gita will tell us in a further verse that the self is the friend of the Self and the self is also the enemy of the Self. All these will have to be understood in a very, very subtle implication that is embedded in these verses. These short sentences are filled with immense metaphysical meaning and psychological suggestiveness. Hence, when it is said that one is in a state of yoga, or establishment in the Self, it has to be understood that there is a rootedness in one kind of self. But the kind of self with which one is associated at any given moment of time is to be properly encountered in the manner it is associated. This is to be in a state of harmony with all things. It was mentioned to us that yoga is also a state of harmony in every sense of the term. We never are at loggerheads with anything due to any particular degree of reality or level of being; we are in a state of harmony. There is a gradual rising from the lower condition of self to the higher condition of self, from the lower state of health to the higher state of health. "I am improving in health," people say. He has not really become entirely healthy. "How are you, my dear friend?" "Improving. Better. My health is better," he replies. The betterness of health is one degree of health. It is better than the condition which was yesterday. The lesser condition of health which was yesterday was also a kind of illness. Today I am better, which means I am in a higher state of health today than I was yesterday. Now, when I use the word 'better', it means it is one degree of health and not the whole of health, which means though I am in a higher state of health today, still an element of illness is persisting; otherwise, I should say I am totally all right, not simply better. So these are some of the ways we can understand the manner of establishing oneself in the state of selfhood as we establish ourselves in a state of health gradually.

Now, the lower condition is to be set in harmony with the higher condition. We are not moving from one enemy's kingdom to another enemy's kingdom. It is a graduated ascent of intensified forms of friendship. Lesser friendship becomes more intensified friendship, and more intensified friendship becomes inseparable friendship. Finally it becomes one entity only, not even two persons. So it is a movement from one level of harmony to another level of harmony. In every degree of reality we are set in a state of equilibrium; we are friends. Yoga is a state of friendship with all things, and the intensity and degree of friendship depends upon the extent of distance maintained between oneself and the other, whatever the other be. The distance gets diminished as we go inward more and more, and then the friendship becomes more and more intense until the word 'friendship' is no more applicable, and it is total communion.

Hence, one condition of self is to be abandoned for the sake of another condition of self. This also implies that sannyasa and yoga go together. Sannyasa is the abnegation of association with a lower condition of selfhood for the purpose of a higher inclusive state of self, which includes everything that was earlier. Hence, a person who has renounced has not lost anything. Here, again, we have to bear in mind that we have not lost anything by abandoning. We have not lost anything by renunciation, because we do not lose the lower state of health when we are in a higher state of health. When we are in a higher state of health, we do not say we have lost our lower state of health, because the lower is transcended in the higher. Hence, yoga and sannyasa are the same, renunciation and establishment in the self are identical, *tyaga* is not different from yoga. Very carefully we have to maintain this in mind: Sannyasa and yoga are one.

Chapter 25

THE LOWER SELF AND THE HIGHER SELF

The Bhagavadgita is like a mantra, and the tradition is that when we chant a mantra we must think of the author of the mantra. It is a respect that we give to the author, and he is called the rishi. Here the rishi is Bhagavan Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa. We have to mentally offer our obeisance to this great Master who has been the medium to communicate this eternal wisdom to everyone. It goes without saying that our heart and soul, our whole body, goes in obeisance to the great divine Incarnation, Bhagavan Sri Krishna, whom we must remember in our minds, must keep planted in our souls in humble submission before we to speak anything on this great, grand, magnificent legacy bequeathed to us. Every time we must offer our prayers to these great divine forces. That is our respect to them, which is required of us.

*yadā hi nendriyārtheṣu na karmasv anuṣajjate,
sarvasaṅkalpasamṇyāsī yogārūḍhas tadocyate. (BG 6.4)*

*uddhared ātmanātmānaṃ nātmānam avasādayet,
atmaiva hy ātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ. (BG 6.5)*

*bandhur ātmātmanas tasya yenātmavātmanā jitaḥ,
anātmanas tu śatrutve vartetātmaiva śatruvat. (BG 6.6)*

Here we have a bit of deep philosophical truth presented in a few words. Yoga is the art of Self-recovery. It is the Self gradually becoming aware of its Self. It is self-control, and also Self-recognition. It is Self-recognition in the sense of Self-realisation. All yoga is the systematised process of the self realising its Self. The whole world is the play of the Self. Philosophers have been intrigued in understanding how the whole world can be a play of the Self. There is nothing but the Self everywhere. But how many selves are there? Many selves? Two or three selves? Two selves? One self? These are difficult things to understand. Varieties of points of vision have furnished different kinds of answers to these questions.

It appeared to some thinkers that the world is filled with little selves. The Sankhya in the East thought like that. Philosophers in the West, such as the German philosopher Leibniz, felt that there are spiritual monads filling all space. Leibniz held that the whole world is nothing but a conglomeration of spiritual monads. Materialistic physicists say that everything is atoms, which are unconscious, essentially. But here is one who says, "Yes, the whole world is filled with atoms and is made up of atoms only, but they are spiritual atoms. They are self-aware. They are conscious." And questions arose whether there are windows in these little selves so that they can see each other, or whether are they windowless, blocked and locked within themselves. This question was not actually expected. Nobody thought that such questions would be raised. The Sankhya was not wanting that such questions be raised, and nobody raised such questions until many, many years later. The windowless monads may not actually satisfy rational questions. The isolation which is non-communicative and

totally self-sufficient, filling all space, looks like a new type of materialism rather than spiritualism, though the word 'spirit' is associated with the word 'monad', which is nothing but 'atom'. The Sankhya held that many selves are there, but it did not expect to confront this question of the relation of one self with the other. The *purusha* is the Self of the Sankhya, as we have the monad of the German philosopher.

There are others who feel that there are many selves, no doubt. The Vaishnava theologians such as Ramanuja, Madhva, Nimbarka, Vallava and Chaitanya all have an inclination to accept the multitudinousness of the Self, but with shades of difference in their opinions. Some feel that each self is different from the other, as we are all different from each other. One person does not seem to have any connection with another person. You can go that way, and another goes this way, without even knowing that the other exists. Do the selves exist in this manner as totally unconcerned individuals? Are they individuals? The Sankhya does not want to think that they are individuals in the sense of little bodies. The Sankhya feels that each *purusha*, which is comparable to the Self we are speaking of, is infinite. How could there be any commerce between one infinite and another infinite? Such questions are not raised, and they are not answered.

There are totally different selves, says Madhva and his coterie. Each one represents an independent, isolated spiritual unit, a *jivatman*. A *jivatman* is bound by *maya*, ignorance, some sort of confusion, and the great purpose of spiritual living is to cast off this veil of ignorance and live in the kingdom of God. Even in Christian theological parlance it is difficult to understand the position of the liberated spirit in the kingdom of God. The question is not very much mooted in the Bible, nor in rationalistic interpretations of the nature of the salvation of the soul according to Christian dogma. However, there is also parallel thinking in India which says that it is possible for liberated souls to live in the kingdom of God.

In the traditions of theology in India there is the position that in salvation, in moksha, there are categories. One can be free with different types of freedom. It may not be a uniformity. We are free to move anywhere as we like in the kingdom of heaven, in the kingdom of God. This is called *salokya*, living in the universe of God. God rules that kingdom. Therefore, there is some literal significance even in our calling that realm as a kingdom of God, a kingdom ruled by God, as this earth is ruled by an emperor. And we are totally free; nobody will restrain us. The concept of Brahmaloaka in Indian theological parlance is also something like that where the Creator is the supreme deciding principle, and each individual is so transparently free that the extreme freedom that they enjoy goes to such a point of logical perfection that each one is mirrored in the other. In Brahmaloaka, each individual, if we would like to call them individuals, is reflected in every other individual, and everyone is everywhere.

Plotinus, the great mystic of Alexandria, has this doctrine of it being possible for the soul to be everywhere and yet be independent in some way, like mirrors reflected one in the other, placed one in front of the other, and so on. Such

illustrations are provided. God can be near us. We need not necessarily be wandering in the kingdom of God freely as an enjoyer of *salokya*. We can also have some *samipya*. We can be near God, in the same cabinet of God, as it were, or in His own palace or in his own Vaikuntha, in his own Kailasha, in his own Manideepa – whatever our concept of the great Master, the Divine Being, is. We can daily have darshan of God, not merely be moving in the kingdom. That is *samipya*. That is one kind of salvation because there is no bondage. We are near God. But greater freedom is *sarupya*, to be like God Himself, as if we are dressed like God, we have all the forms of God, and we look like God. It is said that in Vaikuntha Jaya, Vijaya, Pashudan, all look like Mahavishnu with *shankha, chakra, gada, padma* in their hands. We cannot know who is Vishnu and who is a Pashudan. But another concept of salvation is that non-separability from God's existence. It is *savidya mukti*.

Theologians view interesting illustrations of the possibility of salvation in this manner. If sesame seeds and rice grains are mixed together, there is a mix-up, a communion of sesame seeds with rice grains. One quintal of rice grains and one quintal of sesame seeds mixed up and shaken seem to have communion, one with the other. They become one, and we cannot separate one from the other. This sort of moksha is sometimes countenanced by thinkers such as the followers of the Madhva school. But yet we are independent. A grain of rice is not the same as a sesame seed. They can never become one or unite.

Or there can be a closer communion such as milk and water, which is not as markedly different as sesame and rice. We cannot distinguish one from the other, yet milk can never become water. They are two different things. Under given conditions the water can be separated from milk. So even in an apparent communion, there is a distinction. But if water is mixed with water, or milk with milk, that is real communion.

What is the position of the Self when it is bound, when it is on the path to freedom, and when it is liberated? One status of the soul is in bondage, another status is when it is striving to get liberated, and a third status is when it is totally free. The Bhagavadgita does not enter into these scholastic disquotations or metaphysical arguments on the nature of Self. The Bhagavadgita is a practical instruction. It is a teaching on the way of actual living in this world. But it is not unconscious of these difficulties that may arise in the notion of the Self. The Bhagavadgita is conscious of the possibility of these divergent notions that can associate themselves in respect of the nature of Truth, Reality. And it appears to me, at least, that the Bhagavadgita has, notwithstanding its awareness of these possible differences, succeeded in bringing a rapprochement of all these thoughts, and all these things that have been told seem to have a little grain of truth in them, though they do not tell the entire truth.

It is true that there is some point in opinions held in this manner. They are not entirely out of point. They are not one-hundred-percent falsehood. But they are truths of a particular category. The Bhagavadgita accepts that there are categories of fact, and when we come to the issue now in this verse in the Sixth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita, we are to consider the status of the Self.

The Self is called the Atman. The Atman, which is the Self, is the friend of the self. The self has to be raised by the Self. The self has to be expanded by the Self. The self has to be improved by the Self. The self has to obey the Self. And the self should not be deprecated; it should not be cast into any mood of despondency. The Self is the friend of the self; the Self is also the enemy of the self. It appears in this little verse that all the philosophies are pressed into a concentrated focus. We can take any idea of the Self as we would like because some notion of the Self is at the back of these statements, namely, that the self has to be raised by the Self, that it should not be trampled down, that it is its own friend, and that it is also its own enemy. It is the friend when it is conquered. It is the enemy when it is opposed.

How is it possible to oppose the Self? How is it possible to be a friend of the Self? Where comes the question of raising the self by the Self, and what is actually the meaning of deprecating, trodding down, disregarding or resenting the self? These questions cannot be answered if we have one stereotype notion of the Self. That is why I feel that the Bhagavadgita has here in its mind all the types of notion of the Self. All are valid because each person, each one of us, is one kind of self. None of us is identical in the concept of Self, or even in the living of it in practical life.

It is generally believed that a self is that which is identical with itself. Philosophically speaking, metaphysically conceived, a self is a non-alienable indivisibility. It is impossible to alienate it into something else. The thing that cannot become another is the self. I am what I am, and I cannot be you. A is A; A cannot be B. That law of self-identity is the law of the Self. That which knows but cannot be known is the Self. That which sees and hears but cannot be seen or heard is the Self. That which is responsible for every kind of experience but cannot itself be experienced is the Self. It is the subject which can never become the object, which means to say, it cannot be encountered in any manner. This is to have a philosophical, up-to-date notion of what we may call a metaphysical Self.

But the Bhagavadgita is a practical guideline for our day-to-day life. The Bhagavadgita is not teaching an academic, armchair philosophy. It is not a professor speaking in a university. It is a friend speaking to a friend, a parent speaking to a child, a physician speaking to a patient. Therefore, there is immense practicality down to the core of it in the instructions we have in the Bhagavadgita, though it does not mean that the teacher of the Bhagavadgita is not metaphysically awakened. Life is nothing but practice. Life is nothing but living. It has no meaning if it is not living. You have to live it and be it, and it cannot be explained in more explicit terms. That which you are is your life, and therefore, that is the most important thing for you. The way in which I am conceiving myself to be, the way in which I live, and the way in which I act and behave and conduct myself, the way in which I think and feel, this is my life. What is the use of telling you anything unconnected with this greatest of realities? The greatest reality is yourself, and anything unconnected with you has no reality for you.

So what are your feelings in regard to the self? A layman's self, a poor man's self, a rich man's self, an involved man's self, a detached man's self, a man's self and a woman's self, this self and that self, an individual self and group self, a social self and a political self, a family self, a world self – you can have concepts of these selves also, with certain definitions attached to them, and so it is possible to have many selves. That there are many selves may be taken as an accepted fact under strict supervision of precision of thinking.

Though the Bhagavadgita has no quarrel with the notion of a multiplicity of selves, it does not wholly agree with any of the schools of thought which hold such extreme ideas of the self. The notion of the self has to be flexible. It is malleable, it is ductile, or whatever we may call it. It can be moulded into any shape, and because it can be moulded into any shape, it can have many shapes. Now, that which can be moulded into many shapes may look like many things, and yet it need not be many things. We can cast a substance into many shapes by melting it into a crucible, and yet the substance has not become other than what it is. Molten lead is lead, whatever be the shape it takes. We can make an idol of it. It can be square, it can be oblong, it can be round, it can be any blessed thing. These are the forms of the substance which is cast into these shapes because of the mould through which it is interpreted, conceived and understood. So in a way there are many gods, many things. Are there not many things in this world? Yes, certainly. There are many things, countless things, but really they are not many things. They are many faces of a single substance.

Thus, manifold is the self, and one's self may look different from another's self. But what is the kind of self that the Bhagavadgita is thinking when it speaks in this manner that we have to raise the self? The self has to be lifted by the Self. Now, while we are engaged in understanding the meaning of this very, very important verse, the crux of the whole matter, we have to carefully carry with us a caution that together with the provision of there being a multiplicity of selves under different conditions, the Bhagavadgita is maintaining throughout, from the beginning to the end, the supremacy of the ultimate Self. Because there is one absolute Self in the end, therefore, there is one Self even in the beginning, and even in the middle, in *adi* and *madhya* and *anta*, which is the beginning as well as the end. That conviction is carried relentlessly throughout the teaching, right from the very outset. *Mattaḥ parataram nānyat kiṃcid asti* (BG 7.7): Nothing superior to Me, nothing outside Me, nothing higher than Me can ever be. This great 'I am what I am' is asserted there. But together with it there is this intriguing passage which says that the self can be the friend of the Self or it can be the enemy of the Self, and how it can be the friend and how it can be the enemy also is explained very precisely: The conquered self is the friend, and the opposed self is the enemy.

Now, in what way can we oppose it and convert it into our enemy? In what way can we befriend it so that it supports us? It is difficult to logically explain all these things; analogically we may be able to understand something. There is a higher dimension of everything which includes all the lower dimensions. A dimension is something which is to be understood by us. We can take, for the

purpose of a homely illustration, the dimension of management. There is a higher type of management and a lower category of management. There can be many little managements within a large circle of a single management. Many villages are sometimes headed by a chieftain. It is a kingdom by itself. A village is a kingdom by itself, headed by one single person we call the headman, the *pradhan*, and so on. This little village is a self-identical completeness by itself; it is an integration. It is one single concept of management, and yet this little self, this little management is subsumed entirely by a larger circle of administration which we call a *tehsil* or a *taluk* or a district. Now, that district also is a self by itself. It is a single administration headed by one principle of administration called a District Collector, or in the case of a *tehsil*, it is a *tehsildar*, and so on.

Here we should not bring personality into the picture. Unfortunately, we cannot think except in terms of persons. When we speak of management, we are not thinking of persons. The village is not a person; it is a system of organisation. A group of people does not make a village. When we speak of a village here from the point of view of management, we think of the unity of concept. So a management is an indivisibility conceptually introduced for the sake of secure existence. It has nothing to do with persons. This person may be there or that person may be there; that is immaterial. Thus, the district is not the District Collector. We should not make the mistake of identifying one with the other, though the principle called the collector is permeating the whole district. The collector is not a man. It is a principle permeating the entire area called the district, a force that makes itself felt – an energy itself, we may say. So a self is that which permeates everything. It is not sitting in one place. Even our own little self, this so-called self, is not in one place, in one part of the body. It is the total. The whole thing visible here is the self. It pervades. Nowhere is the self an individual. It is a pervasion, it is a control, it is a supervision, it is a management, it is an integrality, it is a concept, it is a consciousness, it is a principle; it is not a person, it is not a thing.

In this analogy that I am mentioning before you, there is a higher dimension of management which includes the lower without violating the existence of the lower. The district management is not in any way opposed to the village management, yet it is so much inclusive as to find within itself everything that is in the village. The higher is not a negation of the lower, but it is inclusive of the lower, so when we think of the district it is not necessary to think independently of the little villages.

Do we not feel that our bodies are made up of little cells, organically composed? Each little cell of our body is a self by itself. These days medical men say that we have got intriguing things called DNA and RNA and so on, hard things to comprehend, which suggest the existence of certain independent influences in each cell of the body. One doctor in Bombay told me, "Swamiji, these days medical science has done so much that we can know the past, present and future of a person by diving into a single cell of that person's body." The whole life is reflected in that little cell. It is one mirror of the whole. The little cell of the body is a microcosm; the whole body is a macrocosm. As we say, the *pindanda* is the

whole *brahmānda* in one sense; the whole cosmos is reflected in each individual. In one cell we find the whole man. Likewise, there is a larger dimension of control, supervision and administration which is the self.

We have to learn the art of thinking impersonally. We should not be always bogged down by this dogma of thinking in terms of persons – the prime minister is a person, the president is a person, the collector is a person, the minister is a person. We are habituated to think in this manner. None of these are persons. If we are true democratic thinkers or persons really having a love for the nation, we should not think of persons. There is no person anywhere in the country. They are forces operating; they are influences exerted for a non-individual motivation, which is national welfare. The illustration is that there are higher dimensions which include lower dimensions. There can be many selves. Each administration can be considered as one indivisibility. It is indivisible because it is self-contained, and it is indivisible because it is not one person sitting somewhere. It is a pervasive, integrated power.

There are higher selves. These are called generalities, or *samyānas*. Acharya Sankara makes reference to these in his commentary on the Brahma Sutras. There are *samyānas* and *samyānas*, generalities and generalities. He mentions this thing I mentioned to you just now. The village administration is a generality, the district administration is a generality, the provincial administration is a generality. By generality, he means an inclusiveness and compactness and totality. And the whole nation is one single person. Do we not say the whole world is one person? It is believed that in religious circles like the one propounded by Acharya Ramanuja, etc., the whole universe is the body of Narayana. There is only one person in the whole universe, and the whole nation is one person, not a multitude of many people. So when we carry the notion of singleness, unitary existence and indivisibility, we carry with us the notion of the self. Thus, we will be able to appreciate that the world contains only selves, and not persons and things. The self is not a thing and not a person. It is an indivisible consciousness. The village administration is a consciousness of indivisibility, and so on, in all the dimensions, until the world self or the universal Self is reached. So there are many selves.

Yet, we have to be conscious in admitting the possibility of many selves. It does not really mean that there are many selves, while it appears there are many selves for certain practical purposes of management. Yoga is the art of administering oneself. We have villages, we have provinces, we have countries, and we have international organisations inside our body. Every blessed thing politically conceived can be one way of thinking in our management of ourselves. As we manage a whole nation, we have to manage ourselves. Finally, we may have to conceive the whole universe as one single nation, one family, of which we may be the chief. And when we conceive ourselves as the chief of the administration of the whole creation, we should forget that we are persons.

Here, incidentally, we answer the question whether God is a person or a nonperson. Is the administrator of a country a person or a nonperson? When we say, "I want to see the head of the government" it looks as if we are going to see a

person, somebody sitting on the chair. In that sense we may say, "Yes, the administration is a person; God is a person." But the administrator is not a person from another angle of vision, into which I tried to throw a little insight. So we are seeing the whole nation reflected in that so-called person sitting on the chair. We have not seen the person. It is a concentrated, pinpointed presentation of the principle of the total administration of the whole country apparently sitting on the chair. So it is a person and a nonperson. God is a person, and yet is not a person. So the self can be conceived in an individual manner or it can be conceived in a non-individual, supremely universalised, general sense.

Now, in all the senses we have to encounter the notion of the self in order to understand how we can be a friend of the self, and how we can be an enemy of the self. The *tehsildar* can oppose the collector. Then what happens? Or he can be friendly with the collector. Here is a self becoming an enemy of the self, and if he is friendly, he is friendly with the self. The *tehsildar* friendly with the collector is the self friendly with the self, the self's friendship to the self. But if he opposes the administration of the district, he is in direct enmity, at loggerheads with the higher dimension. Sorrow descends upon the lower self when it opposes the higher self, and security is always automatically bestowed when the lower self is in communion with the law of the higher self. We shall have no problems if the little self is united with the higher self. Everywhere there is a problem, and nothing but problems can be there everywhere if the lower self is in opposition to the higher self. This is obedience to law, or opposition to law in another way.

Thus, we have a deep religious, philosophical and spiritual practical message concentratedly pressed into this little verse, into whose meaning we have to enter in order that we may be successful participants in the yoga discipline, which is the subject of this chapter.

Chapter 26

BEING SPIRITUALLY ALONE TO ONESELF

In the verse under consideration, which we were discussing yesterday, the Bhagavadgita precisely states its intention. The yoga of Self-realisation adopts the method of self-restraint, and the restraint of the self leads to the realisation of the Self. This would mean that an uncontrolled self is not a realised Self. The realisation of the Self is the Self becoming aware of itself. When the Self knows itself, we call it Self-realisation. If restraint of the self is necessary for the Self to become aware of itself, it will follow from this instruction that a self that is not restrained is not aware of itself. This unrestrained self, which is not established in itself and therefore not aware of itself, also is aware of something. The unrestrained self is also aware of something, but it is not aware of itself. It is aware of that which is not itself. The self is aware of the not-self in uncontrolled states. What is it that the uncontrolled self is aware of? Anything other than itself.

The world is the object of the unrestrained self. The world becomes an object of the unrestrained self by way of an externally communicated attachment artificially creating in that object of attachment a sense of secondary selfhood, so that in all our objects of attachment we are secondarily present, not primarily. The lover is present in the object of love in a sense which is not natural, because one cannot be present in another. We observed that the self cannot be the not-self at any time. Hence, the unrestrained self's longing for what is not itself is a sickness of spirit. It is the opposite of the state of yoga. Yoga is the union of the self with the Self, establishment of the Self in itself, and being aware of itself only and nothing else, not because there is something else of which it is not aware, but because really there is nothing of which it is expected to be aware.

There is no necessity for the Self to be aware of anything other than itself. Truly speaking, this is the truth of the matter, the reason being that outside the Self nothing is. Inasmuch as the externality that is characteristic of all attachments cannot be in any way associated with the true nature of the self, all attachments are unspiritual. Every craving, every prejudice, every desire, every emotion outwardly motivated in the direction of external objects is irreligious, unspiritual, unnatural – we may even say morbid. It is a kind of sickness which has descended on the self itself, such kind of sickness that is equivalent with mortality. Death is the punishment meted out to this unrestrained self which attaches itself to that which is really not there, as if it is giddy, out of its head and totally topsy-turvy in its perception. It sees the movement of objects outside as a giddy brain sees mountains revolving. Therefore, the restraint of the self is necessary for the self to be really healthy.

Hence, the outer self has to be restrained by the inner self. The inner self should be restrained by the universal Self. The lower self should be restrained by the higher self. The lower self should be subordinate to the regulations and principles of the higher self. The outer self should be conditioned by the principles and regulations of the inner self, and the inner self should be regulated

by the law of the universal Self. So the movement from the outer to the inner, and from the inner to the universal, is also a movement from the lower to the higher.

While we are in states of attachment, sentiment, emotional longing, etc., we are living in a world of the externalised self. But the Self cannot be externalised, so the world of perception by the externalised self is, in a way, an illusion. Perhaps, there is a point in some masters telling us that the world does not exist. It cannot exist because the Self cannot be other than itself, and the world cannot exist unless the Self becomes another, quite different from itself. Thus, the world is a contradiction. Hence, it cannot be real. And for any kind of self to imagine that this contradictory experience of this world is real, for that self the fate is that of the enemy who opposes a higher regulation, a higher authority and a higher Guru. The outer is manifold in its nature. All sense objects may be considered as an outer form of selfhood. The yoga here described is a withdrawal of the self from this artificial location of itself in objects of sense. This is practically tantamount to what we call in common parlance *pratyahara*, restraint or withdrawal.

The self that is not so restrained stands opposed to the welfare of the higher self. The intentions of the higher self are contradicted by the longings and prejudices and the ways of life of the lower self. Whenever the lower self's way of life is not in harmony with the regulations of the higher self, the lower self stands opposed to the higher self. Then the higher self is an enemy, as it were, of the lower self, an enemy in the sense that the higher self cannot brook intervention in any of its regulations. It is an indomitable principle.

A law is expected to be obeyed. A law that is not obeyed is no law at all. The intention behind a regulation is that it has to be enforced, and the self in a particular status of itself enforces its law. It enforces it vehemently, as strongly as the self can be, and if there is any other self than itself which has its own laws subsumed under the mentioned self, which is higher, there will be a reaction automatically set by the operative law of the higher Self in respect of that disobeying self. In one sense this is karma, bondage, caused by what we call the reactions produced by unlawful and unprincipled, unspiritual behaviour. The unspiritual behaviour is the essence of disobedience to the law of the higher self. That which is spiritual is the law of the Self. The Self is spirit and, therefore, the law of the spirit is called spirituality. To live the life of spirituality is to obey the law of the spirit, to be subservient to the law of the Self, which means not to disobey the law of the self-complete nature of that Self. It is self-complete, and therefore the imagined dissatisfaction felt in any status of self, due to which it is propelled to move in the direction of outward things, would be unspiritual. Any longing for objects of sense, therefore, may be regarded as opposed to yoga. Therefore, it is necessary to exert the influence of the higher self upon the lower self. *Uddhared ātmanātmānam* (BG 6.5): The lower self has to be lifted by the power of the higher self. We have to enforce upon the lower self the law of the higher self.

But it is never to be pampered. The lower self is not to be indulged in. That would be the *avasadhana* of the self: *nātmānam avasādayet*. To pamper the

cravings and passions of the lower self would be to allow it to go down and down into greater and greater pits of sorrow. This should not be done, and such a state of affairs should not be permitted. There should always be the control of the higher self over this little self.

All morality is obedience to the law of the higher self. The restraint of the higher in respect of the lower is called the ethical mandate. The determination of the lower in terms of the higher is morality. If the higher is not to operate in the life of any particular person, there would be no ethical behaviour, and there would be no moral conduct. So morality, while it is a voluntary acceptance of a disciplined way of living, is also a kind of control exerted upon oneself by a higher principle superior to the one with which one is individually accustomed in one's physical and social life.

Thus is the importance, at least in the case of a yogi, a spiritual seeker, of perennially keeping watch over the movements of the lower self as a policeman would keep watch of permanent vigilance over conditions which may go out of control. Vigilance is yoga. Any kind of heedlessness is the death of yoga. The great Sanatkumara says that heedlessness is equivalent to death. In a moment we may slip down, and one slip is sufficient to tumble us down to the lowest level. A little kick is enough to go down and down until we are at the lowest. To rise up once again would be very hard. So never allow the lower self to have a free hand. Do not give it a long rope. Let it be always under the subjection of the law of the higher self. Never befriend the cravings of the lower self, because the higher self is the real friend of the lower self. Law is a protector, and not a punisher. It is intended for the welfare of people, and not to destroy them. Discipline is not a pain-giving mandate. It is a protective measure and a health-giving procedure.

The law of the higher self, therefore, is a protector of the lower self. Hence, the higher is the friend of the lower, but law can also look like a terror. The disobedient may feel that law is an enemy. The obedient feels secure in the face of law. The one who is obedient to law is ever secure, always protected, guarded by the strength of law. But the disobedient is always in fear of law. The rods of administration are frightening. The arms of law reach up to the corners of the earth, and so the thief has no place to stay anywhere. So the law, the administration, is an enemy sometimes, but we know very well it is really not an enemy. Thus is the meaning here. The higher self is the friend and also the enemy: *ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ*.

Bandhur ātmātmanas tasya yenātmaivātmanā jitaḥ (BG 6.6). The higher self is the friend of that self which is controlled by its own self. *Anātmanas tu śatrutve vartetātmaiva śatruvat*: The unrestrained self will feel that the higher is always its enemy, a dreaded spectre. We fear God Himself. We do not know what God can do to us, merely because we know that we are always disobedient to His principles. Not for a moment can we fully obey His law, and therefore we are always awfully in fear of that Being who looks like a terror incarnate, while the greatest friend is God Himself. *Suhṛdam sarvabhūtānāṃ jñātvā māṃ śāntim ṛcchati* (BG 5.29): The great friend of mankind is God the Almighty, who is apparently looking like a great enemy of man, insisting on obedience to His law.

So the practical methods of yoga of restraint of the self for the sake of the realisation of the higher Self are now being briefly stated in some of the verses.

yogī yuñjīta satatam ātmānaṃ rahasi sthitaḥ,

ekākī yatacittātmā nirāśīr aparigrahaḥ (BG 6.10).

śucau deśe pratiṣṭhāpya sthiram āsanam ātmanaḥ,

nātyucchritaṃ nātinīcaṃ cailājinakuśottaram (BG 6.11).

tatraikāgraṃ manaḥ kṛtvā yatacittendriyakriyaḥ,

upaviśyāsane yuñjyād yogam ātmaviśuddhaye (BG 6.12).

samaṃ kāyaśirogrīvaṃ dhārayann acalaṃ sthiraḥ,

samprekṣya nāsikāgraṃ svaṃ diśaś cānavalokayan (BG 6.13).

praśāntātmā vigatabhīr brahmacārivrate sthitaḥ,

manaḥ saṃyamyā maccitto yukta āsīta matparaḥ (BG 6.14).

Here is a concentrated recipe of yoga. The yogi should unite himself with himself: *yogī yuñjīta satatam ātmānaṃ*. *Satatam* means always, permanently, without remission of effort. The yogin should always be engaged in being in union with himself. The yogi is the Self referred to here. We are all the Self. The Self is ever engaged in being what it is. Always exert effort to be what you are. Never be what you are not. What does it mean? *Yogī yuñjīta satatam ātmānaṃ*: The Self should always remain in its own status. You should not forsake your Selfhood at any time. You should not become other than what you are at any time, which means to say, you should not have any kind of longing for anything outside.

We are sunk in the world of outward longings. Every one of us can think of life only in terms of longing for things. A life without any desire is no life at all. Who can expect to live in that manner? There is always a need of some kind, a pressure, sometimes some comfort reaching up to a luxury. Can anyone think of a condition where it is not necessary to want anything? We cannot imagine such a state because we live in a world of relationships. We are immersed in a web of contacts with everything possible. The whole environment is sticking to us as an accretion grown on our own self. We carry the coat of externality wherever we move. We cannot be without it. So to be without this dress of external attachment would look like living naked. A totally desireless life is unthinkable to ordinary human minds. The difficulty in even imagining such a state arises because we have not been accustomed to think in these novel ways which may be considered as the spiritual outlook of life. We have a worldly outlook of life – a physical, social, political, economic and family-ridden life of attachments – which we consider as the only possible way of living, and there cannot be any other way of life. This is mine, that is mine, this is not mine, that is not mine, I am this, I am that. There is no other way of thinking except in these ways.

Therefore, we may have to get re-educated entirely into a new system of thinking. The mind which has been brainwashed into the belief that to be alive is to be desiring cannot understand how it can be alive without longing for objects outside, without possessing them and without enjoying them, because life is satisfaction. We do not live in a life of sorrow. We have somehow acquiesced in

the conviction that to have nothing of one's own is to live a life of utter poverty, a life of vegetating, and not a real life at all.

What do you think of this state of affairs of the mind of a human being not wanting to live a life of yoga? It is lack of faith arising out of lack of understanding, an absence of yoga due to an absence of *sankhya*, to repeat the very words of the Bhagavadgita. We are totally deprived of correct understanding, and therefore the way of life chalked out by this right understanding is not acceptable to us. It is not intelligible and, therefore, not acceptable. But all the course that we have now covered through these chapters of the Gita would have given us a little bit of an awakening into the facts of life. The world is made in such a way, truly speaking, that it is not necessary to ask for anything in this world.

We can understand the meaning of this position only if we remember what we have studied earlier. The world is related to us in such a way basically that we need not expect anything from it, as when a customer goes and expects something from a shop. The world is not a market where we can purchase things or beg for things. It is our home. Therefore, we are secure in this world, but we are secure only if we are friends of the law of the world, which is also a state of the Self. As was stated earlier, we are ever protected and we can never be forsaken in this world, but we are protected only if we are friends of the law of that principle which is ever ready to protect us. Otherwise, the world is an impossible place to live in. We cannot live in this world for three days if we have a wrong notion of it. The world is sticking to our skin, as it were. It is our large self. It is one degree of the manifestation of the universal Self, and our little self, in its unitive association with this large Self, stands not only united but guarded, protected, and provided with every amenity. It will be told us later on that we shall be taken care of, and we shall be guarded: *yogaḥkṣemaṃ vahāmy aham* (BG 9.22). Who says this? God says that, or the world says that, or your higher Self says that, the law says that: I shall look after you. Therefore, there is no need for asking. Hence, there is no point in the clamour of the senses for objects outside, especially as it is an unnatural way of thinking. Therefore, all our joys in life are, in a way, unnatural. The satisfactions of life to which we cling so much as the only normalcy in existence is utter abnormality. It is a spiritual sickness – a metaphysical evil, as philosophers call it. Therefore, let the yogin restrain himself: *yogī yuñjīta satatam ātmānaṃ rahasi sthitaḥ. Ekākī yatacittātmā nirāśīr aparigrahaḥ*: Be alone to yourself and live a life of seclusion.

Here again, we have to appreciate the real intention of these instructions. Are we ever alone in this world? Is it possible to be secluded and to be in a state of utter retreat? Is it a practicability? The yoga of the Bhagavadgita is a novel teaching. It is always putting the finger on the knob. It always answers questions to the point without beating about the bush, and therefore it is so concentrated in its teaching that it may sometimes seem difficult to understand and to appreciate its meaning. What is meant by saying that yogins should be alone and be secluded? How could we become secluded in this world?

Well, as the yoga of the Bhagavadgita is also an instruction and a gradational ascent of the self from the lower to the higher state, the meaning of the terms 'seclusion' and 'aloneness' should also be considered in their gradational meanings. In the lowest meaning it may mean that you should physically be dissociated from the crowds of people as much as possible. You should not always be longing for association with herds, crowds, multitudes. The more you feel satisfied in being alone to yourself, the more is the progress you have made in living a spiritual life. If you feel sick and out of sorts because nobody is there to talk to, you may consider that you have not appreciably entered the field of spirituality. There is still a longing for something other than one's own self.

Here again we have to follow the law of what is called the *via media*, or the Golden Mean. This also will be mentioned in the coming verses. You should not go to extremes in your longing for seclusion or being alone. You should know your strengths and weaknesses at the same time. A good soldier capable of fighting in the field of battle is one who knows his strength and also his weakness. It is not good to either overestimate oneself or underestimate oneself. You should know where you stand, and then you will know how to prepare and guard yourself, and work ably in the condition in which you are placed. Likewise, in your aspiration for living a life of yoga, aloneness and seclusion, you must know what you actually are capable of. In the initial stages it may be a gradual elimination of unnecessary contacts with people and things. As Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was ever fond of telling us, we have to keep a spiritual diary to check the daily progress that we make in our practice. What are the essentials and the non-essentials in our life? We have to demarcate these two things. Now, we have to be a little honest and dispassionate in distinguishing between the essentials and the non-essentials because if we are not honest in making this clear-cut distinction, the non-essential also may look like an essential and the luxury may look like a necessity. Thus, it has to be a dispassionate self-analysis.

In the earlier stages, therefore, the non-essentials should be avoided. Unavoidables, of course, are always unavoidable. You cannot give up those things. "This is impossible, and therefore I must have it. If I don't have it, it will be like death for me." Well, in that case you have it. But if you can manage comfortably without something, that something is not a necessity. You have to use your own intelligence here if you are endowed with a dispassionate *viveka shakti*, or discriminative power. If this power is lacking in oneself, it is always good to consult a superior if a superior is available. "These are my ways of living, this is my daily sadhana, this is what I do from morning to evening, this is my routine for the day. Do you think this is all right, or am I making a little mistake?" A superior who has great experience and has trodden the path much before you will be able to guide you to some extent. So in the earlier stages, this instruction of being secluded and being alone may be taken as the elimination of the non-essentials and maintaining only the essentials.

What are the essentials? They are those things without which we cannot exist, and we cannot even sleep, the absence of which will cause restlessness and tragedy will befall us. They are the essentials. This is not easy to understand. You

cannot know what are the essentials. Everything will look essential. Therefore, a careful self-analysis, mathematically precise, should be carried on with the help of a Guru, a superior, a teacher in whom you have faith and confidence.

Be alone to yourself when it is not necessary for you to be in the midst of other people. Sometimes it is compulsory for you to be in the company of somebody when you are working somewhere, or for some obligation that you have to discharge. That is an essential. Where it is not obligatory for you to be in the company of somebody or in association with something, that association should be avoided. Thus, you may find more time to be alone to yourself instead of saying, "I have no time." There is time for everybody. When *prarabdha* is so heavily weighing upon our shoulders that we cannot find enough time to contemplate, study and be true to ourselves, what to do? Sometimes it may be even necessary for us to reduce our sleep. We have to undergo this little extra sacrifice of reducing the sleep without injuring ourselves. The Bhagavadgita is a good physician and a good parent. It tells us, "Don't ruin your health." Extremes are not permitted in the yoga of the Bhagavadgita.

Thus, in the beginning non-essentials may be eliminated, and one may resort to only essentials. Being alone and living in seclusion may be regarded as an achievement, but there is a higher meaning hidden in this instruction when we try to understand it from a purely spiritual point of view. You can be alone even in a marketplace; it is not impossible. Even in a railway platform you can be alone to yourself. Even in the din and bustle of a large clamouring crowd of people, you can be as if in a forest with utter desolation around you. This experience is possible even in the midst of dinning noise and the pressing crowd. This is to understand these instructions spiritually, which is a better way of understanding than physically interpreting them as being isolated inside the room, not being seen by anybody, shutting the windows, doors, etc. All that is one thing; a better thing is to be spiritually alone because it is possible that you may be physically, socially alone and in a state of retreat, yet mentally in a crowd. You may be psychologically in a club or in a market while physically in a jungle or in a closed room or a cell or a cave.

Hence, another caution has to be injected into these instructions that one should be alone in a state of concentration in yoga; one should be secluded. There is no real friend in this world. Nobody is your friend. All friendships are an artificial concatenation of forces, relative associations conditioned by factors beyond your control. Nobody will help you finally, and therefore you stand alone when death yawns before you. When the greatest tragedy of quitting from this world is to stand face to face with you, no dear friend, no husband, no wife, no wealth, no property, none whom you hugged as your dearest and nearest will come to your aid. Therefore, that predicament of utter isolation which you may have to face one day or the other should be considered by you as your real status even now. That which you may have to face last is also the condition into which you were born first. You were utterly unbefriended when you came to this world. Nobody came with you – no relation, no friend; nobody knew from where you came, and you will go in a similar condition. How is it that in the middle you had

so many friends? You brought nothing with you, and you shall take nothing with you. How is it that in the beginning you had nothing and in the end you had nothing, but in the middle you became so rich with so many things? By exploitation, by imagination, by artificial association you imagined yourself to be rich with friendship and wealth, and so on; hence, dehypnotise yourself. Do not be under the hypnotic effect of artificial friendship. Nobody is your friend, finally. There is no one in this world who, under certain circumstances, cannot deal a blow to you; therefore, do not trust anybody as your utter friend. That is to be guarded.

But thirdly, there is a higher philosophical way of looking at things. The whole universe is a mass of uniformly spread-out forces. You have already been told that *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are the properties of *prakriti*, which constitute the whole cosmos, of which you are also an embodiment. Your whole personality, body and mind, are made up of these forces only; therefore, you have no friends. You are not in association with anything. Association is unthinkable in this circumstance of your whole personality being made up of the very same substance out of which the whole cosmos is made. Hence, no outward relationship is conceivable. There are no friends, no associations, and nothing can belong to you. So now you are alone in a very lofty sense. This is to conceive aloneness in a philosophical and universal sense. At other times you may consider yourself as alone, as explained, but in the lowest of stages it will be a physical attempt to be isolated from unnecessary connections with unwanted people and things.

Ekākī yatacittātmā: *Yata* is 'united, restrained, controlled, and in a state of communion'. The mind and the soul have to stand together in union in yoga. *Citta* is 'mind', you may say, and *atma* is 'what you are'. Your self, your whole being and your thoughts are united. Your thoughts are not outside you; they are with you; they are you. The thoughts do not move outward. They are in you only; they are restrained. Here again is an injunction on *pratyahara*. The mind and the intellect and the self stand united as a single experience. This is to be *yatacittātmā*. *Nirāśī*: Wanting nothing. And *aparigrahaḥ*: Expecting nothing. Thus, one can be happy, and a yogi is always happy. Under every circumstance of life he is ever contented.

Chapter 27

THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION

*yogī yuñjīta satatam ātmānaṃ rahasi sthitaḥ,
ekāki yatacittātmā nirāśīr aparigrahaḥ* (BG 6.10)

*śucau deśe pratiṣṭhāpya sthiram āsanam ātmanaḥ,
nātyucchritaṃ nātinīcaṃ cailājinakuśottaram* (BG 6.11)

Some preliminary instructions to the primary level student in the practice of yoga are given here: the outer forms of preparation, the physical appurtenances necessary, and the very first step that is to be taken. The way of meditation is being described here.

This is one system of meditation, the way which is almost akin to the prescriptions of Patanjali Maharishi. Some commentators on the Bhagavadgita, the foremost of them being Madhusudana Saraswati, tag on a large portion of the sutras of Patanjali in their expositions while commenting on these verses of the Sixth Chapter. Madhusudana Saraswati sees a vital connection in these verses between what Bhagavan Sri Krishna must have been having in his mind at the time of his speaking and the methods prescribed in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali.

There are several ways, methods, of meditation. One particular method is here specially mentioned, namely, the directing of the mind to a chosen spot or ideal by being seated in a posture called the yoga asana, the position of the body assumed in meditation. In a calm and quiet undisturbed spot, you should seat yourself. There should not be anything outside which will distract your attention. There should be nothing which you will resent, nothing that will interfere with you, disturb you, annoy you or cause your mind to oscillate out of the point of attention. A pure spot is a *śuca desa*. Fresh air, beautiful sceneries, mountaintops, riverbanks, the shade of large trees, and so on, which are conducive to composed thinking, such spots are to be selected for meditation. And there one should be seated in intense satisfaction within oneself. This is important. Only a satisfied mind can settle. The unsatisfied mind is unsettled, and concentration or meditation is the settling of the mind. It has to remain like undisturbed water, without ripples or waves, and therefore, no wind of desire or distraction should blow over it.

The instruction here is that outer conditions have a definite influence upon the internal states of mind. This is something very obvious. We know very well how we think differently in different kinds of atmosphere or environment. In a holy place we think in one way, in a judiciary we think in another way, in a marketplace we think in a third way, and so on. The atmosphere of the place to a large extent interferes with our mode of thinking. Hence, such an environment may be chosen for being seated in meditation, which will add to the satisfaction of the mind and not distract it or pull it aside in other directions than the chosen one. Here in this beautiful spot well chosen, one must be seated.

We have similar references in the Brahma Sutras, for instance, in which there are long discussions in connection with the need to be seated for meditation

rather than be in any other posture. What posture other than sitting can we assume? Can we stand and meditate, or lie down and meditate? Here it has been very carefully told us that the mind cannot concentrate while the body is standing, because it is necessary for the mind to bestow some attention on the fact of standing in order that the feet be planted properly, fixed firmly on the ground. If we are totally unconscious of standing, we may fall down. Hence, the standing posture is not suitable for meditation. A lying posture also is not suitable because there will be a tendency to go to sleep. Due to the relaxed condition of the body the eyes will slowly close and the mind will so relax itself that it will know nothing. Therefore, a middle course has to be chalked out of not standing or lying down, but sitting.

Even while sitting, what posture will you assume? There are standard postures prescribed. *Padmasana*, *siddhasana*, *sukhasana* are the usually selected standard poses. It is up to each person to select the posture according to one's convenience. The kind of posture one chooses should be such that it will not cause unnecessary mental attention on any particular part of the body. The very purpose of concentrating the mind in yoga is to lift it above body consciousness as much as possible. The balance maintained in the seated posture will enable the mind not to think of the body too much, just as when we are perfectly balanced in health we are not even aware that we have a body. Only when we have some illness do we begin to feel that there is a body hanging on us. A perfectly healthy person is like a child, not even aware that there is a body. That is the balanced state of the whole physiological system.

When there is a disbalance in the nerves or the muscles, in any part of the body, there is the demand on the part of the mind to be conscious of that disbalance, and our intention here is to free the mind from the necessity to think that it is lodged in a body. Body-consciousness is an obstacle in the pursuit of the ideal of yoga. In a graduated manner, the clutches of the body over the mind should be loosened, and this has to be done with care, not in a hurry. How is it done? By maintaining a poised, balanced posture, such a posture which will keep the body in perfect position in such a manner that after a few minutes of sitting in that balanced pose, one will not even know that one is sitting. There will be no necessity for the mind to think that there is a body seated in that posture. This is so because of the balance maintained. There is a stability automatically following from the maintenance of balance. The balance and the fixity are the same. We can fix any particular object in a particular position when its fulcrum is known and it is fixed on that point. So we must know the fulcrum of our physiological system, and then we shall be poised like a hill and unshakenly we shall be seated. When the balance of the physical system is ensured in this manner, the mind will feel secure, just as when the whole country is in great peace, the administration is highly satisfied. It has no work to do. It is only a disbalanced atmosphere that calls for attention from the administration. The mind is the administrator. It has no work afterwards when the entire atmosphere of its governance is in utter peace, as in Ramraja. So *śucau deśe pratiṣṭhāpya sthiram āsanam*: having seated

oneself in a fixed posture like *sukhasana*. *Padmasana* is a hard thing for modern legs; otherwise, it is said to be the best posture.

Nātyucchritaṃ nātinīcaṃ. This is a little commonsense instruction. This seat should not be too high above the ground level, nor should it be just on the ground level. That is the idea here. If it is too high, like this cot, for instance, and I sit for meditation, I could fall down. To prevent that possibility of the body falling down by any chance, we are told not to have a seat too high above the ground level. Nor should it be just on the ground level because some insects may creep in and they may bite us. Hence, let the seat be a little high, say half a foot high, not one meter high: *nātyucchritaṃ nātinīcaṃ cailājīnakuśottaram*. This is an ancient prescription in regard to the seat on which one can meditate.

What kind of seat can we have? It is plainly said in this verse that it should be a three-layered seat. We can have a deerskin, we can have a grass mat, we can have a piece of cloth. It is mentioned that on the top there may be a cloth, then there may be a deerskin or some such thing, then a grass mat. The *kusha* is a sacred grass, and a mat made out of it is referred to here. The idea behind this statement is esoteric, namely that the seat should be such that it is not a conductor of electricity. It should be a non-conductor of electricity. Why is this specific caution? When we meditate, an energy is generated in the body. If the meditation is carried on properly, sincerely, for a protracted period, there will be a concentration of force in one's personality, in the whole physical system, and the earth is a good conductor of electricity. Hence, if there is nothing between one's body and the ground, the energy accumulated in the system during meditation is likely to be consumed by the earth underneath. This is one of the reasons behind *brahmacharins* walking with wooden sandals. Wood is a non-conductor of electricity. Anyway, these days we have varieties of non-conductors of electricity. The particular thing mentioned in this verse refers to an ancient condition of living, and we can use our common sense here and be seated on anything which is comfortable and is helpful according to our own choice in our meditations. This is just a preliminary caution, some instruction regarding the physical posture and the seat on which one can sit for meditation.

Now comes the main task, which is the responsibility of the yogin. What are we going to do while sitting like this? This is a very difficult thing to understand, but the Bhagavadgita, to repeat once again, is a graduated ascent. It has been very systematically rising from level to level, and we are not suddenly told to sit for meditation without any background of thought being provided to us. What is the background? There is a vast ocean of background of thought already provided to us in the earlier chapters. Just as we do not forget the existence of a foundation being already laid and a superstructure being there when a roofing is struck, and so on, we are not merely thinking of what is told us in the Sixth Chapter here; we think it only in relation to whatever we have heard earlier right from the beginning, from the First Chapter itself. We gather the entire harvest of the earlier lessons and get concentrated in the manner required in the light of the teaching that has already gone earlier, and so the question "What shall I do by sitting in this posture?" should not be raised, really speaking. Everyone who has

received the lesson properly and digested its intentions will be able to select the particular form of conceptualisation in the practice of meditation.

According to the lessons we have received, in the light of the picture of the whole of creation that has been placed before us by the Bhagavadgita in all its chapters, what are we expected to think? In this world in which we live, this world which is of that nature which has already been described, into whose mysteries we have been introduced, what are we supposed to think? That is the object of meditation. However, there is still a great concession given to us in these little phrases of the verses of the Sixth Chapter. We do not seem to be required to suddenly lift ourselves to that grand picture of this world, this creation and God, with which we have been acquainted during our studies. We can go to that level of conceptualisation by moving very slowly from the lowest level of physicality. The mind should be moving very slowly from the lowest level of physicality. The mind should be fixed on one spot. *Ekgram manaḥ kṛtvā* (BG 6.12): On one thing only should the mind think, and it should not think two things. Why should the mind think only one thing and not two things? What is the purpose of this kind of concentration? Why this insistence that the mind should be fixed on a single object? The reason is, again, a subject of psychology.

The mind is not a solid substance. It is a fabric of interconnected associations, relations. We are not just moving inside the skull of an individual person. The whole structure of the mind is very intriguing because while it appears to be a little personal property of any given individual, we will find that it is not like that. It has connections with every blessed thing in the world. Modern scientists have coined a word to describe the subtle invisible activities of the human mind, not the visible conscious activities, the unknown hidden background behind the screen activities of the mind, which are stronger operations, more forceful activities than the waking activities. The word coined by modern psychological science is 'prehension' instead of 'apprehension'. They make a distinction between apprehension and prehension. The word was coined specifically to distinguish between ordinary mental action and unknown activities going on in the labyrinths of our deeper unconscious personality.

Apprehension is a subtle connection that a person maintains with his own coterie, though outwardly he may look independent and unrelated to people. Even in human society there are people who look fine outside, very cultured and civilised, but inwardly they are a part of a large brood. A subtle subterranean activity is the occupation of the so-called cultured individual on the surface, and this subterranean treasure of his belonging to something undesirable will not be made visible outside due to the subtle manoeuvring of conscious operations. This is seen in society and everywhere in various subtle operations of human groups. And what is a human group? It is nothing but a mental group. When we speak of human society or political organisations, etc., we are not actually speaking of physical bodies. We are speaking of minds operating in subtle ways.

So the mind, which is accustomed to live this kind of life merely on the surface – sometimes deliberately hiding the bottom of it and many a time not even being conscious that there is a bottom at all – such a mind is unfit for yoga meditation

because it is already a member of a group of relations which tries to maintain its empirical immortality, which means the immortality of the individual personality as a social unit of sentiments, passions, greed, and all sorts of instinctive relations which are the demands of the physical existence of a person. Such a mind involved in such relations consciously or unconsciously, knowingly or unknowingly, will not be fit for meditation. If such a mind begins to concentrate under the impression that it is practising yoga, one will find that the whole brood of hounds will start attacking it as a renegade, and it will not be able to think even for a moment without getting disturbed. After a few minutes of sitting we will get agitated and we will like to get up. I have seen this in certain meditation sessions where people get up in a few minutes and walk out on the veranda because it is so disturbing. Meditation is very disturbing because it is a process of heart searching, the way of searching for dacoits, thieves and undesirable activities. Therefore, they somehow or other sneak beneath the possible atmospheres of detection and get out of the clutches of this detective activity. Meditation is a detective activity in one way. It is a very, very subtle and well-organised method of discovering the activities of the mind, not only as it is available on the surface, but also at its back.

Now, why we should concentrate the mind on one object was a question to be answered. The mind, in spite of it being such a terrific involvement of this nature described now, is a flimsy arrangement of relations which are undesirable, and so they cannot have real strength because they have no moral force behind them. Any kind of organisation which does not have the support of moral sanction cannot last for long. Hence, the very art of meditation is frightening to the wavering mind of instinctive longings.

The mind is a web of relations, and it is necessary for us to understand what an interconnection of relations can be. Relations are not substances. They are not tangible things. They are nothing at all, while they appear to be very, very solidly existing there as heavyweights. A relation is an unintelligible something which appears to be there, while it is really not there. It is a kind of illusion. So in one sense we may say the very existence of the mind is an illusion. It is not there. The ego is said to be like that. The mind is that. Every blessed thing of the nature of a non-spiritual character is finally non-existent. The mind, being a mere setup of relational organisations, cannot be considered as an existent something. Therefore, it is on the one hand difficult to handle it, and on the other hand, it is very easy to squash it.

Now, the concentration of the mind on one particular thing works a miracle immediately. The miracle is this, that its so-called multitudinous tentacles of relation are immediately drawn together into a single direction of attention, so it looks as if we have immediately cut off the hands and the feet of this operation and only one limb is left to keep it alive. This is *pratyahara*.

We also hear some such story of the operations of the mind in concentration, or *dharana*, in the Yoga System of Patanjali. He tells us that in *dharana*, in concentration, a manifold operation is to be noticed by the meditator. What are the manifold operations? The types of thought which are extraneous to the

chosen method of thinking are not at all conducive to the way of meditation. They are obstructive, and are to be eliminated. Conditions of mind which are to be carefully eliminated are also certain functions of the mind, and they cannot be eliminated by severing them from the body of the mind, like amputation. The severing of the relations of the mind does not mean physically cutting its limbs. The severance automatically takes place when its tentacles are withdrawn. The withdrawal of the outer relations of the mind is tantamount to the severance of those relations. It is not a loss, but a gain. In concentration, therefore, our energy increases to a high pitch and an optimum level. It is not a diminution of activity. When I say we have to sever relations of the mind with undesirable things, it does not mean it has lost the contact with realities in the world. It has all the contact, but in a very heightened form. *Pratyahara*, withdrawal of the mind from distracting sources, is not a severance from sustaining forces but from the points of concentration which distract and create illness in the mind.

So in the earlier state of concentration when the mind is withdrawn from sources of distraction, it may appear that it is losing all the centres of its pleasure, but really it is not so. It is freed from unhealthy thinking. Its hanging over objects which it imagines to be the sources of its satisfaction cannot be considered as a healthy condition. Hence, when health supervenes by the conscious withdrawal of the relations of the mind from these distracting sources, the level or the content of the force of the mind rises to a high pitch, though in the beginning it looks as if it is a loss and we are very unhappy when we feel that in the discipline of yoga meditation we have to disconnect ourselves from outward relations.

We are accustomed to social thinking, mostly. Philosophical thinking is very strange. We do not think philosophically in our daily life, much less metaphysically. We are social beings. The society in which we live is a psychological society, and it is made to appear that the very existence of a person depends upon the relation that the mind maintains with other minds, as if one person cannot be alive if another is not there. By 'another', I mean a person or any object of sense. If they are not there, it will look like the life itself of the person is at stake. This is an illusion, this is a deception, this is Mara or Satan working and telling us the wrong thing: "If your relations outwardly maintained with objects of sense are to be snapped, you shall not live." This will be told us from inside, but the opposite is the truth. We shall live much better than we lived earlier because earlier we lived like a slave of the objects; now we are living with great freedom born of the strength of our own self. While working as a slave under a master may look like a life of great protection from a master, and to be without a master will look like a precarious life of insecurity, don't we believe it is better to be a free person than to be a slave of a master who is guarding us? Yet we think along this line only, that we require protection by a master outside. The master is the world of senses, and if the master is not to guard us we are unprotected. So there is a fear. We have a fear that we shall lose all things, but this fear is unfounded. It is the fear of losing ill health and the fear that health will supervene.

So in this little instruction that the mind should be concentrated on one point only there is a wealth of suggestiveness, namely, that all the underground activities of the subconscious and the unconscious mind should be completely taken possession of under a central government authority, as it were, and no independence should be given to these varied and abandoned particular sentimental activities of the mind. Generally we live according to our instincts, according to our sentiments, whims and fancies. We are just automatons moving according to the dictates of the sentiments and the instincts within. We are not masters of our own selves. While we are slaves of others, we are slaves of our minds also. Yet, this double slavery has to be noticed, detected, and its meaning should be known.

When this kind of engagement becomes the sole responsibility of the yogi seated in meditation, it will appear in the beginning that the whole world is up in arms against this yogin. It will appear that we cannot be here at all. "Get out from this place. You are not for us. You are a renegade; you are leaving us." This was told to the Buddha and all the saints. A little suggestion of this kind is made even to the Christ. The world which was our very dear, beloved friend will now tell us, "Get out, I shall have nothing to do with you, because up to this time you were my friend, and today you are trying to assume independence. I shall see to it." When this frightening threat is dealt by the world of relative operations, attachments and longings, the little spark of aspiration is likely to get extinguished by the mere fear of a possible tragedy that may descend upon oneself.

All these are not the concern of the Bhagavadgita here. It is a lofty teaching which assumes that the student is suitably educated in self-discipline and self-control, and the Bhagavadgita is really a teaching for an illumined, cultured and elevated mind. A lay mind will not be able to grasp its actual intentions by a mere cursory glance.

The connections of the mind in relation to objects of sense get automatically broken the moment it is forced to concentrate on any particular thing. It may be even a dot on the wall. Now, it does not matter what object is chosen for concentration, because every object is a part of the whole cosmic structure, and therefore whatever we touch is nothing but the world and the concentrated form of the properties of *prakriti* – *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*. Any object is as good as any other for purpose of meditation because everything in the world is connected to everything else, and any road can take us to Rome.

Chapter 28

SITTING FOR MEDITATION

Tatraikāgram manah kṛtvā yatacittendriyakriyaḥ, upaviśyāsane yuñjyād yogam ātmaviśuddhaye (BG 6.12): For the purification of the self, one should engage oneself in yoga by concentrating the mind on a single chosen ideal. What is the single chosen ideal on which the mind is to be fixed? There is not much discussion in the Bhagavadgita on the details concerning the nature of the object of meditation because it is to be assumed that we have a practically appreciable knowledge of the nature of things of which this world is constituted, and also of the way in which we seem to be placed in this vast world of God's creation. When there is this satisfactory insight into the structure of the universe and our relation to it, we would know how to adjust our mind, our attitude, in the light of this vast universal structure and our placement in it.

What is thought, after all? It is the manner of our being aware of the conditions in which we are living. These conditions come as reactions from outside through the sense organs, through the nervous system, through the muscles, through the entire body, through our mind, through our emotion, through our reason, through everything that we are. We react, and the world reacts in return. There is a mental adjustment or, to be more precise, it is a reaction of our whole being in respect of the entirety of the environment in which we are placed. This looks like thinking. There is all variety of thinking – conscious thinking and unconscious thinking. Even the body may be said to be doing a sort of unconscious thinking when it feels cold and heat and adjusts its temperature for the temperature outside, and maintains a balance of the physiological system irrespective of changes that take place outside in nature.

I mentioned yesterday that the word 'prehension', which is a scientific manner of expressing subtle operations in nature, makes out that there is no unintelligent bit of matter in the universe. Even the cells of the body are intelligent; they react, and because of a necessary adaptation to environment, in which even the body is engaged constantly, we are able to live in this world. Otherwise, if we cannot adapt ourselves to the environment outside, we will perish in three days. So there is a feeling which is keeping every part of us vigilant in respect of what is happening outside, and the mind, or thinking, is a subtle form of this total reaction of ourselves in response to the reaction of the world of nature from outside. Hence, to think would be to adapt oneself to circumstance, and so our thoughts change according to the nature of the condition in which we are placed. Since we are not always in a uniform condition either outwardly or inwardly, we cannot be maintaining a uniform thought always. There is a multitude of thoughts due to a multitude of responses evoked from our side in respect of conditions of every blessed type prevailing outside.

Anyway, taking all this into consideration, a total preparation of oneself is to be undertaken in yoga. The concentration of mind that is referred to here in the context of yoga meditation is a complete army-like preparation, as if we are

soldiers active in the field. It is not enough if only a little of the soldier's personality is active and the other parts are lingering or sleeping. That would not be a proper attitude. It would not be a workable method of action. Yoga is also a kind of battle. Perhaps some such thing was in the mind of the famous Bhishma when he spoke a sentence to Yudhishthira. Evidently the verse occurs in the Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata: "There are only two persons who are eligible for moksha. Only two persons can break through the orb of the sun and attain to salvation: the yogi who leaves his body in deep meditation, and the soldier who dies in battle. These two attain moksha." Well, we have to take this statement in the spirit in which it is spoken, and also the spirit in which the sannyasin is understood or the soldier is understood. The idea is that there is a welling up of the whole being of a person in total action. The soldier is total action, and meditation is total action in a similar manner. There is a total encounter to a total situation in army action. In meditation also there is a total occupation of the total personality to a total situation which is the whole universe.

Hence, meditation is not mere wool-gathering, thinking something idly, as we may be gazing semi-consciously at a tree when we have no work to do, looking at the sky. This is also a kind of thinking, but this is not yoga thinking. Yoga is union, a communion of everything. Therefore, there should also be a communion of all the parts of the mind into a totality. There is a modern psychological term, evidently a German term: *gestalt*. It is a new school of philosophy which considers that the mind is a total operation. There is no such thing as a fractional operation of the mind. Never does the mind work with one leg. It is the whole of it that operates. It is a particular wholeness of consciousness projecting itself through the avenue of a given situation; therefore, when you think, you think entirely, at least in proportion as required under a given condition, even if it be a very insignificant condition or not a very conspicuous situation.

We do not behave part by part; we behave wholly. But this wholeness which we seem to manifest in our daily behaviour and in our thought may be a very lukewarm wholeness or an intensified wholeness. In a very intense form of rage, a kind of wholeness rises into action. In intense affection beyond a normal measure there is a kind of intensity of wholeness rising into action. In utter starvation and greed for food where anything and everything looks very tasty, there is a total asking from the entire structure of the body. In deep sleep where we are sunk into total oblivion, our whole being is also involved. But in conscious life very rarely the intensity rises into high pitch, except under grave conditions of danger when life itself is at stake. When a lion is facing us in the jungle, or we tread on a cobra, and so on, then our whole life will rise up into action. But normally, though we seem to be a *gestalt* in a psychological sense, there is no partitioned behaviour or fragmented thinking. It is a kind of wholeness, no doubt. When I think in any way, the whole of me thinks, but this wholeness needs to be understood in the percentage of the intensity of its expression at any time. The hundred percent total does not rise into action always. It may be one percent whole, two percent whole, three percent whole, etc.

The Bhagavadgita tells us in a coming verse, *śanaiḥ śanair uparamed* (BG 6.25): Gradually do you withdraw; systematically do you rise. Slowly you ascend, which means, let your wholeness of preparation in yoga be a graduated rising from an outward whole to an inward one, and from a lower one to a higher one.

Aikāgraṃ manaḥ kṛtvā: concentrating the mind wholly and entirely. We have a difficulty in getting wholly engaged in yoga practice. We cannot wholly give our love to yoga, as we cannot wholly give our love to anything in the world. There is a reticence and a guardedness, and a little doubt, a kind of wary attitude of oneself even in our wholly giving ourselves up in unselfish behaviour or affection, or in dedication, in worship or even in a religious exercise such as meditation. There is a subtle 'but' at the back of every undertaking of ours. That 'but' is an unpreparedness of ourselves in the given measure of intensity.

The question may arise before us: After all, having heard all this, having studied so much and understood well all that has been told, what am I supposed to do now? You have asked me to sit in a particular posture, and now you are asking me to think one thing. How long will I be able to think one thing, and what is that one thing?

As I mentioned, the Bhagavadgita has not much to say about the nature of this one thing, though we have to read between the lines and take the whole Gita as a single message as if we are in a position to grasp whatever is to come in future also in the coming chapters, and in this light of a capacity that we may exercise in our ability to appreciate the total message of the Gita, we may not have to raise this doubt in our minds as to what it is that we are expected to concentrate upon. It may be the whole creation, it may be God the Almighty or it may be any blessed thing, because when it is said that the mind should gradually rise, the idea seems to be that the lower manifestations, while they too can be taken as objects of meditation, should be clear as a presented picture before the mind. There should not be any kind of haze or twilight of perception even if the object chosen is a physical object. As hatha yogins and certain other circles of yoga practice tell us, concentration can be on anything that attracts you.

Here is some interesting sideline, namely, the object of concentration should be attractive because how would the mind think an unattractive thing? A repelling object or something which one resents cannot be taken as an object of meditation. Now, a thing cannot be attractive unless a value is seen in it. When a value is recognised in a particular thing, it becomes attractive. But how would you see any value in any object? The meaning that it has for you in your practical life is the value: Does this have any meaning for me? In my present condition, does this mean anything? To the extent it means something to me, to that extent it may look beautiful and attractive also. But if in my present condition this is of no utility to me, then it is not attractive. I can see no value in it, nor will I be propelled to think of it too much. It means nothing to me.

But this is not the way you have to think when you are scientific, you may say, in your approach to things. Yoga is a science. It is not an emotional reaction to anything. It is not loving in an emotional sense, or in a sentimental manner. It is a love born of understanding. It is rational appreciation and not an emotional,

sentimental or biological impulse in respect of any object outside because you cannot trust impulses which are emotional, volitional, biological, etc. They are untrustworthy propelling forces, which will not propel you always. They can subside because they are appetites which ask for some food, and when the food is supplied, the appetite will subside. Therefore, it cannot be always a dynamo that can supply you enough energy. That dynamo will stop, so there must be a perpetually reliable mechanism within you which can generate that perennial energy in you which will not subside. The object of my concentration is very beautiful. It is full of meaning to me. It is so because it is all value for me. All the value that I can expect anywhere in the world, I see in this object. All the world of meaning is concentrated for me in this object. Firstly, I may not see any meaning in anything in the world except in this object; or even if there is some meaning in other things in the world also, taking that for granted, accepting it, all the meaning that may be there in other things I see here also, so that there is no point in my thinking anything else. Whatever I can expect from anywhere else, I can have here also. Now, how will you convince yourself that this is the case? Is it humanly possible to accept that any particular thing that you are thinking of in your mind as your dear object of meditation and yoga is all things and all values and all meaning – all father and all mother, all treasure? Is it possible for your heart and feeling to accept this fact?

Consciously considering what we are in our superficial level of waking existence, this is not possible. We cannot love a thing like that. In our conscious life we are shells of personality, fragments, though basically we are a whole. If we take all the levels of our psyche as a total whole, then we can manifest a total love for this object, but if we employ only the surface of our life, which is conscious living, as a means of concentrating, then the lower levels of the psyche, which may be stronger in their demands, may prevent our taking excessive interest in this particular object. They will say, “We shall not allow this because we too have something to say.”

Therefore, it is necessary for us to be conscious of whatever demands may come from our own selves inside. Have you any demands other than this that you have chosen now? It is no use imagining that you have no demands. Psychology, psychoanalysis, is also a good guide, and the sutras of Patanjali, for instance, are very good aphorisms on ancient psychoanalysis. The word *chitta* used in the sutra of Patanjali is a total comprehension of psychic values. It is *mano*, *buddhi*, *ahamkara*, *chitta* all put together, the entire psychic operation which it takes into consideration when it uses a particular word *chitta* to form his own angle of vision. All the requirements of what we call the internal organ, the *antakarana* or the psyche, are comprehended in this word. An unsatisfied mind cannot become a yogi. That is the meaning.

If there is a demand from any part of our psyche inside in respect of anything in this world which has not been properly answered or responded to – the demand has not been supplied, it has been denied, or rather, suppressed or shunted back – there will be an angry snake sitting inside a hole who will try to

project its head out through any aperture whenever opportunities are available, and these are the submerged, unfulfilled longings of the psyche.

Our longings are mostly submerged. They are very rarely manifested outside because desires are intelligent operations. They are not dull. Every desire knows how it can fulfil itself, and it will not unload all its commodity of requirements at once on the head of anybody. It will keep something inside. As much as can be projected outside as a feasible demand will be expressed outside under conditions which are favourable for its fulfilment. It does not mean that it has not got other demands. It is ever unsatisfied. You will never satisfy the mind. The more you satisfy it, the more it will flare up like a flame which has been fed with clarified butter. The insatiability of desires is as vast as the roaring of the ocean itself due to the fact that the psyche is externally motivated in a universal fashion, and it is not one little mind thinking for one little object in the world. There is a vast sea of objective demand at the back of our psyche, which is, at its root, as big as this creation itself.

Psychoanalysts such as Carl Jung and philosophers such as Schopenhauer have gone into the details of this terrific fact that is at the back of our psyche, which they call the universal will or the collective unconscious, etc., making out that we are not such simple persons as we appear outside. We are not innocent little babies that can be handled. No. We cannot be easily handled. We are uncontrollable. Naughty is the mind. That is why it has been said in these verses of the Bhagavadgita that we have to move with caution, weaning ourselves slowly from outer attractions. And about our attitude to our loves and hatreds in this world, our likes and dislikes and our demands for certain things, something will be told us in the coming verse. The Bhagavadgita is very careful. It does not give us hasty recipes, unthought-of prescriptions. The great master who spoke the Bhagavadgita seems to know even the little weaknesses of man. He is a very good teacher, a very good psychologist, though the greatest master you can conceive of. It is not expected of us to repress our longings. About that we shall speak afterwards.

Tatraikāgram manaḥ kṛtvā: thus collecting all thought, the entire psychic organ, mustering the whole force of it in a given direction. Which is the given direction? This is a question of initiation. There is a process called initiation in religious spiritual circles. A master has to instruct, guide, illumine the student in the art of concentration in meditation, in yoga. It is done by various means: by recitation of mantras, by study of scriptural passages, chanting them repeatedly, or by certain other exercises which are prescribed during initiation. Otherwise, by a reading of a commentary or a mere translation of these words much meaning may not come out to an uninitiated student.

Yatacittendriyakriyaḥ upaviśyāsane yuñjyād: Seated in this posture, as mentioned, bringing into a single communion the mind, the sense organs and all the individual operations, may one be prepared for this art of self-purification. *Ātmaviśuddhi* is the purification of self. What is the impurity in us? What is the dirt that we have got so that we require to be purified? The dirt is the accretion that has grown on our own consciousness, the dirt of longing for externals: *kama*,

krodha, lobha, moha, mada, matsarya, and so on. Any kind of impulsion of consciousness towards whatever is outside is the dirt of consciousness. The consciousness is purchasing trouble by imagining that it wants something from outside it. By karma, *upasana* and *dhyana*, as the tradition goes – by unselfish performance of duty, by meditation religiously and by philosophical analysis – one has to purify oneself.

The shedding of the lower for the sake of the higher is a way of purification. Because you have a higher, you need not long for the lower. Therefore, the discipline in the direction of the higher principle in life involves a shedding of the calls of the lower instinctive resistance, which is the dirt in the context of the higher self. The higher self is a purified self; the lower is impure. The lower is impure in many senses. Firstly, the higher includes the lower, and to cling to the lower in spite of the fact that the higher includes all things would be to cling to an extraneous something which need not be there as our concern.

Secondly, the mistake in our thinking is that there can be something of the lower self as a total alien to a higher self. Our longings, our desires, and our cravings of any kind imply that we believe in the utter wholesale extreme reality of that particular thing which is lying there outside, as it were, as another self which the longing self requires. The lower self is not outside the higher self. So even in our longing for things as a sort of outside being, we commit the double mistake of firstly imagining that it is outside the higher, forgetting that it is subsumed by the higher. And also, the other mistake is thinking that it has a reality of its own. That which is already subsumed in some other principal cannot have an independent reality of its own. That which it implies has to be taken as included. It should not be considered separately. The larger finite includes the smaller finite, and the larger finite, from the point of view of the lower finite, is an infinite. It is an infinite because it is wider than the little finite. That which breaks the boundaries of a little given form of finitude is the tentative infinitude immediately superior to the given finitude. So there are levels of infinitude as there are levels of the self, as we have mentioned.

Hence, the purification of the self – *ātmaśuddhi* referred to here – is the gradual withdrawing of consciousness from desires for lower forms of self, the object as self or the body as self, or any kind of temporal object as a desired something. Wherever there is a desire, there is also an implied hatred. There cannot be love without hatred. It is implied that to love one thing is to not love another thing. Not to love another thing because of the love for one thing is to have a subtle hatred for that thing which is not loved, and that it is an object of rapacious hatred will be known when that which is not loved interferes in any manner with the operations of the love for the given object. There can be subtle hatred or active hatred. Anyway, love and hatred are one and the same mental operation. They are not two distinct things. One cannot be there without the other. Now, this has to be properly understood psychologically and in a cultured philosophical mood with deep spiritual aspiration.

The mind, in this sense we have described it as whatever we are, should be roused into total action for the sake of the glorious achievement that is ahead of

us. We have to satisfy ourselves with this message: A glorious achievement is ahead of us, a grand thing is before us. We are going to be face to face with a grand perfection, a great fulfilment, and we are going to be inundated with a great joy unthought of by the world. We are going to bathe in nectar; we are going to drink the elixir of immortality; we are going to speak to God Himself. The whole world of nature is going to be our friend. The wealth of the cosmos is going to be our property. I shall lack nothing. Hence, I lose nothing by this yoga discipline. Some such instruction one has to give to one's own self. Otherwise, we shall droop in spirits after a few days. The mind, in its lower form of instinctive appetite, will say something in its own little whispering voice, becoming louder and louder afterwards, and drowning our little spiritual longing. Hence, guarded is the person – *upaviśyāsane yuñjyād yogam ātmaviśuddhaye*.

Samaṃ kāyaśirogrīvaṃ dhārayann acalaṃ sthiraḥ, saṃprekṣya nāsikāgraṃ svaṃ diśaś cānavalokayan (BG 6.13); *praśāntātmā vigatabhīr brahmacārivrate sthitaḥ, manaḥ saṃyamya maccitto yukta āsīta matparaḥ* (BG 6.14): In this seated posture, the spine and the neck and the head should be erect in position. There should not be a crooked posture or an uncouth position of the body in the posture of meditation, because the intention here is to bring about an equilibrated condition of consciousness, a balance of outlook and a harmony within the functions of the psyche, which is achieved gradually by effecting the very same balance even in our nervous system and muscles.

The pranas also have to move within the body in a perfectly harmonious manner. There should not be any kind of oversupply or undersupply of the pranas in any given direction. There should be a properly proportioned supply of the energy of the pranas throughout the body because the pranas move through the little tubes called the nerves, and they are connected with our muscular physiological system also. The posture of the physical body tells upon the condition of the nervous system, and incidentally, on the way in which the pranas operate through the nerves, and the nerves tell upon the mind. This is the connection between the mental operation in meditation and the posture of the body. The posture is to be erect, not a crouching posture or a leaning posture or any kind of unbalanced position of the body. That is the meaning of saying that we should be seated in a single posture of meditation with our spine and neck and head erect, maintaining that position.

In the beginning this will be difficult because the spine will start aching after a few minutes because you are not accustomed to sit like that, so in the earlier stages you can have a backrest in a ninety-degree position. That is a good assistance in the beginning. Otherwise, you will find it very hard. That is all right; you can do that. Anyway, it is the final requirement.

Samaṃ kāyaśirogrīvaṃ dhārayann acalaṃ: Without movement. *Sthiraḥ*: Fixed. How to fix? An interesting suggestion comes from a sutra of Patanjali. *Prayatnaśaithilyānantasamāpattibhyām* (Y.S. 2.47): Effortless should be the asana. You should not be conscious that you are sitting in a posture. The purpose of this position of the body is to make you forget that you are sitting at all, to make you practically unconscious that the body is there. Therefore, there should

not be undue effort exercised in the maintenance of the posture. You should not bend the knee hard and force it into position. Then it will be an object of your concentration and you will think of the knee much more than anything else. A great ache will be there; the back will ache, and many other things. So assume any posture you like which is effortless, provided it is conducive from your own point of view. *Antasamāpattibhyām*. This is a sutra of Patanjali: concentrate on *ananta*. *Ananta* can here be considered as that which has no *anta*. *Anta* means 'end' or 'limit'. Concentrate on that which has no end. Concentrate on the endless. What are the endless things?

For your own practical purposes, you can think of space. Endless is space. Go further, go further, go higher and higher, go wider, go right, go left, go north, go south, go to the top and go to the bottom – endless, endless, endless, endless, endless. From all sides is endlessness, endlessness. I am melting and I am moving in ten directions. I am becoming as large as space, as big as space, as wide as space, as endless as space. Now you see the body is sitting erect because of the very thought of endlessness. Endlessness is nothing but perfect equilibrium. It is infinity. Endlessness is infinity. So the thought of infinity, endlessness, creates a stability of the posture. There are many other meanings attached to the word *ananta*. We need not concern ourselves with that now.

Samprekṣya nāsikāgraṃ: gazing at the tip of the nose, as it were. It is mentioned that you may gaze at the tip of the nose. Sometimes it is said 'as it were' – not exactly gazing on the tip of the nose but gazing, as it were, at the tip of the nose. Now, the idea is expressed in various manners by the students of the Bhagavadgita exponents. If you open your eyes entirely, it is possible that objects of sense may distract your attention. Therefore, do not open your eyes entirely and be gazing outwardly. But do not close the eyes entirely, because then you may fall asleep. Neither should you close the eyes completely nor should you open them entirely, for reasons mentioned, so let them be semi-closed. And this semi-closed position of the lids seems to be like looking at the tip of the nose. That is why commentators have used the phrase 'looking at the tip of the nose, as it were'. But some people think it is really looking at the tip of the nose. That is all right in the beginning because the tip of the nose is also some point which can be taken as an object of concentration. It is a part of our own body. It is very near us. And the more generous interpretation of this instruction seems to be that it should be a semiconscious attention of the mind, and not an intensely extroverted consciousness of any particular thing outside or a total subliminal introversion by the closure of the eyes. Let it be a balanced consciousness, neither thinking too much of what is outside nor completely oblivious of what is outside and sinking into the inside. Neither are you an extrovert, nor are you an introvert. You are a balance of the extrovert and the introvert positions of consciousness. Some such meaning we may take for our practical convenience here in this instruction *samprekṣya nāsikāgraṃ svam diśaś cānavalokayan*. You should not be looking around. Do not look in different directions. Do not turn your neck. Let it be fixed erect. Already it has been told, and there is no need for you to look around all sides. In this manner, be concentrated.

Chapter 29

THE YOGA OF THE BHAGAVADGITA

Praśāntātmā vigatabhīr brahmacārivrate sthitaḥ, manaḥ saṁyamya maccitto yukta āsīta matparaḥ (BG 6.14): One should devote oneself to yoga in a state of mind well subdued, not agitated by expectations of any kind, because all expectations which have an ulterior character smack of a desire and expectation for fruits to be yielded by our works. Fearless, therefore, should one be when one sits for meditation. There should be no fear either from any possible eventuality from outside, nor should there be any fear of doubt lurking in the mind as to the very utility of one's engagement.

Here is a subtle point which may come into our minds: What is the utility of my meditation? Even well-intentioned, good-natured, sincere students will have these difficulties. "What have I obtained after years of struggle on this path?" To ask a question like this is to again expect the fruit of action, which has been ruled out already. *Karmaṇyevādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana* (BG 2.47): You are here but to do, and not to question why. This is difficult because, very unfortunately, the expectation of a result from what we do, even religiously and spiritually, is part of our nature. This attitude of the mind to expect some result to follow from what we do is a part of the structure of the mind itself; therefore, to be told that we should not so expect would mean that we have to go against the very grain of our own internal makeup. We have to conquer our own self, as it were, in yoga. There is nobody else whom we have to conquer in this world. Yoga is self-conquering, self-mastery. This was the suggestion given to us in the earlier verse that the self should be subdued by the self.

Years of practise will show no indication of any event taking place. But *nehābhikramanāśosti pratyavāyo na vidyate* (BG 2.40): Not even the least good that we do in this world can go without being recognised. Even the least good, even a modicum of the proper thing done by us, will be properly recognised at the proper place, and at the proper time. That it will be manifestly recognised at the proper time only, and not just now when we demand it, is the unpleasant part of it, at least from our point of view. Today I sow the seed, and tomorrow I want to reap the harvest. This is our expectation. It is difficult to have a satisfaction that our duty has been done in the manner it is to be done, because the spiritual seeker's anxiety that twenty or thirty years of meditation have yielded no tangible results will certainly have an impact upon the ardour of the practice. This impact may be cooled down. All enthusiasm may receive a wet blanket because of a subtle suspicion that perhaps something has gone wrong in our practice. There will be an unintelligible agony felt inside caused by many factors such as the laws of all earthly amenities, to which condition one has betaken oneself in the hope that one will receive a rain of celestial nectar. That rain has not started, and many problems harass the student. These problems are listed in a sutra of Patanjali, and they are important matters needing attention. Physical illness sometimes tortures the student of yoga to such an extent that he feels that

he would better leave the practice than fall ill. Sickness of the body, anxiety of the mind, and many other pressures coming from outside as well as from inside will unsettle the whole issue. This is not a situation in which only a few find themselves. The majority of seekers unwittingly land themselves in this difficulty. Later on a lethargic attitude supervenes, a sense of enough with everything that one has done. This sense of enough arises not because of a satisfaction of having achieved something but because of a dissatisfaction that nothing has been achieved.

Then doubts which are more subtle in their nature insinuate themselves into the mind. "Perhaps I am not for it. I am unnecessarily straining myself, losing the here and also losing the hereafter at the same time. I am not fit for the hereafter. Maybe I have to take several births." This kind of sorrow will also be gnawing into the vitals. And the sorrow will have another adverse effect upon the whole practice, namely, remission of effort. The tenacity of purpose with which one took to the practice in the beginning will cool down and there will be a break in the middle. "After twenty years of tenacious continuation of the practice, I have got nothing, and if I stop doing it for one day, what do I actually lose?" Then the continuous sessions get discontinued and the chain breaks. Sometimes there are medical prescriptions given by physicians. These medicines have to be taken at particular intervals for several days, and the number of days and the intervals are all very important. If the intervals are not taken notice of, there will be a break in the chain of action of the medicines that are taken. "For three days I have taken it; on the fourth day, what does it matter?" This kind of idea should not come to the patient's mind.

Hence, the cumulative force which was generated by practice will get dampened by a remission of effort due to the despondency of spirit caused by helplessness, which again is brought about by the feeling that, after all, nothing is coming. "Why should I not go back to my old pleasures of life? After all, they are concrete, available, real things. What for is this pursuit of the will-o'-the-wisp, the phantasmagoria of a God which may be there? Even if it is there, it is not for me." And so this *pramada*, or heedlessness in practice, catches hold of the person.

Also, I mentioned a kind of lethargy, and not actually sticking to the principles of a methodical routine. The stability of the mind in yoga practice can be maintained only by a methodical routine. If there is no method, the structure may fall. There is a precise arrangement of the material of a building in order that the building may stand erect. If the arrangement is not precise, if it is imprecise, then it is possible that the building may fall. Hence, the strictness with which the practice commenced should be maintained; but it is really hard to maintain it because the senses, which have been controlled by the vigour of aspiration in the beginning, will now whisper from inside, "You are a fool. You have denied us our diet, thinking that a gorgeous meal will descend from the heavens. How foolish you have been! Thirty years have passed and you have got nothing. We are here to serve you. Even now it is never too late to mend. We have not left you, though you have deserted us. You are an ungrateful man, but we are still ready to serve you. We shall be with you. Give us what we want, and we shall give you what you

need.” The senses speak like this even after forty years. And why not listen to this good advice of a real friend rather than hang on some imaginary friend who may be there or may not be there, who has actually given nothing even after years of austerity, starvation, sorrow and suffering?

And down the person goes to the level of matter and the conditions prescribed by the sense organs because pleasure is not only tantalising, it is very attractive. Who can resist the attraction? And what attraction can be there in the ideology that you have placed before yourself in yoga? You have ideally pictured before your mind a pleasure centre, which you call the goal of yoga, but there is a real, concrete, tangible, contactable pleasure centre whose realism is overwhelmingly more impressive than the doubtful impressiveness of the pleasure of an ideal that is only in the mind of the seeker. These are difficulties indeed, hard things.

Did not the Buddha feel this difficulty? “I am done for. A waste is this yoga. Unnecessarily I have given pain to this body by starvation. I am crawling now. I have no energy even to stand on two legs. Today is my last day. So much credit for this yoga! Be gone! I am quitting today.” Such were the ideas of Buddha a day before his illumination, and a sea of temptations thronged around him. The senses become stronger and stronger as they are starved more and more. A starved snake is more venomous than a well-fed snake, and not only are they starved, they are angry. A starved person is susceptible to immediate irascibility. A hungry man is an angry man, it is said. So the senses are starved. You have not given them what they wanted, and so they are very wroth with you. They are waiting to rush upon you in ambush. This happened to a great man like Buddha; beauties, grandeurs, pictures of magnificence unthought of and unseen in this world were there before him. “Why not come with us? Enough of this hard austerity melting the flesh and breaking the bones.” Fears of other types also came upon him. Threats of death and destruction were also dealt at him. Every saint and sage has passed through this stage.

Why do these difficulties come before us when we are honestly longing for something holy, something divine, godly? Why should we deserve this kind of punishment, and why should we be meted this dish of pain and poisonous sorrow while our intention is tolerably honest and sincere? The reason is scientific. It is a thing that has to take place because it is a preparatory starvation for introducing health into the system.

The sorrows are nothing but the inward feelings of an empirically bound mind that its friendships are being snapped. All its belongings are taken away. The world is a large belonging of this individual person, and all association, all contact, is a desirable source of pleasure. They are being severed. It is as if your limbs are being amputated. A psychological amputation is going to take place. All the antennae of the connection with the psyche are cut off by means of this dissociation of interest in things, and so while in the beginning it was an emotional upsurge of an ideal satisfaction that is yet to take place, it is basically an inward suggestiveness towards secret suffering. “Though I may be blessed with divine vision and universal consciousness, I have lost something which is

already there.” It is hard to be free from this notion that along with a possibility of divine enrichment in the future there is, simultaneously, an immediate loss. That you are going to have a large salary in the future may not sufficiently compensate your sorrow that you have lost your purse today. “After all, I have lost my purse, though I may get a larger salary tomorrow. No loss is tolerable. So let God Himself come and stand before me; that is fine, but have I not lost the world? That is also there as a point to consider.” The mind will be thinking over this matter. “After all, I have lost the world.”

It is not possible to adjust the mind to the expected idealisation that the whole of reality can be found in the object of meditation. The whole of it is not there. It is some grand, great thing, no doubt, a very large thing, a beneficial thing and a desirable thing, but the loss is also real. These are the ways in which the senses speak. And then the *pramada*, or the heedlessness of remission of effort, creeps in.

Then there are other tricks of the psyche which tell us that we have attained to a satisfactory stage of spiritual enlightenment. “I have visions. I have seen colours and heard sounds which come from the denizens of the higher heavens.” These visions are not considered to be illusions. They are regarded as satisfactions, so that the effort may be stopped somehow. The mind will not be able to concentrate on that point anymore. It will flit here and there and move about. In the earlier stages, due to the pressure of the effort exerted upon it, which acted like the whip that goads the horse to pull a vehicle, it did concentrate. But how long will it move like this with the power of a whip? Then the mind gets exhausted. It falls down, and the concentration ceases. However much you may try to fix your mind, it will not be possible.

Therefore, here is a benign word of blessing. *Vigatabhi*: Have no fears of this kind. Let all these fears be shut out because there is a time and also a manner of the coming of the divine grace. It comes at the proper time, and it comes in a proper manner. We have to expect it in the manner it will come, and also at the time it can come, and not at any time that we may call it. Submissively we have to expect it, no matter the length of time it may take to visit us.

Brahmacārivrate sthitaḥ, manaḥ saṁyamya. The senses are turbulent, and the needs of the human personality are galore. Countless are our needs. The physical body needs food. Every sense organ requires a food. The ego also requires a food, and our emotions require a food. Our logical understanding, reason or intellect also asks for its own food. Now, this is the manner in which they are sustained by their own requisite diets, and *brahmacharya* is the way of the universal existence. Brahma is completion, it is the plenum, it is the total, it is self-sufficiency, self-completeness, and to move as a whole is to be in a state of *brahmacharya*. For our practical purposes, Brahma may be considered as that which is integrated. To live an integrated life is to be a *brahmacharin*, and to dissipate one’s energies in any channel of sensory activity would be the opposite of it. Enough has already been said in the earlier chapters of the Gita of what it means to be a whole person. We need not comment on it once again, as it would be an unnecessary repetition. It is necessary for us to maintain ourselves as

wholes, and not fractions. We are not subordinates of any circumstance in this world. We are not slaves of any condition. We want nothing. We do not want anything because we have everything in us. We have everything in us because we are wholes. We have to bring into our minds what was told us in the Third and Fourth Chapters of the Bhagavadgita that is it possible for us to satisfy ourselves that we are a sort of completeness of selfhood.

God should be our ideal, finally. *Yukta āsīta matparaḥ*: devoted to Me only as the Supreme Almighty. Here in this devoted and dedicated betaking of oneself to the supreme Godhead, one has to maintain a certain attitude. Where is this Godhead? The God that you are seeking for communion in yoga – where is this God seated? In every experience through which you pass there is an element of God because anything that you are forced to regard as real in some sense partakes of the reality which is ultimate. The ultimately real is present in some measure in the relatively real, because even to enjoy a relative reality there must be at least a little of the ultimate in it. Hence, our problems must be real in order that they may harass us. Unreal problems cannot give us trouble. So even a problem has a reality, and nothing can be real unless there is a jot, at least, in it of that which is absolutely real. Even that which is passingly real, transitorily real and relatively real – real as a phantasm even – must have some shadow of the ultimate Reality. To the extent anything is impossibly real, even if it be a little insignificant so-called ‘something’ of the world, insofar as it enjoys a reality of its own, it attracts our attention and it calls for our obedience to the law that operates in its circles. Hence, the Bhagavadgita will tell us that we should be moderate in our attitudes, and not go to extremes in a supremely idealistic sense minus all realism in it. The ideal of spiritual realisation is not bereft of the real element in it. The ideal is also real. Generally we make a distinction between the ideal and the real, but such a distinction is uncalled for. The ideal has no meaning unless it has a reality. An unreal ideal is not going to bring us anything.

Hence, in a proportionate measure it is necessary for us to recognise elements of reality even in the lesser circles of environment in which we are unavoidably placed, as it were, and which we are helplessly forced to consider as real. When a cold wind blows, it is real. When a hot air blows, it is real. When hunger pinches from inside, it is real. When there is illness, it is real, and when there is agitation of the mind, it is real. They are not unreal events taking place.

Now, to compare them with an absolute Reality and hold that they are not real would not be a wise attitude towards them because in our ascent to the Absolute, or the supreme Reality, comparisons are not allowed. We cannot compare one thing with another thing. Each has to be taken from its own point of view and from the status which it occupies. Everyone is important in this world. There is no unimportant person, and everything has a value. Totally valueless things do not exist. The very fact that they exist should be enough proof that they have some value, and therefore it is up to us to give them sufficient regard to the extent of the value that we evince in them. There is no beggar bereft of all value. Nothing in the world is a beggar of that type; hence, in all the levels of ascent in

yoga, in all degrees of rise from selfhood to selfhood, we have to pay tax at every toll, and these tolls are nothing but the gates of the different levels of reality.

What are the levels of reality? They are as many as we encounter. Therefore, any kind of excessive attachment to an unrealistic ideal should not be the motivation in yoga. There is some element of reality in the world to the extent that the consciousness permits such reality, and an austerity which does not want to take notice of the existent reality in the relative values of life will have to pay the penalty of that ignorance of the law of the lower level. So the yoga of the Bhagavadgita is a balance of attitude outwardly as well as inwardly, horizontally as well as vertically.

Nātyaśnatas tu yogosti na caikāntam anaśnataḥ, na cātisvapnaśīlasya jāgrato naiva cārjuna; yuktāhāravihārasya yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu, yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhahā (BG 6.16-17): The yogin, the student of yoga, is not a peculiar person. The yogi is a normal person. The yogi looks like any other person. The yogi does not have two horns and four eyes. He looks like anybody else. There is no necessity to put on faces or to be queer in one's behaviour. Normalcy, freedom of expression and utter relief of every tension is the characteristic of a yoga student. The difference between a yoga student and an ordinary person is freedom from attachments and emotional involvements of every kind.

Yoga permits us to work, as is the case with work in a factory or on the roadside. Outwardly, all work will look like a uniform behaviour of people, but yoga is not an outward behaviour; it is an inward attitude. It is a detached consciousness that speaks the nature of yoga. The outward relationship is the form of one's empirical existence in this world, but the inward meaning in it is to be seen in the attitude of consciousness. There is an element of universality present in the work that a yogi does, and that is the unselfishness about it. The dispassionate performance of work, which is the special feature of any performance of a yogin, is due to an element of universality present there which distinguishes it from all other works involved in personal attachments, involved in the desire for fruits of what one does, binding action. *Na karma lipyate nare* (Isa 2) says the Isavasya Upanishad: Action does not bind.

Hence, we are told repeatedly in the Bhagavadgita that the yogin is not necessarily an inactive person: *na niragnir na cākriyaḥ* (BG 6.1). Nor is it action of an involved nature. It is not inaction because inaction would also be a personalised attitude, and a yogin has overcome the limitations of personality in some degree. It is not action; it is not inaction. It is a different attitude altogether, difficult to describe. *Aniṣṭam iṣṭam miśraṃ ca trividhaṃ karmaṇaḥ phalam, bhavaty atyāgināṃ pretya na tu samnyāsinaṃ kvacit* (BG 18.12): For the sannyasin, for the renunciate, for the yogin, action is neither good nor bad. It is also not a mixture of two things. The action of a yogin cannot be called good action, nor can it be called bad action, nor can it be called a combined product of something good and something bad. In the case of ordinary persons the actions may be good or bad or mixed, but in the case of the renunciate any kind of evaluation in this manner is unwarranted because the yogin's actions are natural

actions. 'Natural' means 'spontaneous', spontaneous in the sense of communion with the facts of nature; therefore, these actions are nobody's actions, or rather, they are everybody's actions. The yogin's action is the action of the whole world or, in a sense, it is no action at all. Such is the inscrutable nature of the behaviour of the yogin.

All extremes are avoided. "I want these things," the yogin will not say. "I do not want these things," the yogin also will not say because he has established a harmony of attitude inwardly in consciousness in relation to events and things in the world. Complete abstemious attitude of an over-pressurised ascetic is not the yoga of the Bhagavadgita. Yoga is not starvation. The yoga of the Bhagavadgita does not tell us to starve ourselves emotionally, intellectually, or even physically and materially. The yoga does not want that we should kill ourselves. It also does not tell us that we should pamper ourselves, that we should indulge our ego and the sense organs.

The yoga of the Bhagavadgita is the yoga of healthy living. You know what healthy living is. Normalcy of intake and normalcy of avoidance, both these are normal behaviours. In order to live a healthy life we have to avoid certain things and we have to take certain things. Now, this intake of certain things for the purpose of the maintenance of health is not to be considered as attachment because it is partaken of as a necessity in the maintenance of the balance of the person, the health of the body. Even eating is not to be a pleasure; it is a medicine. Food has to be taken as a medicine for this illness of hunger. We do not take medicine because there is pleasure in taking it. It is a necessity. The diet of the senses and the food of the body are necessities to the extent they are unavoidable for existence, but they should not become luxuries and excitements of senses and the physical appetites.

Hence, there is this norm of a golden mean prescribed in our diet, in our food, in our intake; in our daily behaviour, in our work, in our occupation, in our character, in our conduct, in our sleep, in our wakefulness we should be normal. We should not be excessive either way. This shows the wisdom of the yoga of the Bhagavadgita that we should maintain *samatva*, which is yoga, a balanced outlook at every stage in yoga, even in the least and the most initial steps, because this balance called for implies our due regard for all things that are real, relatively at least, in the atmosphere outside. We do not disregard the world in our love for yoga, nor do we pamper, praise, eulogise, or get attached to the objects of sense. In all the levels of approach we maintain a wise, judicious attitude. Therefore, we are ever in a state of perfect equilibrium of conduct in attitude with all things at every level, whatever those things be. Hence, we are friends of all people: *sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ* (BG 5.25): The yogin is a well-meaning friend and benefactor of all. You have the goodness by which you show due regard even to the least of values in this world. The yogin respects everything. He does not disregard anything. Therefore, he is a benefactor, a lover, a friend, a philosopher and a guide of all. Such is the yoga of the Bhagavadgita, a wholesome outlook to the whole of life in all its manifestations.

Chapter 30

COMMUNION WITH ETERNITY

*yadā viniyataṃ cittam ātmany evāvatiṣṭhate,
niḥspr̥haḥ sarvakāmebhyo yukta ity ucyate tadā* (BG 6.18).

*yathā dīpo nivātastho neṅgate sopamā smṛtā,
yogino yatacittasya yuñjato yogam ātmanaḥ* (BG 6.19).

*yatroparamate cittaṃ niruddhaṃ yogasevayā,
yatra caivātmanātmānaṃ paśyann ātmani tuṣyati* (BG 6.20).

*sukham ātyantikam yat tad buddhigrāhyam atīndriyam,
vetti yatra na caivāyaṃ sthitaś calati tattvataḥ* (BG 6.21).

*yaṃ labdhvā cāparaṃ lābhaṃ manyate nādhikaṃ tataḥ,
yasmin sthito na duḥkhena guruṇāpi vicālyate* (BG 6.22).

*taṃ vidyād.h duḥkhasaṃyogaviyogaṃ yogasaṃjñitam,
sa niścayena yuktavyo yogonirviṇṇacetasā* (BG 6.23).

*saṅkalpaprabhavān kāmāms tyaktvā sarvān aśeṣataḥ,
manasaivendriyagrāmaṃ viniyamya samantataḥ* (BG 6.24).

*śanaiḥ śanair upamed buddhyā dhṛtigrhītayā,
ātmasaṃsthaṃ manaḥ kṛtvā na kiṃcid api cintayet* (BG 6.25).

*yato yato niścaraṭi manaś cañcalam asthiram,
tatas tato niyamya itad ātmany eva vaśaṃ nayet* (BG 6.26).

Here, in a capsule, is a description of the blessedness of yoga experience. When the mind subsides, it is like the child returning to the lap of its mother. It finds its own source, rejoicing in the ecstasy of having possessed what it had lost, like the returning of the prodigal son in the biblical story. Squandering all the wealth of the loving father, the foolish son wanders far, far away from the source of protection and replenishment. The wealth that is God-given is squandered by mortal enjoyment. When all the wealth is exhausted and there is nothing to call one's own, there is a sense of weariness and a sense of enough. One sees to the corners of the earth and finds that in its dark caves of promised joy there are only cups of poison hiddenly kept for the enticement of the desiring soul. Knowing this, the mind comes back like a tired bird that flies higher and higher in search of its prey, going above in the skies throughout the day and returning to its own little place of rest in the night.

It is unbelievable that our thoughts are far, far removed by an incalculable distance from the source which they are really seeking. The mind is searching for the very same thing from which, at the same time, it wants to run away. A contradictory attitude has the human mind – every mind, I should say. It is in search of perennial satisfaction that the mind runs; but in this running, it is moving away from the very thing from which it expects satisfaction. This is something the mind itself cannot understand. That which it seeks in the sorrow of the wilderness of this earthly existence it finds not, because in all the searches of the mind in terms of the senses, it is running after the shadow of things, keeping itself away from the original which has cast the shadow. All the promises

of joy in the objects of sense are upside down shadows of an original that is far, far away.

Plato, in his great work *The Republic*, describes an analogy of the cave to illustrate the kind of bondage in which we are. Imagine that prisoners are shackled in a dark cave, their hands and feet and neck tied firmly by iron chains so that they can see only a wall on which is cast the shadows of objects moving behind them outside in the world of sunlight. They cannot see the objects, but only their shadows, because of the fixity of their necks. They get accustomed so much to the reality of the movement of the shadows on the wall that they imagine that real life is present in the shadows, because they move. Anything that moves must have life, and shadows do move; therefore, they must have life. The prisoners read significance and meaning and all value into the movements of these shadows. These prisoners may live a family life in this condition. They may have children, all born in this dark cave, but conditioned to live in a dungeon of darkness, forced to see only the shadows and never allowed to turn their heads back to the light of day. Ages may pass like this when it is impossible for anyone to imagine that there can be anything anywhere except these movements. And they are in the realities. They speak, they dance and they gesticulate. They have life, and these are the denizens of the cave. But suppose after ages they are released from the prison; their shackles are loosened and then they are brought back to the reality of waking life and they see the originals. Will they not be surprised? They will not know what they are seeing. Their eyes cannot see the light. They will be dazzled. They would not be able to recognise the people who were casting the shadows in the cave. They will think they are in a new world altogether which they cannot recognise, appreciate or understand. Long is the description; I am briefly stating the meaning of this illustration.

We are the prisoners in the cave of this world where all that we see before us is the dancing of the shadows, and the movements of objects in front of us is actually the movement of reflections cast by the originals. The originals are not in this world. We are only shadows, you and I included. That is very important to remember. It is the shadow seeing the shadow. The originals are not in this world.

We can extend this interesting analogy to conceive the extension of our visualising pictures on a screen in a cinema hall. Suppose, with a stretch of your imagination, you place yourself in the screen itself. Do not be one person in the audience outside the screen. Imagine you are also one of the pictures in the screen. Would you not be in a real world? Real world indeed! And all are shadows, nevertheless. The grandeur and the three-dimensional solidity of pictures, which are nothing but two-dimensional shadows, become more enlightening and educative if we ourselves become their friends. In case we ourselves are part of the dramatis personae appearing there as shadows dancing on the screen, that would be the world in which we are living.

There is not one substance in this world that can be called real, nothing that is original. The original is somewhere. All thoughts are reflections of original motivations in the higher realms. Every event is a shadow of volitions of the

denizens of higher degrees of reality. It has been said that marriages take place in heaven first, and their reflections are seen later on. Wars take place in the heavens first. Perhaps diseases also originate internally in the system before they manifest themselves outside in the physical body. The fruit ripens from inside, and it takes time to appear ripened on the surface.

We have to exercise a special mental effort to appreciate this position in which everything in the world is only a shadow of originals, including the perceptive media, the perceiving individual like me and you, so that the whole world is a theatre of shadows, puppet movements whose strings are pulled by originals which are undetectable by the eyes of the shadows because the puppets cannot turn back and see the strings.

The mind is happy. We are all rejoicing in this world with all the wealth and the glamour of possession. Everyone seems to be very secure, but as secure as the idiotic shadow. It is difficult to understand the blunder that we have committed in coming to this earth. It is a headlong movement into samsara, with head down and legs up. The word 'headlong' is mentioned in the Upanishad, to make matters very clear. It is sinking into the pit of suffering when we entered the womb of the mother, and when the Upanishad makes out that we have fallen headlong, as it were, into this sea of mortality, it also suggests, at the same time, that we are afflicted with hunger. Hunger and falling headlong go together.

Appetition is our nature. There is a craving from every cell of our body. Every part of what we are is hungry for things. And what are the things for which it is hungry? It is a grabbing attitude of the derelict mind, that which has lost sense completely. It is raving, as it were, in the agony of separation from the original from which it has fallen. The fall is beautifully described in Genesis, and it is also described, in a more dramatic fashion, in the Upanishads. Yet, we seem to be ruling in hell because we do not want to serve in heaven. We think that ruling in hell is better.

So the lords of the earth, the kings and emperors and potentates and the rich men of the world are these wondrous shadows, these reflections, lifeless automatons that seem to be full of life due to the energy that is borrowed from an original which is at the back but cannot be discovered due to the outward movement, like a projectile, of the actions of the mind. *Parāñci khāni vyatṛṇat svayambhūs tasmāt parāñ paśyati nāntarātman* (Katha 2.1.1). Before Plato told this analogy of the cave, the Kathopanishad had already envisioned it. Outwardly turned are the senses and the mind; shackled is the consciousness of the mortal. Therefore, there is a compulsion to see only the outside, and never can you have a moment's rest and the occasion to sink down into yourself and see what is at the back. We have no eyes at the back of our heads. We have only eyes at the front, which see only what is external. Therefore, the inward original, the archetype, is never seen. But in yoga there is an occasion of the coming back. The shadow enters the original. The reflection goes back to That from where the reflection arose. Then what happens? That is what is described here in these verses.

When the mind that is controlled returns to the Atman, it enjoys a bliss which is unthinkable – unthinkable because it is not an object of the senses. It also cannot be cognised by the mind. This bliss of the Atman, this experience in yoga which is a merger into the universal bosom of all things, cannot be thought by the mind because it is not outside the mind. It is prior to the very origin of all thinking process. It cannot be seen with the eyes, it cannot be touched by the hand, and it cannot be sensed by any means we have because this bliss is non-spatial, non-temporal. It is not in the world of spatial distance and temporal succession. Therefore, it is unimaginable. Because it is unreachable by the powers of the mind and the senses, we are not attracted by its presence. The mind can be pulled only by that which it can conceive. The senses can move only to that which they can cognise, perceive, contact. But here is something which the mind cannot think, the senses cannot contact. Therefore, we cannot even believe that it can exist. We doubt even the existence of it. Such is the tragedy that has befallen mortal man.

But when the consciousness stands steady, unmoving like the flame of a lamp in a windless place, there is a universal communication being received from all the corners of creation. Tributes follow from every direction, as it were. *Sarvā diśo balim asmai haranti* (CU 2.21.4), says the Chhandogya Upanishad. When you are placed in this uniformity of communion with every particle of creation in yoga meditation, tribute follows from every corner of the earth. As vassals come with offerings to their master who is the king, directions, which are the quarters of the whole of creation, bend down before this emperor, as it were, offering their tribute, and unimaginable miracles take place. Non-living so-called entities, which we call matter, inorganic substances, assume life. Stones will speak, trees will bend, as it happened, they say, when the great master Suka moved. Trees shook in obeisance to the great yogin, the son of Vyasa, and the leaves of the trees began to communicate messages, indicating his presence in every leaf. Vyasa summoned his son, “My dear boy, where are you?”

“Here am I, Father,” is the response that came from every leaf of the trees around, because he was not anybody’s son and he was not living in a particular place. So friendly did even the leaves of the trees become.

The world may look like a vanishing phenomenon, as we do not know what happens to night when the sun has risen, where night has gone. Such a terrific dark spectre, which is the blinding night through which we pass, vanishes when the sun rises; so shall the world vanish before this vision that is spiritual. But where has the night gone? Where is it sitting now when the sun has risen? No one knows where the night is sitting. It shall come after some time. From where does it come? And where has it gone now during the coming of the sun in the day? As the night shall vanish to a place which is nowhere, the world shall also vanish to a place which is nowhere because it never existed, and therefore there is no question of its coming and going. There is no such thing as darkness; it is not an existent substance. It is a negation of light. It is an abstraction. It is not an entity, and therefore its going and coming are unimaginable to us. Yet the night looks

intensely blinding, solidly real before our eyes. Such a solid earth shall melt into liquid when the mind returns to the Atman.

When the mind has settled itself in this condition of union with the Atman, there shall be no further effort of meditation because here all effort spontaneously receives its fructification, its fulfilment. All movement, all project, all adventure finds its culmination here. All the rivers of human aspiration commingle in this sea of fulfilment. Therefore, there is calmness, quietude, the *prasanta* state. The stability of this existence can be compared only to the width of the universe.

The mind, in this state of stability on the Atman, does not find itself placed in any particular locality. The Atman is not a locality. It is not something. Nor should it be imagined that the returning of the mind to the Atman is a kind of subsidence of our thoughts in a particular luminous spot in our body. The Atman is not inside the body, it is inside all things. The returning of the mind to the Atman, or the Self, is the returning of all objectivity into universality, externality into the supreme transcendence. It is not something moving to something else. It is not like a drop which is the mind going to another flame that is the Atman. Neither is the mind a drop, nor the Atman a flame of light. The mind is a force of objectification, a projection of consciousness outwardly in space; therefore, in a way, the mind can be said to be as vast as space itself. It is conditioned by space and time, so our longings are as vast as space, and shall continue for as long a time as time itself continues. This entire objectivation has to return to its originality. It is not one man's mind – your mind, my mind. It is the force of external projection of consciousness subsiding into the original which is the Atman, meaning thereby the soul and the Self of all things, which is not present in one or two things only, but in all things.

The inner status, the substantiality and the root of Being, the Self-sense of everything, is called the Atman. Inasmuch as this Self-sense is universally, ubiquitously present in all – the Atman is not in me or you or some people, it is that inviolable selfhood present in everything, every person, and also in every kind of relation between persons and things – to such an inconceivable universality the whole force of objectification returns. This is why such dramatic phrases are used here in these verses of the Gita, because language is impotent here. What happens in this spiritual communion cannot be expressed in the words available to us. It is the whole cosmos merging in Godhead, the entire creation entering into the Creator. This is what happens in yoga samadhi. It is not a little act that you perform in the corner somewhere inside your room. It is not my meditation; it is not your meditation. In the beginning it looks as if a person is seated for meditation, but as the progress continues, you become wider and wider in your comprehension. It begins with a person, as it were. I or you begin to sit in the posture mentioned, with this discipline described; yes, it is so, of course, but this is only the initial picture of meditation.

As we advance further and further, the little individuals – you or me – begin to get expanded in their comprehensiveness; large does the self become. The higher self occupies the position of the lower self. Remember the words 'higher self' and

'lower self' used in the earlier verses here. When the higher self is the experience of the lower self, the lower vanishes into the higher, and in the next higher stage of meditation the little individual, which is you or me, gets liquefied, as it were, into the larger self. The larger self again rises into the still larger one, the little general becomes the larger general, the little universal enters into the wider universal. These are the stages of samadhi and *samapatti* described in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, to which he gives his own terms: *vitarka*, *vichara*, *ananda*, *asmita samadhis*, and so on. All these words make no sense to us. We do not know what they actually mean. We have to stretch our imagination with great effort to understand some iota of the significance of these statements.

In the beginning it may look like some individual is meditating. The individuality merges into the selfhood of the person, which is nothing but the total wholeness of the consciousness of the individual. Here, when we speak of a person meditating, we should not think of the physical body merely. It is the self that tries to unite itself with the Self. And the Self is not a physical location, it is a permeating consciousness. In the beginning it is a sort of localised selfhood, as it were, but this location of the self becomes expanded in dimension when it unites itself with the larger selfhood in meditation. As I mentioned, it goes on like this, higher and higher, until all-self becomes all-Self. Every self is everywhere. This is only to speak in a figurative, metaphorical way. There is no 'every self' there. All rivers become the ocean, and there are no rivers in the ocean. There is the ocean; there ends the matter.

Having reached this state, one attains the goal of life, a goal which is everywhere, not only in the future. The ideas of location of personality and the futurity of experience vanish here because the location of personality is a spatial dogma, and the futurity of the possible experience of Godhead is a temporal dogma, and these two dogmas vanish. Neither are we spatially located as a little self, nor is the experience to be in the future, sometime in coming periods of the temporal process. These obsessions caused by the intervention of spatial location and temporal process vanish *in toto*. Eternity inundates us, and we are bathed, as it were, in the sea of bliss. So goes these verses of the Bhagavadgita.

After a temporary bathing in this nectar of experience, it is possible for the mind to cool down in its ecstasy because it cannot be said that one can be always in this state throughout the day and the night. The condition of yoga comes and goes. These ecstasies are not perennial and permanent accompaniments of our life. There are moments of sudden exaltation into the spirit of experience, as mentioned here, but sometimes it becomes an intolerable experience for the mind, as in epic language we are told that it was not tolerated even by Arjuna himself when it became possible for him to have that blissful cosmic experience. But the mind has to be brought back once again to that source which it experienced, but from which it may get separated gradually by the pressure of old karmas. Therefore, the mind has to gradually be brought back, with great effort. How will you bring it back? By bringing to memory the delight, the nectarine joy, the sweetness of this experience which it tasted once. If we remember the taste of a past experience, we shall try to have it again.

So śanaiḥ śanair uparamed buddhyā dhṛtigrhīṭayā, ātmasamsthaṃ manah kṛtvā na kiṃcid api cintayet: By the effort of understanding, the mind has to be subdued and fixed in the Self. Then there is nothing for you to do afterwards. There is no question of doing anything afterwards, because all doing is fulfilled here in its attaining all value and all meaning, all significance, eternity itself. Again, human thought, which is accustomed to think in no other way than the acquisition of property and the living of a cosy individual life, will not be able to even remember this. Even the memory fades. Even if we gorged ourselves on a very delicious dish some days back, we may not be able to remember every detail of it today. The memory fades. Even happy experiences in this little life cannot be remembered always, because memory becomes feeble as time passes. Hence, even such exaltations may not always remain with us.

Whenever the mind moves, let it be brought back to its source. *Yato yato niścarati manaś cañcalam asthiram, tatas tato niyamaitad ātmany eva vaśaṃ nayet:* As and when the mind moves outwardly, bring it back from that place immediately.

In one of the minor Upanishads we have a suggestion, an instruction how we can bring the mind back to the Self. Let the mind move, but the mind moves to the Self only. It does not, and it cannot, move to any other place. Wherever you cast your eyes in the middle of the ocean, you will see water and water, and nothing but that. Let the eye be cast long distances ranging beyond the conceivable limit. It will see a mass of water everywhere. Let the mind soar higher and higher. It will see space and more space, nothing but empty space everywhere. It is space everywhere; it is water everywhere. So may the mind move anywhere. Do not control the mind. Let it not be restrained. Let it be given a long rope to meander and graze in the garden of this creation of God, because it will see nothing but the face of God everywhere. It will not be able to find anything else except the Self, or the Atman, because all things, even the grass in the meadow, has a selfhood of its own.

Every tree, every stone, every pebble, every sand particle, every atom is a self by itself. So when the mind moves, where does it move? It moves to the Self. It does not move to an object. There are no objects in this world. They are little selves. Why do you call them objects? Where are the objects? Are you an object? If you are not an object, how does it follow that another is an object? There are no objects, no sensorily contactable things in the world. Everything maintains a status of its own. Everything is a self by itself. Everything is an 'I am I'; everything is an 'I am what I am'. Therefore, if the mind moves, it moves to the selfhood of all things. The mind moves to the I in all things. Therefore, even when the mind apparently moves to a so-called object, earlier called a sense object, really it is moving among the selves of the cosmos. This is a higher form of meditation where restraint of the mind is not at all required, because from what will you restrain the mind? There are no things in the world from which the mind has to be withdrawn. It need not be withdrawn; let it go anywhere. But that everywhere and everyoneness of the movement of the Atman is wrongly imagined as the movement of the mind. The mind is nothing but a concentrated

point of the Atman itself. Therefore, even when the mind moves among the so-called sense objects, the Atman is moving in the Atman. The infinite is moving in the infinite. All desires are the summoning of the infinite for the infinite. That is why desires are insatiable, cannot be satisfied. Who can satisfy the infinite? Therefore, endless is the longing for the endless that is the infinite. Even the desires of the mortal individual are propelled, finally, by the infinitude that is at the back, and also this infinitude of longing is for the infinitude of possession. So in all desires again, the infinite is asking for the infinite.

The whole world, the entire creation, looks like a dance of the Atman within itself. Therefore, let the Atman dance in this world which it has created for its own pleasure. There is no need of self-control. This is a wider, larger, deeper kind of meditation where the Atman rejoices and finds itself even in that which it sees outside as an external to itself. As a baby may dance in the middle of a reflection that it sees in the mirrors kept all round, the Atman rejoices even in the midst of objects of sense. They are no more objects of sense. They are a replica of its own Self.

Thus, the whole of creation is God's beautiful expanded form. Every atom is an eye of God, and every head is the head of the supreme Purusha. This is what the Bhagavadgita tells us subsequently. *Sarvataḥ pāṇipādaṃ tat sarvatokṣīsiromukham, sarvataḥ śrutimal loke sarvam āvṛtya tiṣṭhati* (BG 13.13): Everywhere you find the ears of God, everywhere you find the eyes of God, everywhere you find the limbs and the hands and the fingers and the feet and the heads of God. Where will the mind go?

Thus, in this blissful merger, union, samadhi, attainment, communion with eternity, the infinite embraces the infinite, the eternal communes with the eternal, the whole of creation enters the bosom of the Almighty. This is the goal of life.

Chapter 31

THE MESSAGE OF THE SIXTH CHAPTER

The Bhagavadgita, which is an intensely practical message, is wholly concentrated on self-discipline for the sake of *dhyana*, or the meditation which the self within has to carry on for union with its own higher nature. Various aspects of this discipline have been mentioned briefly in several of the verses, and nothing has been left unsaid. All necessary details in this regard have been emphatically touched upon in their proper context, leading up to a succinct narration of the inner constituents of spiritual experience which supervenes when the higher self engulfs the lower self.

Here, at the end of the message, there is a promise, as it were, given by the invading higher self as God speaking to man, or the Absolute giving a promise to all that is phenomenal and relative. Wherever the higher is, which is the determining factor of the life of the lower, there shall be peace prevailing everywhere, and security will be the blessedness of the self that has surrendered itself entirely to the higher.

*yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvaṃ ca mayi paśyati,
tasyāhaṃ na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati* (BG 6.30).

*sarvabhūtasthitaṃ yo mām bhajaty ekatvam āsthitaḥ,
sarvathā vartamānopi sa yogī mayi vartate* (BG 6.31).

*ātmaupamyena sarvatra samaṃ paśyati yorjuna,
sukhaṃ vā yadi vā duḥkhaṃ sa yogī paramo mataḥ* (BG 6.32).

To see or behold the uniformity of selfhood in the entire jurisdiction of one's experience would be to live in a state of non-objectivity because the perception of selfhood is, at the same time, a union established between oneself and one's whole environment. The higher self, or the larger self spoken of here, is the environment of the lower self, which ordinarily looks like an external world which has to be contacted through the sense organs and the mind. The world we look at and encounter in our daily life is our larger self. When it appears as a coordinated system of individual units, we regard this larger self as a society, which outlook of ours impels us to carry on social welfare work, for instance, an impulsion which is actually the motivation from the selfhood that is ingrained in the so-called multitude of individuals forming this social world of external experience.

The sympathy that we feel for people, the charitable nature we would like to extend in respect of others, is basically a spiritual impulse. It is the larger self summoning the smaller self. It has not become intensely and wholly spiritual as yet. Hence, a socially sympathetic attitude is a mild form of spiritual outlook of life inasmuch as it is, at the same time, diluted with the perception of isolated units. One's own larger self is this world of human society, and even the world of nature which attracts us, impels, compels and requires of us to develop an attitude of harmony with it. This compulsion arises on account of our inwardly being living participants in the working of this whole world of our so-called

external experience. If this were not to be so, if our world, natural or social, were not to be a part of our essential nature, there would be no impulsion from within us to be in a state of harmony with it. We would not have anything to do with a world of which we are not a part – a part really, livingly, vitally, and not as a mechanised part.

Hence, the call of the self is irresistible. It manifests itself as our attitudes of coordination such as family bonds, love and friendship, sympathy, mercy, helpfulness, and a feeling for others. These are psychologically manifest actions of the still-deeper reality of a unitary being, which is our true self, which appears as a large atmosphere outside. *Yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvaṃ ca mayi paśyati, tasyāhaṃ na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati*: He who beholds the Self in all the things which otherwise appear as external objects and persons, he who beholds all things in this widely spread-out Self and, at the same time, conversely, beholds the one Self in all beings, is never forsaken at any time, because who will forsake you except that which is outside you? It may be an outsideness felt even in our own false personality.

We, as human individuals, also have a true personality and a makeshift personality, a kind of personality of which we may be afraid. We may be frightened about our own selves. There are features in us which can cause fear to us. A person can be afraid of himself due to the fact there is a real person and also a false person, a Dr. Jekyll and a Mr. Hyde. Both are present in one person, and these two personalities are the two voices speaking – often at the same time, and severally at other times – in the language of a unitary divine selfhood, and also in the distracting clamour of a desire-filled family of sense organs.

Hence, insecure is that person who sees a duality between the self and its atmosphere, which atmosphere may be the area occupied by the false selfhood of one's own self, the apparent individuality of one's self, which is also a false self, or the secondary self of the world of nature and human beings outside. So there is a dual aspect of this fear which can overtake a person under specific conditions. The world may frighten us, and we ourselves may be a fearsome element to our own selves. The dual aspect of operation even in a single individual is the cause behind psychopathological conditions and impulsions to commit such atrocious and desperate actions as suicide. It is as if the self wants to kill itself. Which self is killing itself? It is difficult in this muddled form of thinking to distinguish between the two mix-ups of aspects of one's own personality. There is an atrocious fear that is injected into the personality arising from a false vesture of an externality which is hanging on one's true nature as a coat, as it were, which sometimes appears as a beloved friend. Even a false friend may appear to be a nice friend, but is not a true friend.

So fears which arise due to this artificial association of the true self with the false vesture appearing as an individual, as this psychophysical personality, or as an association socially and physically existing outside in nature, vanish in a second when that which has caused this duality between the self and its environment vanishes and the self is seen in that which looks like an outward object. Then there is security, because security is a name we give to the

protection we gain from our environment. We have a psychological environment in ourselves and a social environment outside. Both these have to be unified with our true self.

The art of meditation described in this chapter of the Bhagavadgita should pave the way to this realisation of the true self hiddenly masquerading as the other forms of experience. Our love for our own self as this person, and our love for objects of sense outside, are both certain temporal manifestations of the integrality that the real self vehemently wants to maintain. Even that which we cannot consider as really a part of our existence here, which is redundantly hanging outside in the world as unrelated to us, is also our concern because it is there. It is not merely the source of fear that is our concern. Our concern is also in respect of that which is the object of our consciousness. Anything that we are conscious of as existing there as a reality – not merely that which we love and hate, but even those things which are objects of our mere awareness of there being something outside as an object – they too are manifestations of the self.

So in the unification of all the ingredients of experience into the integrality of selfhood it is necessary to melt all forms of spatial and temporal intervention in our experience so that the experiencer feels its own presence in that which is experienced, and vice versa. This is the finale of yoga experience. There is not much use in going into details of the actual character of this experience, because one who has not tasted it directly will not be able to form a concept of it. Conceptualisation of a transcendent presence will not be able to present a true picture of what that experience could be. Because all conceptualisation is an abstraction of reality, the content thereof will always elude the grasp of this conceptualisation. Hence, suffice it to say that the four verses which almost conclude the essential message of the Sixth Chapter glorify the presence of the Divine in all things and the perennial support that anyone can expect from this permanent presence anywhere, and the fact that fearlessness rules the world. In this world where God is the ruler, fear cannot be. Such a yoga is this grand yoga of spiritual identity with the creative principle of the universe.

The great student Arjuna is perturbed. This is a grand description indeed of the magnificent possibilities of human nature, spiritual meditation rising up into an experience of cosmic identity for which arduous effort is called for by way of sense-control and restraint of the mental operations. The mind is hard to control. We cannot tie the violent and tempestuous wind and put it inside our bag, and similar is the mind in its rapacious behaviour – so cyclonic, uncontrollable and tempestuous. How would one control the mind?

Arjuna addresses Bhagavan Sri Krishna, “Do you not believe, O great Master, that a person who honestly endeavours to betake himself to this great yoga of meditation but fails in achieving his goal will be broken to pieces like rent clouds? He will lose both the here and the hereafter. Because of the fact of the austerity of his life, he has lost the pleasures of this earth, and because of the impossibility of reaching this height of spiritual blessedness, he has lost the other world. Would not be the state of affairs most pitiable, losing both this world and the other world? This world has gone because of the austere life; the other world

has gone because it is not coming. What is your opinion? Is it not a tragedy that one may have to face if it does not become possible for a person to achieve the goal of life, this end as it is described as the finale of meditation in one's own present life? If one dies, what happens? In this attempt at the practice of meditation, even if it is honestly conducted, sincerely carried on, if the goal is not achieved in this very life and death overtakes that person, what would be the fate of that person?"

"There is no cause for anxiety," is the reply of the great Master of yoga. *Na hi kalyāṇakṛt kaścid* (BG 6.40): "Whoever is engaged in doing good will not reap sorrow." It is true that this yoga is hard to attain because the mind is fickle in its nature, and ordinarily this is not a feasible way of living. This is a hard life, a difficult life, not meant for the commonality of mankind. A speciality of blessedness, as it were, is necessary; a grace may be required in order to equip oneself with the strength to face this difficult disciplinary system of yoga meditation. Nevertheless, even a little that is done in this direction should be considered as a credit, and it shall not be a loss. By continuous practice, by *abhyasa*, one gains momentum in this practice, and death is not the end of life, as birth is not the beginning of life. Life is an interconnected association of life with life. There is no such thing as individual life in this world. Hence, it is puerile to imagine that someone is born individually somewhere unconnected with other things in the world and helplessly dies in a corner unwept, unhonoured and unsung. This is not going to be. There is a careful documentation of every event that is taking place anywhere in the cosmos. Everything is recorded everywhere in all its minutiae, and no event, call it birth or call it death, can go unnoticed by this cosmic record keeper. There is a note made of everything that is done, everything that is taking place, and every thought and feeling and action shall be noticed. They shall be carefully noted because we do not live in an isolated cosmos.

We are living in a universe which is not a chaos where anything is anywhere and anything can happen in any manner whatsoever. Such a thing is not the rule of life. There is a precision maintained in the operation of things, and every event, whatever be its nature, is causally related to the other conditioning factors which are internally related to the event that took place, and so the coming of a person as an individual at the time of birth or the going of a person at the time of death is not actually a person coming and a person going. It is one condition getting reshuffled into another condition. It is a particular arrangement of associations getting rearranged into a new pattern of arrangement in the structure of the universe, making out thereby that a new type of relationship is established between this centre which acted like the coming in the form of a birth, or the going in the form of a death. Thus, the coming and going, the birth and the death of people in the eye of cosmic regulations is not actually the coming and going of individualities. There are no persons for the universe. Things and persons, individuals, are a chimera for this large organisation which we call the universal organisation. Hence, all effort which is in the nature of an event that takes place somewhere produces an impact upon the whole atmosphere of which it is a

content and a unit, and every event may be said to be a universal event in this manner. If a sparrow falls, the stars may know it. Hence, unnoticed no man is born, and unsung nobody dies.

Thus, the Lord says that there need be no fear in this regard. There shall be a rearrangement of the conditions of the life of a dying person in a new atmosphere in which that condition will find itself. Actually, the person is a condition rather than a thing. We, as human beings, for instance, are not to be regarded as solid bodies. We are certain circumstances prevailing, conditions operating, and certain forces ignited for the purpose of action in a particular manner. The world is made up of forces, conditions, events, energies, fluids rather than solids. Hence, our efforts are also a sort of participation in our maintenance of relationship with the cosmical environment. Hence, all that we do and all that we think and feel will be eternally known to the ruling principals of the universe and our good actions are not destroyed when we die. If death is the destruction of what we do, there is no point in doing anything in this world because death can overtake a person any day. It can be tomorrow. Knowing well that any moment can be the time of the passing of a person, who would like to lift a finger in this world if not for the fact that there is an internal and subtle belief of the continuance of the merit of the action performed? Who would like to be good and do good if that goodness in our nature and the goodness in our action is to be violated immediately and defiled by the hands of death taking possession of us the next moment? We have an unintelligible belief in the possibility of the continuance and the reward that we expect from the good deeds that we perform, irrespective of the fact that our life may be cut off the next moment.

“So Arjuna, what are you afraid of? There is the possibility of this yogin taking rebirth in glorious families where circumstances are conducive to the continuance of the effort.” It is not that once again we start at the beginning. The propulsion, the momentum and the cumulative force of all the good things that we did earlier will be mustered in and garnered into a concentrated harvest for utilisation in our present existence, or our future one, and so there is a continuous onward march of the soul in its spiritual evolution. There is a rise from level to level. The ascent of the soul to Godhead is a process of spiritual evolution. It is a reshuffling of the lower coil for entering into a newer and finer one so that the involvement of the soul becomes more and more intimate, friendly, ethereal, fine, shining and radiant like an angelic personality until it becomes all radiance, a flood of divinity. Hence, there is no loss of effort in this world. All good effort, all sincere motivation, all pious action shall be blessed by the Almighty’s ordinance, which is a permanent sanction of the reward of justice for every little sincere participation in the purpose of God’s creation.

Hence, there is no cause for anxiety that people who are denied the blessing of this realisation in this particular physical life for certain reasons are really lost souls. There are no lost souls. Every gain is a permanent gain. Even a little gain is a gain after all, and it shall be a spiritual benefit. So one should engage oneself in this yoga of communion with Reality with unremitting effort.

So goes the message of the Sixth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita. We could imagine the importance of this intricate theme of yoga meditation from the length of time that we had to take in making some sense of this message, because it is intensely practical. Very little theorisation is here. It is a down-to-earth engagement of the seeker in something that is to be done just now.

In the light of all the instructions provided in the earlier chapters, from the first onwards, the Bhagavadgita, as we have noticed, is a complete teaching. It takes us along the path of an involution of our spiritual involvement gradually. In a cosmological order, we may say, the manner of the ascent of the soul to the ultimate Godhead is almost a reverse of the process of the coming down of the soul in its descent from God. The Supreme Being willed the cosmos, created this universe, made this a whole picture which this whole being of God visualised as a totally beautiful substance. This wholeness of the picture of creation God willed out of His total will.