THE TREE OF LIFE

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Publisher’s Note

This is a series of 3 discourses that Swamiji gave in 1979 on the commencing verses of the Fifteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita.
THE TWOFOLD CHARACTER OF COSMIC LIFE

Sadhakas and seekers of truth from various parts of the country come to this holy abode in search of a mysterious something, the acquisition of which is considered as a rectifying factor or a remedy for the various illnesses of life. They have not come here for nothing. It is taken for granted that their search is for a light, and not for a substance or object. They seek an enlightenment, a torch to illumine the path which they have to walk in the various fields of their activities.

There are doubts and difficulties, problems galore, so that it becomes difficult to take even one step ahead on account of a pitch darkness through the horizon that appears to be hanging heavy before our eyes, which is apparently a common factor in the life of each and every person. It does not appear that we are asking for any particular thing in this world. We seem to be asking for enlightenment and light so that we may move in the direction that is proper, lest we should move in an erroneous direction and fall into a pit.

Our notion that we are asking for things is basically an error. We are neither asking for food, clothing and shelter, nor for the company of people, nor for wealth, nor even for a lengthened life in this world, notwithstanding the fact that it appears we are asking
for these things. There is a sorrow that is seeping into
the very veins of our personality, and we try to get over
this problem of sorrow by various means, just as a
patient goes to various doctors under the impression
that a physician will be able to cure his sorrow of
disease. If he is not satisfied with one physician, he goes
to another. He goes to a multitude of physicians in
search of a cure for his ailment.

This is exactly what we are doing. We are in search
of a cure for the sorrows of life, which is nothing but
the illness of life, and we run to various places and
personalities as patients go to doctors in search of
recipes or magic prescriptions which can
instantaneously place us in a haven of happiness and
freedom. Neither are we able to diagnose the nature of
the illness of our life, nor can it be said that we are in a
position to understand what sort of happiness we are
seeking. We have a very hazy notion of both these sides
of life.

“What is the sorrow that is hanging heavily on our
heads?” is not a question easy to answer. At one
moment it may appear that the grief is of one type, and
at another moment it is of another type. It changes its
colour like a chameleon, and we are under the
impression thereby that perhaps there are millions of
sorrows. Not so is the case. Sorrow is a single structural
or organic defect of personality which ramifies itself
into various expressions of inconvenience to our
personality, and which goes by the name of sorrow, grief, suffering, pain, and so forth.

There is a basic illness which is deeply rooted in us, and we have not the time or the patience to go into the abyss of this sorrow. We seek immediate relief, as is the case with physical illness. There is an asking for an immediate remedy for an acute case of suffering, and this is human nature. The sorrow cannot be borne any further for a longer period, and so we ask for immediate prescriptions of medicine for our griefs, and these are what the world gives to us in the form of experiences.

Unfortunately for us, we are mistaken in the very approach that we are adopting in the redress of our sorrows. No amount of running to doctors of divinity will be able to keep us in that haven of bliss which we are apparently striving for. The world has been what it was, and it has not given any indication that there has been any change in its structure. Perhaps right from creation up to this day nature does not appear to have changed its colours.

But we are endlessly hoping for something, we know not what. There is an endless agony in the hearts of people. Not one individual through the process of history can be said to have passed a life of perennial freedom from birth to death. There have been thorns under the feet of everyone, though the search was for roses, milk and honey in the world. There is a chaotic approach of the mental structure of man. There is
confusion in our brains and anxiety in our hearts, and darkness before us.

Well, this is to give an outline of the picture of the life that we are living in this world and the way in which we are trying to acquire freedom and happiness, not knowing the basic structure of the various problems of life. A good physician is supposed to be one who knows the location of the main switchboard in the personality of the human being, by operating which the whole panorama of experiences can be visualised at one stroke.

A disease is a structural maladjustment, and it appears in the form of an agony to the consciousness. When there is a lack of an alignment between our mind, or consciousness, and the nature of our experiences in life, there is what we call unhappiness. Happiness is nothing but the organic alignment of our mind with the various patterns of human experience. When there is a lack of this alignment a jarring sound is produced, as a loudspeaker sometimes makes a noise. There is some kind of defect in the alignment of the internal mechanism. When the mechanism of our psyche in its relation to the structure of the whole of experience in the world goes out of gear, there is unhappiness because happiness is alignment, and unhappiness is the opposite of it. As Ayurveda physicians tell us, health is the harmony among the humours of the body: *vata, pitta, kapha*. When the
sattva, rajas, tamas qualities are in a state of balance, we are supposed to be enjoying mental as well as physical health. So is the case with every kind of happiness. There is a necessity to put the mechanism of life in order, to streamline the way of the working of the mind in its relation to the various shapes that life takes.

All this, when it is enquired into profoundly, will naturally go over the heads of people. We are not taught to think in this manner. We have an education which is supposed to be for earning our bread; today it has failed even to earn our bread, and it has not succeeded in getting anything worth the while. We are in sorrow in the beginning, we are in sorrow in the middle, and we are in sorrow at the end. That is all we see in life. The shape of sorrow may change, but it is there in one form or the other. Whether our creditor is this man or that man, it makes no difference; we have a creditor at our door, and that is enough for us. It does not matter which person it is and when he will come and stand at our gate. So is the sorrow of life.

There is, therefore, a need to be serious in our pursuits and not to continue to behave like babies or children asking for toys, which are only a temporary relief for their tears. We give a toy to the child, and it stops crying. Why it cries, nobody knows. These toys are temporary contrivances to suppress the outward expression of the sorrow of the child, but the inner
difficulty persists whatever be the outer adjustments we make in the various walks of life.

The various outer adjustments are well known. The gaining of wealth, making money, increasing the bank balance, getting a good job, enhancement of status of oneself in human society, dainty dishes, palatial houses, vast gardens, and so forth, are the avenues of approach of the mind that seeks immediate relief. We have seen people with large areas of land. Are they happy? We have seen people with large bank balances. Are they happy? We have seen people with everything that the world can give, but they are grief-stricken for a cause they cannot explain, and nobody can explain.

In the commencing verses of the Fifteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita we have a complete picture of the whole of life in every one of its aspects. The way in which the Fifteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita starts is the way in which we have to start thinking if our thinking is to be right thinking. We are used to thinking in terms of family, relations and properties, but in these verses of the Fifteenth Chapter, the Bhagavadgita does not think in terms of family and relations, of I and mine, of my property, my belonging, my friend and foe. There is a magnificent picture before our mental eye. The whole world is placed before us in a nutshell.

The analogy the Bhagavadgita places before us to explain the nature of life as a whole is the well-known
analogy of a tree. The whole of life is compared to a large tree spreading itself in every place, in and out of things, and extending from heaven to the nether regions: ुर्ध्वमुलम आधारशक्खम (B.G. 15.1). We have never seen a tree of this type whose roots are above and branches are below. It is an unthinkable tree. How can the roots be above in the skies and the branches be below on the Earth? But such is the tree which life is.

This tree is taken as the example of the structure of life because of the way in which the tree grows. Life is a growing process and a movement with the power of the waves of an ocean rumbling within its own bosom, urging itself forward in a direction which is spread out everywhere, in all places. The growth of life is not in any particular linear direction. It is an all-round movement, like the growth of our own body. When we grow into an adult from a baby, we do not move only vertically or horizontally, but in every aspect—inwardly and outwardly—in a balanced manner.

The creative evolution of life, into which great research has been made in modern times by philosophers such as Bergson, is a tendency to move in every direction, outwardly expressing its power of vitality for a purpose which the human mind cannot properly envisage. When we grow, we do not know what we are growing into, and to what purpose. Why should we become an adult? Who has written this, in which scripture? Why should we not remain as a baby?
What is the harm? Let us all be babies and never grow, or let us be born as youths. Why should we be born as babies and then grow into youths, and then have this agonising decrepitude of senile ataxia? What is all this mystery? Why should there be this growth of anything or everything? What is the direction which things are appearing to take? Why should the tree grow? Why should man prolong his life up to a certain limit and then disappear from the Earthly scene, not knowing even the time of his disappearance? What is this tremendous impulse in us which keeps us expecting something noble in the future, though that future may be cut short in one moment by the icy hands of nature?

We know very well that our Earthly life can come to an end at any moment, but we never take it very seriously. We can take it seriously if it goes so deeply into our hearts that we will not be able to breathe even for a few seconds. Something in us overpowers this instinct of the awareness of the impending discontinuity of life, and we are instinctively compelled to brush aside this immanent catastrophe of what we call death that may descend upon us at any moment of time.

While there is on one side the instinct of the consciousness of death and destruction, there is also another kind of instinct which keeps us completely forgetful of this phenomenon of life. We would very much wish to forget that there is such a thing called
death. Nobody would like to think there is such a thing as that because it hangs before us as an ominous horror.

Now, a reality cannot be forgotten. If the death and destruction and annihilation of Earthly existence is to be an end of all things, if that is a reality by itself, there cannot be another reality overcoming it. But there is something in us which somehow or other overwhels this instinct of destruction and sorrow, and tells us that life need not necessarily be equated with all sorrow. If it is concluded once and for all that life is only sorrow and an ocean of suffering, and there cannot be anything else but that, then there cannot be any such thing as the instinct of hope for a better future. But who does not hope for a better future? So we have in us a mysterious and tremendous impulse for what we may call an immortal pursuit of the ultimate success in life, though what is visible to our eyes is only darkness and pain.

The comparison that the Bhagavadgita gives is significant. The growth of the tree is from the seed towards its trunk and branches and the various ramifications thereof. There is the impulse of external expression in the tree. It moves towards the sky, if we can take the example of our own trees on Earth. The seed of the tree bursts forth in the direction of an external expression of itself. The tendency of the seed is not to hibernate but to develop the roots and the tendril of the large tree that it is to become later on. The sap which is hidden in the seed urges itself forward
in external forms, searching for the light of the sun in extended space. The impulse that is within the tree is the cause behind its manifestation. The tree is in the seed in the form of an impulse, and this impulse seems to be towards diversification. It wants to manifest itself in as many forms of expression as possible, branching off into minute details which cannot be counted.

This urge is present everywhere, not merely in the vegetable kingdom but also in animal life and in human existence. Multiplicity is the objective behind the vital urge of nature as a whole. We cannot understand what this drama is. We want to multiply our wants, multiply our needs, multiply the gadgets that can satisfy our desires, and we ask for an infinite number of things in the world. Infinitude in the sense of a multiplicity of arithmetical computation is perhaps the nature of the impulse that is hidden in life.

This is explained in the very first verse of the Fifteenth Chapter of the Gita. There is the expression of this tree into various branches. What are these branches? The knowledge that we seek, the intelligence that we have, the perceptions which give us satisfaction are the branches of this impulse for self-expression—चंदाम्सि यस्य परन्नि (B.G. 15.1). Chandāmsi are various types of knowledge, natural as well as supernatural, and it is so because the tree spreads itself not merely in this world of physical experience, but also even in the heavens. अधा योऽधावं
prasṛtāstasya śākhā (B.G. 15.2): The branches of this tree spread themselves not merely here on Earth but also above in the heavens. 

Na tad asti prthivyāṁ vā divi deveṣu vā punah, sattvaṁ prakṛtijair muktaṁ yad ebhiḥ syāt tribhir gunaiḥ (B.G. 18.40): Not one thing anywhere, neither in heaven nor on Earth, can be found which is not an expression of the gunas. 

Guṇapravṛddhā viṣayapravālāḥ (B.G. 15.2): The gunas are the forces of externalised expression; the power that drags us outside of ourselves, which pushes us out of our own house and into the space outside, that is the guna.

The gunas of prakṛti are the forces which make us a stranger to our own life and aberrant in our own personality, and make us lose our own self. The powers that make us lose our own self and search for that which is not our self are the gunas of prakṛti. Just as the sap of the tree moves outwardly in the direction of the ramification of branches, the sap of life moves outwardly in the direction of the ramification of experiences. Therefore, we seek infinitude of experiences. Variety is the spice of life. We are bored of monotony. We know very well we can sit for hours and hours in a movie theatre watching a variety of sound and colour, passing the whole night without a wink of sleep. But if we sit for japa, for instance, chanting one name throughout the night, we will droop down into sleep in half an hour. The mind does not like monotony. It likes variety, but why?
The mind likes variety because it is a slave of this impulse of self-expression into the variety of experience. We are not masters; we are utter slaves of something which is handling us as puppets. This power is everywhere in the world; it is not only in the body of a particular individual. That is why it is called cosmic prakriti. The gunas of prakriti are cosmic powers which compel every individual, right from the lowest electron to the highest orbs of the solar system. All these are dancing like puppets, marionettes, by the strings that are operated upon by these powers of nature called sattva, rajas and tamas, which are the constituents of prakriti.

Visualising this horror of life due to which we seem to have no voice in anything whatsoever in this world, thinkers such as Schopenhauer in the West pictured a dark form before us, and said life is nothing but hell: If you want to see hell, be born into this world. This is the utter despair that sometimes made these thinkers write poems such as The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam which says everything is wind passing; everything is despair, sorrow, straw, sapless and essenceless; now it is, now it is not; there is nothing worthwhile in life.

But the picture of life is not complete merely by seeing the seamy side of things. The problem lies here. The difficulty in understanding life arises merely because of the comprehensiveness of the pattern of life. If it is just one thing before us, we can look at it; but it
is so many things, and it is difficult for us to comprehend. Life is not only one side of the picture. It is tremendous sorrow, no doubt, from the aspect of emphasis that we lay on one side of experience; but if it had been only that, we would not be living here even for three days. Utter sorrow will not permit a person to live in this world even for a few minutes. He will immediately have a heart attack and collapse. But one lives in spite of darkness everywhere and sufferings galore because there is a positivity ruling over the sorrows of life.

This twofold character of cosmic life is presented in these verses of the Bhagavadgita. The first part tells us the problematic structure of the tree of life, and the second part tells us how we can free ourselves from the clutches of this cosmic urge for self-expression and entanglement in objects of sense.

The powers of prakriti are nothing but the powers of the whole of nature. We cannot know what nature is, what prakriti is, because we are a part of it. It is not outside us. This is another difficulty before us. A thing that is outside us can be seen and examined through a microscope or a powerful instrument in a laboratory, but how can we examine that in which we ourselves are involved? A study of nature automatically becomes a study of man. To know things is to know oneself.

This uncomfortable truth automatically follows from the fact of the involvement of human nature in
cosmic nature. The world is not outside us, nor is it inside us because as a limb of the body hangs inseparably in its relation to the organism of the body, we hang inseparably in relation to nature as a whole. To understand anything will appear to be like understanding everything, just as to know the structural pattern of one cell in the body would be to know the whole body because of the interrelatedness of the various parts of the whole which it is. This tree of life which has its roots above and branches below is the evolutionary process of the cosmos. The whole of cosmology is here in two or three verses. The creative will of God is the sap of the tree of life, and if we can compare the will of the Supreme Being to the impulse for self-expression in the seed of a tree, we may naturally conclude that the whole of life is nothing but a tree with all its ramifications.

We are told by the Upanishads and scriptures of this character that the One willed to be many; the seed intended to become the tree. This intention of the seed to become the tree is the desire of life. What we call desire is nothing but the urge of the seed to become the tree. Why does the seed wish to become the tree? Why should it not exist as a seed alone? What is wrong with being merely a seed? And what does the seed gain by becoming a tree? The whole of the Bhagavadgita is an answer to this question.
Why should we not keep quiet as a seed? Why do we want to become a tree? Why do we peep into nature through the skies and look at the sun for light and air? Why does the tree desire this? Why should we come out of our rooms or peep outside the window to see who and what are there? Why should we want to know? How can we explain this curiosity in our lives? Why is it that we feel like fish out of water within our rooms, and want to go out to other places? Why is it that we are so restless?

Well, the seed is restless. It has to become the tree. We cannot curb its force. Our movements from place to place are nothing but our seed of the mind moving as the branches of the tree of our own experiences. Nobody can rest quiet: \textit{na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarmakṛt} (B.G. 3.5). We will go crazy if we are locked up in one room, just as the seed will struggle to burst forth in some way or the other when circumstances for it become favourable.

Unless we are able to know what this mysterious urge is which keeps us always on tenterhooks and never gives us anything, we will not be able to live happily in this world. We may go to any doctor, any Guru, but we will be the same person. Nobody is going to help us unless the light comes from within us, because our conviction is our guide. Our faith, our stability and logical conclusiveness of approach in life are the
satisfaction. Gurus and physicians may show us the way, but they cannot walk for us. We have to walk.

The sorrows of life are the outcome of our subjectness to this urge of life to ramify itself into branches of experience and keep us unhappy nevertheless. If we are to seek for a concrete example of an experience between the devil and the deep sea, here it is before us. To live in this world in this condition is to be exactly between the devil and the deep sea. We cannot keep quiet. We are forced to run out of ourselves in search of various things. That is the deep sea on one side. But after searching for all the things in life, we are still in sorrow. That is the devil on the other side. Not to be seeking for things is sorrow, and not to find anything after the search is another sorrow, so always there is sorrow. Oh, what is this? We do not know whether to exist or not to exist. To be or not to be, is the great question. We cannot live, we cannot die, because to live is great sorrow, and to die is worse than that. We do not know which to choose between these two.

The Bhagavadgita gives the answer. We may have been studying, reading chapters of the Gita, but it is difficult for many people to find time to go into the nature of the answer the Bhagavadgita gives to the various queries that arise from our minds. Otherwise, we would be reading the Bhagavadgita like reading the British Pharmacopoeia from the first page to the last
page. It may describe all the drugs that are available anywhere in the world—their composition, their character, and so on—but nothing happens. So would be the study of a scripture, whatever be the scripture, if the import of it is not absorbed into our experience.

Our spiritual sadhana is not a mere activity such as running a shop. It is not a business. People go to ashrams and do something, then go back home and do another thing, so it ends in various kinds of doings, but the inner pith of their personality is untouched. They go as they came, which is very unfortunate.

To regard spiritual sadhana as a mere outer activity, without any relation to the inner consciousness of our being, would be to treat typhoid fever by putting on a beautiful shirt. The typhoid fever will not go, even if the shirt is beautiful. Similarly, all sadhana which is purely of an extraneous nature will look beautiful on the outside but inwardly leave us in the same place.

So let sadhana be a turning of the tables round within the structure of our own mind, a vital transvaluation of values, a change in the very outlook of our life. The whole secret is in our hands. The magic is in our own internal approach. While the Guru, or whatever he is, is an instrument in the same way as the working of an extraneous medicine in our personality, the vitality in us has to cooperate. A corpse will not react to any medicine that is thrust into it. The vital
force in the body of a person is the main factor which contributes to the cure of illness. If the vital force is absent, medicines cannot work. The medicines are the Gurus, but we have to cooperate. If we are non-receptive and stubborn in our outlook of life, if we stick to our own guns whatever happens anywhere, then there is no movement of the boat of life. We will be rowing the boat of life endlessly throughout the night of ignorance while the boat is tied to a peg, as an old story goes. The boat is tied, anchored. Due to the liquor of life that we have drunk abundantly, making us giddy and oblivious of all things, we have forgotten to lift the anchor. We try to row the boat of life towards God, but the boat has not moved one inch because the anchor has not been lifted. The anchor is the stubborn identification of our ego to this body. The body is the ego—that we think we are this person, and that only the sensations of this individuality are worthwhile in life.

Therefore, a complete rapprochement of the whole outlook of our life has to be effected which, in a few words, the Bhagavadgita tells us in the Fifteenth Chapter.
Discourse 2
THE SEARCH FOR WHOLENESS

The mystery of life is explained, as we noted yesterday, in the first five verses of the Fifteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita. The mystery lies primarily in the fact that the way in which this tree of life grows is a little different from the way in which human minds work. This is the reason why human comprehension cannot fathom the depths of the extendedness and the functioning of the movements of this cosmic tree. Just as the branching of the various limbs of the tree is conditioned by the power that is inherent in the seed which gives birth to the tree, all knowledge and work in this world is preordained and channelised in a given shape by the Original Will which is the seed of this cosmic tree.

The world experience is knowledge and action combined. The whole of life can be summed up in knowledge and activity, the understanding and the putting of it into practice in the daily vocations of people. The outlook of life is the knowledge that is behind the way in which people work. A very significant word is used: chandāṁsi yasya parṇāni (B.G. 15.2). The leaves of this cosmic tree are the Vedas, or to put it in a more general manner, all knowledge in its extendedness. Many a time the word chandas is
understood to be the knowledge of the Veda, and a significant note is struck by this particular kind of analogy in this verse.

The knowledge that operates in this world has a twofold feature embedded in it. It is outwardly limited to the form in which it is expressed by way of perceptions, cognitions, etc., through the mind and the senses. Our knowledge is limited in the sense of the ocean waters getting limited when they are channelised through a river or a canal, etc. The vast oceanic expanse can be conditioned by a canal, through which it can be diverted in any given direction. The ocean gets conditioned because of the limitation of the banks of the canal through which the water, the ocean, flows. Likewise, the cosmic urge, which is present in the seed of the tree of life, gets channelised through the senses and the mental operations of individuals whether they are subhuman, human or superhuman.

But this water that flows through the canal is the ocean water, and not anything else. The conditioned character of the water of the ocean is due to the limitation of the bank of the canal through which it flows, but the force with which the water flows belongs to the ocean itself. The pressure of the water comes from the ocean, but the limited way in which this pressure moves is because of the limitation of the banks.
Some such thing can be taken as the analogy of human experience. We are on Earth and in heaven at the same time. This is the reason for the mystery of life. If we had been totally on Earth and stuck to the ground with our feet, with nothing of the heavenly in us, that would have been something to our satisfaction, at least empirically. But we can never be satisfied with anything in this world. Though we are conditioned entirely by whatever the world gives us, we are not wholly in this world. That particular aspect of our being, or that part of our personality which lifts us above the Earth, keeps us restless and unhappy. That which we have gained may make us happy, but that which we have yet to attain keeps us unhappy.

It is not true that we have gained everything that we require. Our needs are endless and as vast as the expansion of the tree of life. What we see with our eyes is far less in expanse than what we are unable to see with our eyes. The waters in the canal are very meagre in their extent compared to the expanse of the ocean which flows through the canal. Our happiness, whatever be the character of it in this world, is due to the sensation of having acquired what we need. But a simultaneous undercurrent of unhappiness at the back of it is due to a suspicion that there are many more things that we have yet to gain. So there is the dashing of the waters of this ocean of life against both the banks of this river of experience—on one side in the direction
of a tentative happiness due to the feeling of having gained what we need, and on the other side in another direction, making us conscious that we have not yet obtained what we really need.

Our needs are incalculable and non-computable. No human being can say what he or she needs. Our ideas of our needs are foolish at the very core because of our mistaking appearances for realities. The knowledge of the world that is at the back of our activities in life has, again, a twofold character, which is perhaps the reason why the Bhagavadgita brings in the analogy of the chandas, or the Veda, which is knowledge temporal and knowledge spiritual at the same time. The wisdom in the Veda is not merely supernatural; it is also natural. Modern explorations into the regions of the Veda have revealed the fact that empirical sciences are also explained in the mantras of the Veda. The Vedas do not speak merely of God and His creation; they are said to explain even such mechanical devices as making an airplane. Mathematics, differential calculus, and such other scientific approaches are also the content of the Vedas, so that the knowledge which the Vedas contain and speak of and present before us is as vast as the tree of life which has its roots above in the eternal Absolute, but whose branches extend towards the lowest Earth and the deepest nether regions.
The Vedic knowledge, therefore, is rooted in the Supreme Brahman, the Absolute, but it expands itself also to the minutest details of relative experience, so when we touch any part of the tree of life we have touched everything conceivable, everything that exists, and we are part and parcel of the ramifications of this tree of life. We, everyone here seated in this hall, are expressions of this tree of life; it may be leaves, it may be flowers, it may be fruits, it may be anything belonging to this tree as its vital essence. To touch any part of this tree is to touch the whole of the tree, so every one of us is everything, and not merely something.

This is the mystery of our lives, which is the mystery of all life. We are all mysteries seated here. Every one of us is a tremendous mystery in one’s own self. Neither can I know the mystery within me, nor can any one of you know the mystery within you. This inexplicable mystery that is in each one of us is explicable only by the recognition of the presence of the totality of the whole of the tree of life in each manifestation in the form of each one of us. Every leaf of the tree has the power of the whole tree within itself. Every little cell in every little leaf of a tree has a wireless communication with every other part of the whole tree. If we touch any cell of any leaf in the tree, we have touched the whole tree. The sensation will be carried through the entire manifestation of the tree, up to the very root.
So every one of us is a cosmic atom, and every thought, every idea and every impulse that arises in our mind has the power of the ocean of the Supreme Being, whose will works as the seed of the manifestation of this tree of life. We can appreciate to some extent how wondrous we all are, each one of us. We are not ordinary men, women, children, officers, subordinates, clerks—nothing of the kind. This is an illusion that is before our eyes. Unfortunately, we are content with being individuals in a family, citizens of a country, human beings on this Earth, masters and servants, wealthy and poor. All these are the delusions cast by the mind as a web before our eyes, succeeding to completely keep us out of touch with the realities of life, so that our sorrows are endless because our ignorance is abysmal. We are Masters of Arts in the field of ignorance, and this darkness of ignorance manifests itself in a worse form when we begin to perceive an external world. “While men of ignorance go to darkness, men of knowledge go to greater darkness,” says the Isavasya Upanishad. We will be surprised how it is possible that men of knowledge go to greater darkness. It is because the knowledge that we have in this world is an expression worse than the ignorance of reality. Not to know a thing is ignorance enough, and to know a thing which is not there is a worse form of ignorance.
The avarana, as it is called in Vedantic parlance, is a screen over the reality which keeps us out of touch with it. That is what is known as ignorance. We are not only screened away from what is there but are presented with what is not there, so that we are made a double fool. Not only are we ignorant of the presence of God, but we are conscious of the presence of a world outside, so we are deceived in two ways. There is a double deception taking place at the same time. Not only are we completely cut off from the vital root essence, the parent of all things, which is sustaining us here—mātā dhātā pitāmahaḥ (B.G. 9.17)—but we are completely forgetful of this great sustaining power. Well, that one thing is bad enough; but a worse thing is that we are clinging to what is not there, an externalisation of that which is universal.

The tree of life is a universal manifestation and not an externalised form, as it may be made to appear before us. The world is not an object, but it presents itself as an object. Na rūpam asyeha tathopalabhyate nānto na cādir na ca saṁpratiṣṭhā (B.G. 15.3): It has no form whatsoever, but we see the world as if it has a form. The power of the senses is such that they give a form to what is formless, just as a sculptor can give shape to a shapeless block of stone. The visualisation of the pattern of the statue inside the block of stone is in the idea of the sculptor. He can see the required form of the statue within the block of stone, out of which
any form can be engraved or carved out. But the block of stone itself is not a form, although any form can be extracted out of it by the manipulation of the idea of the sculptor.

The tree of life is not like the tree that we see in front of us. Therefore, a magnificent, uncanny, veiled comparison is chalked out in the expression of the verses of the Bhagavadgita here. Adhaś cordhvam prasṛtāstasya (B.G. 15.2); na rūpam asyeha tathopalabhyate (B.G. 15.3): It is there, above and below; it is in all directions everywhere. Because it is everywhere, it cannot have a form. To have a form is to be in some place, and to be everywhere is naturally not to have any form. But the senses carve out the figure of a form as the sculptor carves out a figure from a block of stone. The ink and the canvas have no picturesque conditioned form, but a form is given by the painter who utilises the ink which he splashes over the canvas according to the manner of the working of his mind.

The mind and the senses work together in collaboration to picture a formless being as a formed content of human experience. The world that we see, the various objects, men and various other things, are carved-out figures from the figureless block of stone of the ocean of life. In the Yoga Vasishtha life is compared to a block of stone, from which any form can be taken out by the power of the mind which seeks expression in a particular form. The forms of life, which are the
contents of experience, are the carved-out figures extracted by the mind of an individual from the unconditioned block which is the whole of *mulapratkriti* constituted of a vast expanse of *sattva, rajas* and *tamas*. The mind not only carves out a form from this formless unmanifest being, but also projects it externally in what we call space and time.

Now we are entering into a new section of analysis of this totality of experience called the tree of life. Yesterday we had occasion to observe that the sap of the tree of life grows in the form of the tree, and the seed will not be content to remain as a seed. The baby grows into the adult, etc. We were wondering why this expression should be there at all. Why should there be growth and evolution and movement in any direction? It is the intention of the Original Will to find itself as the one in the many. The oneness is present, and the manyness is also there. The presence of the oneness of the Original Will of the seed of life keeps these varieties of forms in unison, in collaboration with one another, just as the comprehensiveness of the tree keeps all the branches and the leaves, etc., in collaboration one with the other.

The variety and the multitudinousness of the leaves of a tree, for instance, is no bar to the relatedness among themselves in the form of this tree. So is this variety of life. The division and the difference, the gulf and the variety in the form of experience of objects, do
not deter us from asking for a unity behind them. That is the reason why we ask for collaboration, unity, solidarity of people. We are urged towards working for a commonness of purpose. We do service, we have a feeling of affection, we feel for other people, we extend ourselves into another, all which can be explained only by the fact of the presence of an inexplicable oneness that is at the back of this apparent multiplicity of personality, objects and things. In the same way as a wholeness called the tree is present in the variety we call leaves, etc., God is present in the world. “He became the many, and He entered into every part of it,” says the Upanishad.

But we have to pursue this nature of the mystery of life still further so that the purpose that is behind the expression of this mystery may be clear to our minds. The knowledge of this tree is supposed to be true knowledge: yastamō veda sa vedavit (B.G. 15.1). If you know the whole of this tree, you are said to have true knowledge. But we do not have knowledge of the whole of this tree. We see only one leaf, or half a leaf, just as we look at some object or a group of objects in front of us.

Who can know the whole of this Earth, what to speak of other things beyond the Earth? No one can imagine what is in the skies and above. We are very much conditioned to this little place, Muni-ki-reti or Rishikesh; or the farthest expansion of our mind may
be to India or the Earth. This is not to look at the whole of the tree but to see only a little of it—and that, too, wrongly, as an externalised form. Even this little knowledge that we seem to have is erroneous knowledge and wrongly directed. But the mystery creeps into this horrid picture of life because of the presence of the great unifying absolute power of God. This unifying presence keeps us somehow or other hoping for the best, happy under every condition, and seeking to save ourselves even in the midst of the ocean in which we are being drowned. We try to catch a little straw in the flooded river, hoping that we can be saved. That hopefulness of continued existence and the seeking of significance in existence is due to the presence of God in us, the presence of the vitality of the seed in every part of the tree of life.

The mystery is here, that God in His unified comprehensiveness is in us; He is wholly present, not only partially, in spite of the fact that we are partial expressions. The part contains the whole in wholeness. This is the mystery. We cannot understand how the wholeness of the whole can be in a part. We never see such a feature anywhere in this world. No drop in the ocean can contain the whole ocean. But the whole of us is present in every cell of our body, though biologically, physically, physiologically, anatomically, each cell is only a part of the whole of the body. The body that we speak of is a comprehensive, living, vital power. That
comprehensiveness of the vitality in us is present in each cell of the body, so that by seeing one cell we can know the whole person. So is the completeness of perfection present in the partial limitedness of forms. That is why we are hoping for God-realisation as a possibility, a practicability and a surety. We are not weeping as though nothing is possible and everything has gone mad. Thus, there is a double feature in human experience, a complete chaotic presentation of an apparent externality of experience which keeps us restless and unhappy, simultaneously with a hope for ultimate perfection and a capacity in us to achieve it.

This tree of life is, therefore, a beautiful analogy. But the Bhagavadgita gives us a caution at the end of this analogy that we should not be busy eating the fruits of this tree, an analogy going further into a mantra in the Veda and a passage in the Upanishad where it is said that in this vast tree two birds are perched, perhaps on different branches. One bird is enjoying the beautiful berries, the fruits of this forbidden tree, and is sorrow-ridden, while the other bird is merely looking at the beauties of the various fruits of this tree and eating not. The mantra of the Veda says the blessedness of this indulgent fruit-eating bird lies in the turning of its attention towards the other bird—merely looking at it, gazing at the presence of the bird which eats not, participates not, does nothing whatsoever, but merely
is. To give another analogy, it is just as the success, greatness and power of Arjuna lay merely in being conscious that Krishna was seated there in the chariot; but if Arjuna were to forget it, woe unto him.

There is also another beautiful analogy which might have missed the attention of readers of the Srimad Bhagavata. In the great story of Daksha Yajna, which occurs in the Fourth Skanda of the Srimad Bhagavata, Virabhadra is said to have rushed to the sacrificial ground of Daksha and attacked him, wanting to sever his head, but he could not do it. However much he tried, he found that it was not possible for him to sever the head of Daksha. Then he remembered Lord Siva who sent him, and at once he succeeded. There was an individuality-consciousness, as it were, a confidence in his own power, which defeated the very purpose for which he had gone.

The whole secret of the success in life seems to be in the knowledge of the presence of something which is behind the varieties of the world experience, and not in the foolhardy pursuit of our intention to eat the fruits which the tree of life yields. The various experiences of pleasure, satisfaction, and grasping by the senses are the bondages of the individual. That is the bird. Every one of us is this bird.

Ishvara and jiva, God and the individual, are both seated on the same tree. This tree is this body, our family, our community, our nation; this tree is the
whole of mankind, the whole universe. All these are but the same tree manifesting itself in various degrees of expression. There are not many trees; the tree is one, but the degree of its expression varies according to the stages of the development of experience. The whole is present in every degree, in every stage. I have been saying again and again that the whole human being is present in the baby, in the adolescent, in the adult, and in the mature person. In every stage there is a wholeness of the human being. Likewise, the whole tree is present in the seed, in the tendril, in the plant, and in its vast expanded maturity. The whole is present everywhere in every degree, only in different degrees of expression, so that the whole of God is present in us; but it is only in one degree, which is not sufficient or adequate.

Because of the inadequacy of the consciousness of the presence of this wholeness in us, we are pursuing the experience of this wholeness according to the knowledge with which we are endowed. Action is preceded by knowledge. Knowledge comes first, action comes afterwards. We have already an idea of what to do, and then only we start doing it merely as an outward implementation of this idea that is contained inside. We will never do anything without having an idea of it. First we think, and then we act. So the action is nothing but the form of the thought that is in our mind.
Hence, the search for wholeness, which can be equated with the search for happiness, is manifest in our lives as a search for an external object. The tree moves up in the direction of the sun in the high sky for this purpose alone. It seeks completeness of its life and imagines that this completeness can be experienced only by manifesting itself through an outward ramification in space and time.

What is it that we are seeking in life? Salary, high status, long life, soft beds, big buildings, large areas of land—are these the things that we are asking for? No. These are definitely not the things that we are asking for. When we are presented with a bundle of currency notes we feel happy, as if we are possessing something worthwhile, but we know very well we are not going to eat these currency notes. They cannot do anything except act as a means of getting something else which is our requirement. Nobody wants currency notes or coins. We need these as instruments for procuring something else. So our desire is not for money in the form of notes and coins, but for something else which we imagine can be acquired through this instrumentality. If we go further, we will find even that second thing is not our aim. That also is an instrument for a third thing which we are actually wanting. So on it goes, further and further, until we realise, to our horror, that we are asking for something which is beyond
human comprehension through the instrumentalities of these little visible finite expressions of life.

What is it that we are asking for, if not all these things? We are asking for a relief of all tension, which is equivalent to happiness as we conceive it. Happiness is the release of all tensions—nervous, muscular and psychological—and our personality is in a state of tenseness because of some kind of pressure which is exerted upon our personality by something over which we evidently have no control, and over which we have no knowledge.

The pressure is something very interesting. From where does this pressure come? It comes from the ocean of life which seeks fullest expression through the limitation of our finite personality. The ocean wants to find itself in the river, in the pond. This little experience of ours through the senses and the mind is sought for as an instrument for the fullest expression of the whole power that is behind the tree of life. Any kind of completeness of experience is the same as happiness. When we search for objects in this world, we are trying to search for a type of conscious experience which will introduce into ourselves a wholeness of being. We are now partial expressions. When the object we need is outside us, that unity of feeling is absent. We are unhappy because a part of our life is outside us. It may be a visible object or merely a conception. A concept of an externalised situation or a visible object
outside may be the cause of our unhappiness. Physical objects such as houses and land may keep us restless and unhappy because they have not become part of ourselves. Or merely conceptual notions such as status in human society can keep us unhappy. Status in human society is not a visible object. It is visible only to the mental eye, and when it is imagined to be a circumstance which is outside our mind, it becomes a psychological object that can keep us unhappy.

But when does this unhappiness leave us so that we become happy? It is when this object is united with us, when the percentage of ourselves which is apparently the object outside, whether physical or psychological, joins with us and becomes a part of us so that we become one hundred percent. When we become one hundred percent, we become happy. If there is even one percent outside us as a visible or conceptual object, we are in a state of unhappiness.

Now, this wholeness or hundred percent of being is a state of mind. It is an awareness, it is a thought, it is a consciousness. We must be convinced in our consciousness that we have obtained a hundred percent of all the values of life. A leaf in a tree should be aware that it is a part of the whole tree, and the whole tree is in it. A finger of the body is healthy and seems to be contented because the whole of the body is associated with it and it has a subtle experience within itself of its being sustained by the whole body and of its being a
vital, inseparable part of the whole body. The health of a personality and the happiness of a person depend upon this consciousness of wholeness which is what we are seeking in life, and we are not seeking anything else—and ‘not anything else’ is to be underlined again and again.

So when we are told that we have to be aware of the whole tree of life in order to be perfect in our lives, we are asked to go into the nature of the higher knowledge in which the tree of life is rooted. In the Upanishad especially, we are told that we should have the knowledge of the whole tree. The knowledge of this tree is liberation. But the Bhagavadgita says something quite different. Our salvation lies in our ability to cut at the very root of this tree by the axe of detachment: \textit{asaṅgaśastreṇa drṛhena chittvā} (B.G. 15.3). Both these terms of advice have a meaning in themselves.

As I endeavoured to point out, this tree of life has a twofold feature, namely, rootedness in the Absolute and manifestation in space and time. The aspect of its rootedness in God is what requires us to know the whole of this tree, and the aspect of its expression in space and time is that which is to be cut by the axe of detachment. The knowledge of this tree is our source attachment to God, and our detachment from the externalised form of this tree consists in our withdrawal of our external consciousness and the centring of it in our universality of being.
Discourse 3

SEVERING THE ROOT OF THIS TREE OF LIFE

Many a seeker on the spiritual path is often unintelligently enthusiastic with a misapprehension of the nature of spiritual life and the way to the attainment of the goal. Sincere seekers often imagine that yoga is a practice, and they want nothing but practice, with an added notion that it will bring about an immediate experience of a supernormal reality. This is immature thinking, a child’s behaviour towards the realities of life. There is no such thing as a sudden jumping into the practice of yoga, yet they imagine that it is doing something immediately and that it will be followed up by a sudden outburst of supernal light. This is a thorough misunderstanding of the situation.

The Bhagavadgita is also called a Brahma Vidya in addition to its being called a Yoga Shastra. It is a science of the Eternal, and it is a scripture on the practice of yoga. Science precedes practice. If we have to embark upon a business program, we do not suddenly start thinking how to make a profit and in which bank we can deposit it. The idea of business does not consist merely in profit-making. There are processes which have to precede this ideal concept of the aim of business. We have a program which is in our mind. We
do not suddenly open a shop on the roadside and keep certain articles for selling. That is not business.

There is a scientific system of the methodology of working laid out in one’s own mind and, as the science of economics tells us, there are stages of the fulfilment of the program. There is a necessity for a location for the business, there is a need for some capital to start it, there is a necessity to find the requisite labour, there is also a need for scientific systematic management, and there is a necessity for enterprise. All these are the theoretical side of the practical system of business called buying and selling. We do not suddenly start purchasing things imagining that we are starting a business, nor do we start selling immediately. To build a house we have a program of making a plan, maybe a master plan. The location, the structure, the nature of the material, the persons who will be entrusted with building, the idea of the work of construction, and the final structure will depend upon the purpose for which it is raised.

Theory and practice are not bifurcated as the North Pole and the South Pole. Idea expressed is action, as I mentioned previously. As water condenses into ice, thought manifests itself as activity. In the same way as water and ice are not different—it is water itself that has become ice, and they are not two different things—likewise, it is the idea that has become practice. Science becomes technology. We cannot have merely a
technological organisation without the scientific concept and knowledge preceding this practice.

The aim is the fulfilment of the system of practice, but it is preceded by the important conditioning factor of the ideological structure in one’s own consciousness. The ultimate realisation of the aim is the concretisation of the theoretical foundation already laid in one’s consciousness.

Some centuries back there was a great German thinker called Hegel. He had a system which is hard to understand for lay persons, according to which he developed a thought from the barest minimum of concepts available to human minds, not taking a stand on a phase of experience which is unintelligible. Take the lowest minimum, the irreducible minimum of content of thought, as the foundation of the development of your ideas, and gradually raise the structure of thought until you reach what he calls the Absolute Idea. The Absolute Idea is the idea of there being such a thing called the Absolute, the one not being separable from the other. Your idea of the existence of the Absolute is inseparable from the content thereof. This idea, which is so vast, has to get tagged on to the idea of the external object called the universe. Then there is a necessity for the union of this idea of the Absolute with the content thereof, namely, the physical universe. This union is Absolute experience. This is what we may call God-realisation.
When consciousness becomes one with its content and the content does not remain something outside as a perceptual category, that state of conscious experience is called spiritual realisation or God-realisation.

This principle is also emphasised in the Bhagavadgita. It is a Brahma Vidya, or the science of the Absolute, and by science what we mean here is the ideological structural basis for its expression as spiritual practice, which is called yoga. Thus, yoga is an external manifestation of the internal foundation of Brahma Vidya, so it is necessary that we should know where we stand. All enterprise, all business, all activity, if it is to become successful and fruitful, has to be based on a correct understanding of one’s own station in life. There is not to be that mistake of underestimation or overestimation of oneself. Neither are we nothing, nor are we everything. We are in the middle, between the two phases. This is a great difficulty for seekers because nothing can be harder than the assessment of oneself by oneself. We cannot exactly know where we stand in this world, what our relationship is with the atmosphere in which we are living. That is why the need for a Guru arises—a teacher, a guide, a master who has trodden the path and knows the various steps to be taken and the stages to be passed through.

I am placing this divergent introduction before you because I had occasion to hear from a sincere sadhaka
that what he requires is immediate practice and immediate experience. This is not to be unless the mind is cleared of all its cobwebs of entanglement with phenomenal experience. The mind will not concentrate, whatever be the effort we put forth, because the mind which we think is our mind is really everybody’s mind. It is not our property, and therefore it will not be possible for us to restrain it. If it is ours, we may handle it in the way we like; but unfortunately for us, the mind we are contemplating is one facet of a large structure of universal psyche, and it is not possible to control, regulate, handle or manipulate a part of a large organic continuum without knowing and learning the art of controlling this entirety of continuum. There is no such thing ultimately as my mind and your mind, and to imagine that I can control my mind independent of relationship with other minds would be a fallacy of approach. Most people fail in their attempt at concentration of the mind because they think their mind is theirs and that this so-called mind of theirs has no connection with other things in the world.

Now, this subject we have been discussing for the last two days is capable of throwing sufficient light on the problem of spiritual meditation or the practice of yoga, as we may call it. We were trying to analyse and understand the great analogy of the tree of life the Bhagavadgita presents before us in the Fifteenth Chapter. We had taken sufficient time to go into the
deeper intricacies of the nature of this tree of life, the way in which it grows, and the purposes for which it intends to move and grow.

The Katha Upanishad also makes mention of this tree of life. In the scriptures of other nations also we will find mystical reference to trees of this kind—the tree Yggdrasill, for example, as we read in Scandinavian mythology, comparable with the tree that is described in the Fifteenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita. This art of comparing life to a tree seems to be common to various nationalities because of the character of growth implied in life, the feature of the ramification of aspects which we find in the movement of life, and the tendency the tree manifests are comparable to the tendency of life as a whole.

In certain scriptures we are told that knowledge of this tree is the knowledge of the Absolute, so that it is identified with some aspect of Ultimate Reality itself. But the Bhagavadgita wants us to cut at the root of this tree with the axe of non-attachment. The Gita is oftentimes known as *anasakti* yoga, the yoga of detachment or non-attachment, and the whole of yoga is only this much, at least from one point of view. It is an art of detachment. But it is not merely a negative process of withdrawal of something from something else. That is why we have both sides of the picture presented before us. On one side, it is the act of
severing the root of this tree; on the other side, it is knowing what this tree is.

This double feature of the tree consists in the fact that the root of this tree is in the Eternal but its branches are spread out in the phenomenal realm. It is just like the human being whose personality stretches from Earth to heaven through all the levels of experience through the various realms or *lokas*. Everything is in every level at all times, but we are conscious only of one level at any given moment. Though even just now our personality is stretched from the nether regions up to the highest heaven and we can operate upon any level at any time, our egoism tethers us to a particular type of experience. At present, in our case, it is physical experience, which keeps us completely oblivious of even the presence of other levels of our own personality. In a more crude form, psychoanalysts tell us that we have layers of psyche within us of which we are unconscious, and we are presently operating in the so-called conscious level of the mind, not knowing the deeper level is buried in the abysmal depths.

More true is the case with the vaster implications of the human personality. We really exist everywhere in all levels, vertically as well as horizontally. But this is something strange to hear for the mind that is accustomed to think in terms of finite objects which are placed only in one place, located in space and time,
and are cut off from our own personalities as bodies. So when it is told that by the *shastra of asanga* the root of this tree has to be severed, that monition is towards the necessity of withdrawing the consciousness from involvement in objectivity of experience. Here again we have a tremendous problem before us. We have heard about this detachment so many times that this term has become commonplace. Everyone knows what this detachment means, but no one has fully succeeded in the practice of this type of detachment that is required by the Bhagavadgita.

When we think of detachment, we generally conceive of physically moving out of our house, going a few thousand miles away, and then it is detachment. This is the crudest form of the notion of non-attachment in the field of spiritual life. But our bondage does not consist in our physical location in any place. It is not the house that binds us. It is not the land on which we are seated that is our problem. Nothing visible to the eyes as a physical content can be regarded as a bondage. The bondage is a kind of experience that is injected into our consciousness. Our happiness and sorrow are a type of consciousness, a feeling, an operation of the psyche in some way, and if the mind is to work in a different way, we will have a different kind of experience. So we are concerned with experience rather than with objects.
Therefore, if the experience does not change even after isolation of the body from its physical atmosphere, that would not be counted as detachment, or non-attachment. What the mind is thinking is the touchstone of success in the practice of non-attachment. You may be having a house in Switzerland but you are physically seated in the Himalayas. Will you call this detachment? You may say, “Yes, why not, because my house is in Switzerland and I am not there. I am here.” But what is the mind thinking? Is the mind conscious that it has a property? That would be a subtle silken thread connecting the consciousness with its object, which can slowly become stronger, strengthening itself into an obstacle in the direction of the mind towards the spiritual goal of life.

Bondage consists in a type of movement of the mind. We can create bondage within our mind even inside our room because the mind is not inside the room. It is not even inside the body. It is an ethereal, unintelligible, all-pervading medium, and that is why it cannot be controlled, even as we cannot control the wind. How can we control a tempest or a cyclone or a tornado? Likewise is the hardship involved in the control of the mind. The mind is connected to everything everywhere, and to detach the mind from objects would be to withdraw it from everything.

In the system of yoga propounded by Patanjali, an analysis of the mind is made towards the achievement of
detachment. There are two kinds, at least, of the movement of the mind in respect of objects—an emotional kind and an intellectual kind. The emotional connection of consciousness with an object is what is usually called affection, love, or the so-called attachment, clinging. This sort of relationship of the mind with the object is called a klishta vritti, a painful operation of the mind, because when we are emotionally related to an object there is anxiety in the mind at all times. Prior to the connection of the emotion with the object, there is the anxiety as to when that object will become the content of one’s mind. When it is already a content of the emotion, there is the anxiety as to how long this will be within the content, and when it will be severed. And when it is actually severed, the sorrow is untold.

Therefore, emotional relationships with objects are tantamount to a perpetual sorrow in the beginning, in the middle, as well as in the end. That is why it is called klishta or sorrow-giving, grief-ridden. This is the crudest form of mental connection with an object. That is bad enough, and no one would endorse the presence of such an attachment in respect of things. But there is a very subtle condition which the system of yoga lays before us. Even if we have no emotional attachment to an object, we may be bound by the very consciousness of its presence. There is a wall in front of us. I cannot say that any one of us is emotionally
attached to this wall. None of us has an affection towards this wall as a mother may have towards her child, for instance. But we are aware that there is a wall. We are conscious that we are inside a hall. This consciousness itself is a bondage. This is an aklishta vritti, or a non-painful operation of the mind, yet conditioning the mind to objectivity.

Now we can imagine the extent to which we have to go in the control of the mind in order that it may be steadfast in the practice of yoga. If yoga is steadfastness of the mind in the Ultimate Reality of things, no thought, ordinarily speaking, can be regarded as a healthy thought in the light of the requirement of yoga. There is a morbidity attached to every thought, even if it be a so-called unconcerned thought. As the mind operates, it takes a form in the shape of the object; therefore, it is a vritti. When I see a wall, the mind is connected to that operation of the sight. The feature, the structure, the form, the limitation, the finitude of the wall is due to the character of abstraction in which the mind engages itself when it perceives anything whatsoever, for the matter of that.

All perceptions of objects, whatever be their nature, are abstractions from the infinitude of content in nature. Nature has no walls. There are no buildings for nature. It is doubtful if the whole of nature is aware that there are buildings in the world. It is a different type of experience altogether. But we are aware of
limited things—marble stones, electric lights, rainfall, wind blowing, people sitting. These are all limited experiences which assume an importance in reality on account of an assumption of isolatedness of these contents abstracted from the totality of nature, in which function the mind engages itself perpetually. It does not mean that the universe is made up of only what we are seeing with our eyes. There are infinitudes of content in the structure of the cosmos, and one phase, one particular characteristic of experience, is culled out from the infinite possibility of the universe for the purpose of present experiences of the jīvas or individuals living in this cosmos, which means that in the next creation the world may not take this shape.

As I mentioned yesterday, any image or form can be taken out from the block of stone by a sculptor. From the block of stone the sculptor can carve a tiger, a Jesus Christ or a Bhagavan Sri Krishna. He can carve a donkey or a monkey. Everything is present in that block of stone. Any thing, any form, any structure, any pattern can be said to be present in this impersonal block of stone. In the same way, every type of universe is present in the Divine Mind. Any universe of any kind of experience can be extracted out of it. This is not the only world that can be created by the will of the Supreme Being. This is why God is sometimes called Ananta Koti Brahmanda Nayaka—the Lord of infinite crores of universes. How many crores are there, nobody
can know, just as we cannot say how many crores of images are there inside a block of stone.

The forms of experience which are the objects of the mind are the bondages which confine everyone to the processes of life called *samsara*, which is equated with suffering. This is the tree which the Bhagavadgita expects us to cut at the very root—the tree of phenomenal experience. *Asanga* is supposed to be the methodology to be adopted. We should not be attached to anything.

Leaving aside the other more intricate teachings of the systems of yoga for the time being, we may take for our present consideration what this *anasakti* means. It appears to us that this is hammered into our minds again and again by the Bhagavadgita. We cannot detach ourselves from anything unless we are simultaneously attached to something else. The mind cannot be in a vacuum. We cannot ask the mind to lose everything, and give nothing to it. This is not possible. Therefore, to imagine that we can vacate the mind of all thoughts and keep it absolutely blank is a foolish idea. We cannot keep it absolutely blank. If someone asks us what we are thinking, we may answer, “Nothing. I am thinking nothing.” The idea that we are thinking nothing is itself a thought, so how can we say that we are not thinking anything? Even when we say we will not do anything, we have already done something because the very idea of not doing is an action of the
mind. So na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarmakṛt (B.G. 3.5): No one can exist for a moment without some kind of action. Everyone is psychologically engaged in action, which is real action. Physical action is no action if the mind is detached from it.

Hence, to be detached, to be anasakta, to be able to sever the root of this tree of life, a positive method has to be adopted. Unless we are sure that we have gained something superior, or at least there is a prospect of gaining something noble and high, we will not be able to withdraw ourselves from something else. We cannot expect to lose everything and be nothing. That is an impossibility.

Therefore, the Bhagavadgita, being conscious of this psychological secret at the base of human nature, says tataḥ padam tatparimārgitavyam (B.G. 15.4): You have to pursue this great goal simultaneously; yasmān gatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ: having reached which, there will be no return to the sorrow of phenomenal life. Once we wake up from our dream, we need not experience it again. We are happy that we have woken up. Who would like to enter into the sorrows of the dream world once again? A tiger might have been attacking us there. Well, the tiger is gone, by God’s grace, because the experiences in dream and waking are so constituted that while the one inheres in the other in the degree of their expression, they differ from each other.
The thought of God is the real axe that strikes at the very root of this tree of phenomenal experience. We cannot find any other axe to cut at the root of this tree. Axes made of steel or iron will not be able to cut this tree. Because this tree is not physical, a physical axe will not work here. It is a cosmic tree. It is a tree that is spread out everywhere, and perhaps its roots are also everywhere. Inasmuch as this is the situation, the weapon that we have to employ in laying low this tree of life should also be equally powerful.

It is not possible to overcome this illusion of phenom-enality. Daivī hyeṣā guṇamayī mama māyā duratyayā (B.G. 7.14): It is impossible of crossing and impossible of handling. With the furthest stretch of imagination and the greatest of effort conceivable, it is beyond us. But, māṁ eva ye prapadyante māyāṁ etāṁ taranti te: The resort of the mind to God is the positive step which will at once annul all movement of the mind in the direction of objects of sense. The love of God engulfs the loves for everything else in the world.

How does the love of God swallow every other love? This is another problem for seekers of Truth. There have been complaints and complaints that even after meditation on God one has not been able to sever oneself from affection to things. It is our daily experience that when we think of God, our mind goes to a shop, to a bazaar. It goes to a club. It goes to anything. Why does it go like this? Because we have,
unfortunately, limited God-thought to an object-thought. For us, God also is an object like any other object. Maybe He is a larger object, but nevertheless He is some kind of existence somewhere, to concentrate upon which we have to exert much. And the mind, being aware that there are also other things external to the ideal of God on which we are trying to meditate, seeks immediate satisfaction. The mind wants immediate satisfaction; it is not satisfied with remote promises. The immediate hunger of the mind is its prominent concern just at this moment. We have been told many a time that religion cannot be taught to hungry stomachs, and this psychology applies here. The mind is hungry, and we cannot fill its stomach with a remote God-thought which is religion.

The thought of God or the love of God can engulf all other loves only if it is as vast as everything, like the ocean itself. The ocean swallows up all the drops, but one drop cannot engulf another drop. If the mind persists in its notion that God is also one of the objects, a content in the universe, then it will not be possible to withdraw the mind from the thought of objects.

Love for things in the world can melt in the menstruum of God-experience only when God-thought is inclusive of all other affections. The affection or love for God is not a love that is different from other loves, but it is a transcendent love which includes all other loves, just as the values of the dream
world are included in the values of the waking world. When we wake up from dream, we do not have a feeling of loss. The mind does not run towards the treasures which it might have had in dream. Is a beggar in the waking state sorry that he has lost the kingdom he had in dream? A beggar on the road might have dreamt yesterday night that he was an emperor, but when he woke up into the consciousness of a beggar he was not grieved. He was not sorry because the beggarhood of waking is superior to the kinghood of dream. Though it is true that the beggar is not happier than the king, the consciousness is what matters. It is not the content of consciousness, but the nature of consciousness itself.

Likewise, if our thought of God or our love for God or devotion to God can assume the nature of a higher degree and a greater vastness than the thought which is moving towards external objects, then the mind will be happy at the very thought of God. But there is a subtle suspicion in the mind that it has lost something in the world when it is moving towards the idea of God. We may not be consciously, deliberately feeling that it is so, but we have deeper levels of the psyche. The heart has a reason which the reason does not know. Our feelings inside will speak a different language from the operations of the reason working in the waking condition. Our real friends are in the subconscious and unconscious levels. Our waking friends are not real
friends, and they will whisper into our ears that we are making a mistake, that these dacoits are our brothers and we belong to that group while we appear to be friends with the waking world of things, which is far from the truth.

Our deeper levels in the inner layers of our psyche are connected to subtle objects of sense, and these are the impulses that disturb our meditations and even the very thought of God. How can anyone be seated throughout the day and think of God? We will feel restless and out of sorts because of the unnaturalness of this thought. It is a wonder that the thought of God should appear as unnatural and be rushed forward into the outer atmosphere to become natural.

Don’t you feel, even all you people seated here, a slight sense of relief when you finish the satsanga and go out? “Oh, the boredom is finished. Let us breathe.” You feel a sense of limitation and uneasiness when you are restrained like this inside a hall. This is unnatural satsanga, if going out of this place is natural to your minds. If you feel a sense of relief when you go out into the open air, and feel the other way around when you are inside the hall, this sadhana is unnatural. But if you feel restless when you go out—“Oh, it is over. I want it more. I want to be seated here. I want to listen. I want to contemplate. I want to absorb myself in this idea”—then your sadhana is natural. Otherwise, the
kitchen would be natural, the shop would be natural, not the satsanga here.

Unfortunately, likewise is our meditation on God. It has somehow or other become unnatural to us. Japa is unnatural, worship is unnatural. Who would like to sit there? It is a great headache. We would like to go out as early as possible. The whole of sadhana becomes a nuisance to the innermost layer of our personality. But we force ourselves to believe the other way around. “No, no, it is not like that. I want God.” Who is telling this? It is our conscious level, which is the least part of us, the weakest part, and perhaps the most unreliable part. The reliable part, our real substance, is inside, and it is connected to objects of sense by a power of prehension, which is different from the apprehensions of the conscious mind. So this asaṅgaśastreṇa dṛḥena chittvā (B.G. 15.3) admonition of the Bhagavadgita will be like pouring water on the rock of the human mind if its implications are not properly understood. We will be simply chanting and chanting, and gaining nothing.

We cannot really love God, let us be honest to ourselves, because we have subtle loves for our children, for our families, for our properties, which of course we will deny outright if it is told. We say it is not so, that we are fed up with everything. But we are not fed up because, again to reiterate, we have a personality deeper than the one which we know about ourselves, and we cannot know what we are thinking.
So there is, again, a very great necessity before us to sit at the feet of powerful Masters who emanate a force of rejuvenation and positive thinking, who have dedicated themselves entirely to God-living, and whose totality of being is immersed in the search for this great Reality. All people cannot succeed in this attempt because we cannot go under our own skin and enter into our own psyche.

Therefore, blessed souls, I evoke the blessings and the grace of the Almighty upon you all that you have time enough to think over these difficulties, and do not think that everything is milk and honey in this world. There is neither milk here, nor honey, nor friends in this world. You have terrible problems before you every moment of time if you mistake things for what they are not. God is before you, and nothing else is before you.