

Om Sri Sai Ram

BHAGAVAT GITA VAHINI

By

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Greetings

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the Sanathana Sarathi, the timeless charioteer, who communicated the Geetha Sastra to Adithya and helped Manu and king Ikshwaku to know it; He was the charioteer of Arjuna during the great battle between good and evil fought out at Kurukshetra. When the rider, Arjuna, was overcome with grief at the prospect of the fight, Krishna instructed him in the science of recognising one's oneness with all, and removed the grief and the fear.

He is the charioteer even now, for every one of us; let me greet you as a fellow-sufferer and a fellow-disciple. We have but to recognise Him and accept Him in that role, holding the reins of discrimination and flourishing the whip of detachment, to direct the horses of the senses along the path of Sathya, asphalted by Dharma and illumined by Prema towards the goal of Shanthi.

Arjuna accepted Him in that role; let us do likewise. When worldly attachment hinders the path of duty, when ambition blinds the eyes of sympathy, when hate shuts out the call of love, let us listen to the Geetha. He teaches us from the chariot whereon He is installed. Then He showers His grace, His vision and His power, and we are made heroes fit to fight and win.

This precious book is not a commentary or summary of the Geetha that was taught on the field of Kurukshetra. We need not learn any new language or read any old text to imbibe the lesson that the Lord is eager to teach us now, for victory in the battle we are now waging. This Geetha Vahini is the same stream, refreshing and re-vitalizing, brought by the same divine restorer to revivify man caught in the mesh of modern dialectics, in the pride

of modern science, in the cynical scorn of modern superficiality. The teaching here set forth will comfort, console, and confer strength and faith.

Let us listen to these words with as much care and concentration as Arjuna had, even in the turmoil of a battle field, and we too will declare when the book nears its final pages, "My delusion is dissolved; I have become aware of my reality, which is God."

The ancient charioteer who is in you and me has responded to the call of the conflict-ridden hearts; He gave these lessons in the "Sanathana Sarathi" that is published from the Prashanthi Nilayam. Now they are with you, between covers, as a book, which you can read as often as you can or must.

May the faith with which you have started to scan these pages grow from day to day; may you be drawn by the ever-widening vista of knowledge, which this book reveals, to the grand glory of the experience of the Oneness, which is the basis of this manifoldness.

N. Kasturi

Chapter I

To understand the meaning of the Geetha, the reverential approach is necessary. You must take up its study in an attitude of submission and expectancy. For the Geetha is the "milk" of the Upanishads, "drawn" by the cowherd Krishna with the help of Arjuna, "the calf", for all the "dull-witted" to drink and draw sustenance from. There are some who argue that the Geetha as a sacred poem was a creation later than the Mahabharatha, of which it is a part; but whatever may be said of the composition of the Geetha, there is no doubt that the principles and teachings of the Geetha are ancient, nay, dateless. In the first three slokas of the fourth chapter, reference is made to the Lord instructing the Geetha to Surya first and later to Manu; and to the fact that from Manu it reached Ikshwaku and thence to others in succession! So, the Geetha is beyond the category of time and it cannot be assigned to a particular point of time, past or present.

The Geetha is a text for spiritual practitioners, for it emphasises Sadhana, and spiritual attitudes, more than anything else. Every chapter lays down means and methods of reaching the goal of peace and harmony. Now Sadhana is the product of keen and steady yearning for progress. The aspirant must aspire, not despair. He must persevere, not clamor for quick success. The Geetha is as a boat, which takes man across from the self-imposed state of bondage to the freedom, which is his nature. He is taken from darkness to light, from lustrelessness to splendor. The Geetha ordains for man disciplines and duties, which are free from the taints of Vaasanas (tendencies and impulses) that tie him to the relentless wheel of birth and death.

Really speaking, man has come into this Karmakshetra (field of activity) only to engage himself in activity, not in order to earn the fruit of such activity. That is the teaching of the Geetha, its fundamental lesson. The Geetha is the quintessence of the meaning of all the Vedas. Yajnas and Yagas, the outward directed activities are mentioned in the preliminary portions of the Vedas; activities of the mind, like the Upasanas, which are directed inward are mentioned later; and Jnana Yoga too is expounded to minds thus clarified and purified.

Whoever the individual, however scholarly, he cannot escape delusion and so he is subjected to grief, which acts as a brake upon activity. Arjuna, the great hero, capable of great renunciation and of great wisdom, is deluded by the awful needs of war and this grief handicaps his activity too. He confuses the body and the self; he starts identifying the two. He imposes on the Atma (ever untouched by the characteristics of the moving, changing world) the unreal and ephemeral nature of the world and takes this delusion as true. He believes that his duties, as laid down by that false identification, are his Atma Dharma! This is the tragedy not of Arjuna alone but of all humanity! Therefore, the Geetha is of

universal and eternal value. To study the Geetha is to learn the art of swimming across the sea of delusion. The Geetha is the very voice of lord Krishna. The fact that it has provided consolation and liberation to millions of men is evidence of its divine origin. A lesser person could not have given it that authenticity.

The way it begins and the way it ends, that gives the clue to the subject, which it expounds. The very first verse starts with the words, "Dharmakshethre, Kurukshethre...", the word Dharma being the leading word. The last verse of the final eighteenth chapter speaks of "Yatha Yogeshwara Krishna" and this word; "Yogeshwara" sums up the Dharma that is taught. Thus, it is clear that the objective of the teaching in the Geetha is just this: "Remember Dharma; practice Dharma." How significant is this word! All Sastras are engaged in demarcating and defining the nature and subtle characteristics of Dharma. The Geetha incorporates this study and this analysis. It is a textbook of Dharma, in all its aspects. It discusses all the principles underlying Dharma.

Arjuna is the Jivi, the individual. The body is the chariot and the teacher in the chariot is Krishna, the Lord. The charioteer is the Lord, the inspirer of the intelligence, the Brahman which prompts It in answer to man's prayer contained in the Gayathri Mantra "Dhiyo-yonah prachodayath..." (Awaken my discrimination, o Lord and guide me). The Kauravas represent the demonic nature; the Pandavas represent the divine. They are Asat, these are Sat; one is evil, the other is good. And there has ever been a struggle between the two. In this conflict between opposing forces, Krishna (the self, the Atma) is ever on the side of Dharma - the reality which sustains, not the delusion which undermines. If you seek to have the Lord on your side as your guide, equip yourself with the divine nature, (Daivi Sampath), the qualities of Dharma. For the Lord is where Dharma is.

Of course, this does not mean that the Lord is not omnipresent...! Butter is omnipresent in the milk, though it can be made manifest in one location, in the milk, only by the processes of curdling and churning. So too, the Lord can be made manifest in one location by the process of Dharma-sadhana. "Yatho dharmasthatho jayah" - "Where there is Dharma, there victory is achieved." Arjuna was engrossed with the physical aspect and so it was necessary to bless him with the knowledge of the real, the Atmic aspect. The entire complex of Sadhana is directed to the clarification of the awareness of Atma, and the fixing of attention on that. The teaching of Krishna is just this; in fact this is the sum and substance of the search for Truth.

Krishna answered many doubts that had entangled Arjuna, but which he failed to express. "O Arjuna! You are grieving because these kings and princes who are related to you are about to meet death at your hands. You talk glibly of Dharma. But, remember, the wise do not grieve either for the living or the dead. Shall I tell you why? Well, you are feeling grief over the body, which alone decays on death. Did you grieve when the body underwent many changes hitherto? The child disappeared in the boy, the boy disappeared in the youth, the youth became lost in the middle-aged man, the middle-aged man was lost in the aged old man and the old man is lost in death. You never wept for the changes that affect the body so long; why then weep for this one change? Have you, today, the body you had when you were a boy? Where is that frame you had when you tied Dhrishtadyumna up? You still remember that boyish exploit; but the body that achieved it is gone! So too, whatever changes your body may suffer, the Atma, the splendor of the true wisdom, remains immortal. Being established unshakably in this knowledge is the sign of the wise, the Jnani." Thus said Krishna.

"You may ask whether one would not feel sad when the bodies with which one had moved and lived for years go out of sight. But for how many have you to lament, in case it is proper so to grieve! Have you thought of that? Joy and grief are as day and night. They have to be put up with, gone through. If you refuse, they won't stop happening; if you

desire, they won't start happening! They are both related to the physical, the material - the body; they do not affect the spirit, the soul. The moment you escape from these two, that moment you are liberated, you have Moksha."

The first discourse, which teaches these truths, is named Arjuna Vishada Yoga, the despondency of Arjuna. That is the very foundation of the edifice, which is the Bhagavad Geetha. When the foundation is strong, the edifice too is lasting. The Geetha built on that foundation, 5000 years ago, is unshaken and unshakable. From this you can infer how strong is the foundation on which it rests and how wise is the person who laid it.

You refer to it as 'despondency'! But that 'despondency' was very beneficial; it was no ordinary 'want of courage'. For it tested his sincerity and steadfastness; it induced him to take unquestioning refuge in the Lord. That is why it is dignified by the name, Yoga. The Geetha, which begins with the Vishada Yoga, ends with the Sanyasa Yoga; Vishada is the foundation and Sanyasa, the superstructure. Vishada is the seed and Sanyasa, the fruit.

The question may be raised: how could Arjuna be credited with a pure nature, which alone is said to deserve the wisdom imparted in the Geetha. The word 'Arjuna' means pure unsullied, white - he is named very appropriately and he lived up to the name that he bore. That is how he secured the immediate presence of lord Krishna that is how he became the instrument for the award of the Geetha to the world.

Krishna used the word, Yoga, many times in the Geetha; the state of the individual (or Jivi) during Yoga too is described; yet, a doubt may arise in the minds of those who have read the Geetha that there is no agreement between the word as used ordinarily and as used by Krishna. Krishna has extolled Vairagya (detachment) in some places. At other places, He has declared that the highest freedom can be earned by worship. Various methods of attaining the supreme state of spiritual bliss are also elaborated. In the eighth discourse, there is an account of Raja Yoga, but it is not right to say that the Geetha is a text that teaches Raja Yoga. Complete surrender to lord Krishna, freedom from the threefold shackles which bind one with the external world of objects, the observance of good deeds and virtuous disciplines, these are the principal truths underlined in the Geetha. The Lord holds these forth as the best forms of training in the deepest secrets of inner progress.

The real meaning of the Geetha is not grasped by all. Reputed scholars and writers, though gifted with rare intelligence, have failed to unravel the mystery of its message. Commentators speak of the principle of perfect balance amidst all change, or of the achievement of freedom as more important than anything else. On the other side, others compare the Geetha with the philosophical texts of the west with which they are familiar and start teaching young minds in that strain! Of course, full renunciation is highly desirable. But only a very small number can practice it. If a certain spiritual teaching has to gain universal acceptance, it must have disciplines that can be practiced and experienced by every one in daily life and its activities.

The highest Dharma is for each one to follow his Swa - (own) dharma boldly. As regards this problem, there is a conflict between religion and morals. "Gahana karmano gathih", "It is difficult, fraught with danger" says the Lord, speaking of the moral discipline. Which act is legitimate, which not? Which act is sanctioned by morals, which not? Persons have struggled and are struggling to decide these. But Krishna has mentioned the type of acts, which are worthy, in the Slokas:

Manmanaa bhava madbhaktho mad yajee maam namaskuru
Maamevaishyasi sathyam the, prathijaane priyo si me.
Sarva dharmaan parithyajya maamekam saranam vraja
Aham thwaam sarva paapebhyo mokshayaishyami maa suchah.

"Fix thy thought on Me; be devoted to Me; worship Me; do homage to Me; thou shalt reach Me. The Truth do I declare to thee; for thou art dear to Me. This is my teaching, My grace."

"This is the path to come to Me. Give up all Dharmas; surrender to Me; do not grieve; I shall liberate you from the consequences of all your acts."

Ah! Note the meaning and significance of these two stanzas. Is not this act of surrender enough to save you and to liberate you from the round of coming to - staying in - and leaving from this world? Thanmana - that is, seeing Him in every being, being aware of Him every moment of existence, being immersed in the Ananda of this awareness; Thadbhaktha - that is, merged in the relationship caused by profound devotion and love to Him; That-yaji - all acts, big and small, dedicated to Him, Krishna, (wish, will, attitude, activity, fruit, consequence) everything from beginning to end, the renunciation of all attachment to the self and the performance of all acts in a spirit of worshipful non-attachment. This is what the Lords seeks from you.

Of course, it is hard to effect this full surrender. But if man makes the slightest effort towards it, the Lord Himself will confer the courage to pursue it to the end. He will walk with him and help him as a friend; He will lead me as a guide; He will guard him from evil and temptation; He will be his staff and support. He has said, "Swalpamapyasya Dharmasya thrayatathe mahatho bhayaath" (this course of action, if followed even to a small extent, will save him from terrifying fear). To follow Dharma is itself a source of joy; it is the path least beset with hurdles. That is the teaching of the Lord.

"Maamevaishyasi", "you will come near Me, you will be approaching Me;" that is to say, you will understand My mystery, you will enter into Me, you will achieve My nature. In these terms, Saadrisya (acquiring divine nature), Saalokya (existence in God), Sayujya (unity in God), are indicated. When one has attained the state of realising the divinity in every being, when every instrument of knowledge brings the experience of that divinity, when it alone is seen, heard, tasted, smelt and touched, man becomes undoubtedly a part of the body of God and lives in Him and with him. When this duty to your own progress is taken up, you will get a new strength at the very first step; you will thrill to a new and purer joy; you will taste the fullness of bliss; you will be refreshed by a new holiness.

This Dharma is not laid down or recommended for the extraordinary among men. It is within the reach of all, for all have the hunger for God; all have the discrimination to discover that there is something basic behind all this change. Even the most heinous sinner can quickly cleanse his heart and become pure by surrendering to the Lord in anguished repentance.

Therefore, the Lord's command is that each should pursue the special Dharma laid down for him; each person should plan his life according to the spiritual foundations of his culture; he should give up the 'objective' vision and listen to the voice of God.

Those born in Bharath should deserve the privilege by listening to the voice of the leader of Bharath - Gopala - and manifest the divinity latent in them in every word they utter, every letter they limn, every wish they entertain, every thought they frame, and every act they do for the winning of gross things, such as food or shelter or health.

Then only can this Indian nation demonstrate to the world the excellence of the ancient religion, the Sanathana Dharma, its special gift to humanity, and ensure peace for all mankind. Acts in line with that Dharma alone can confer the strength of spirit which can encounter all crises and achieve victory.

The sacred Geetha grants that boon by indicating clearly the Way.

Chapter II

The first chapter is better named "Arjuna Geetha" rather than Krishna Geetha. Overcome by sorrow and delusion, Arjuna turns from war and keeps aside his weapons; he is dejected in his chariot, halted between the two opposing forces; he turns this way and that, puzzled and perturbed; he surveys the faces of his kith and kin; he is overcome by pity; his famous bow slips from his grasp, he is too weak to stand or even sit; his mind wanders into the dictates of the Purva Mimaamsa school of thought. He swears he will not engage in fighting. When Sanjaya reported this to the blind king Dhritharashtra, he was overjoyed, for victory was within grasp! He had neither foresight nor farsight, much less, the divine vision; so he felt happy that his dream of an undiminished empire had come true, without bother.

But Sanjaya who had divine vision felt, "What is this insane joy which is affecting him? When the Lord is Himself on the side of the Pandavas, how can this king's wicked plan succeed?" Then he pictured to himself the ghastly consequences of Arjuna jumping into the fray.

But Arjuna had teardrops falling down his cheeks. There were whirlpools in his eyes. Even the Lord could not bear the sight; He could not remain silent. He felt the pulse-beat of Arjuna and diagnosed the malady. He knew in a trice that the malady of Moha (the delusion caused by false evaluation) had penetrated his three bodies: the gross, the subtle and the causal. The pity that enveloped Arjuna was not 'genuine', He saw. For genuine pity will be endowed with Daivi Sampath (divine elevating impulses and motives); it will not disregard the orders of the Lord. It was really egoism, under the veil of pity. So the Lord decided to cure him of that weakness, "Kripayaavishtam", the Geetha says. Arjuna was helpless, "overwhelmed by pity," and that had to be cured.

Just as a spirit entering a person has to be exorcised, Arjuna has to be freed from fear and cowardice. For he who has the Lord by his side need entertain no fear. What can any 'Bhooth' (spirit) do to one who is the Lord of all the five Bhuthas (elements)? "Vaidyo Narayano Harih." The Lord is the supreme doctor. Narayana was the doctor Arjuna needed and got.

How lucky was Arjuna! Even from the depth of grief, joy will swell. Until the eleventh sloka of the second chapter, it is the story of the despondency of Arjuna; the effect of 'the possessions.' That is why the first step in the cure is "the exposition of Sankhya yoga, the path of knowledge, (Jnana)."

The Amrithopadesa (immortality-bestowing teaching) of Krishna begins from this eleventh sloka; in fact, the Bhagavad Geetha starts from this point. Up to this point it is the description of Arjuna's delusion born of ignorance and dullness of intellect. Krishna, acting the role of witness, allows the despondency to deepen and darken. When at last Arjuna threw down his bow and refused to fight, when he confessed that he had lost all sense of right and wrong, when he prayed that Krishna should teach him the way that will solve his problems best, then, Krishna came forward and said:

"Arjuna! How could this miserable shade of cowardice overtake you now, when you have been clear and bright all along? This is quite unbecoming to the hero you are. The word Arjuna means pure, unblemished character. Why then this grief? The battle is imminent. The clouds of war have gathered and are thundering. The foes in front are awaiting the moment when they could jump into the fray. They have heaped countless injustices and cruelties on you and now they are ready to grab the land that must come to you as of right. You have so far borne all the agony they have poured over you, without stirring even an iota away from truth. You have fulfilled all the conditions they imposed and you have passed through the years they prescribed for your exile. Your attempts to effect a compromise were futile, you could not avoid the clash of arms. We have yielded as much as

we could. Now war is the only method by which the eyes of the evil-minded Duryodhana can be opened to his own iniquity."

"This war was decided on, after long deliberation. It is not a hasty resolution taken in a fit of anger. Responsible elders have weighed the pros and cons and come to the conclusion that resort to arms is inevitable. You and your brothers approved all this and appreciated the decision. You have been preparing for this battle with enthusiasm. In fact, you have been immersed in it more than others. How wrong is it for you now to turn back?"

"This war has not pounced on you in a trice. You have been collecting the wherewithal since long. Remember how you struggled and starved and lived on roots and fruits of the forest in order to win the Paasupatha Ashthra from lord Siva, how you went as far as the Loka of the lord of Gods, Indra, in order to win celestial arrows for this battle?"

"I thought that the moment of destiny for the annihilation they deserved has come for the wicked Kaurava brood; but now you have started this moaning dirge! Why this ominous note? Which Sastra lays down this attitude? Think of your duty as a member of the Kshatriya caste: to uphold Dharma, to protect justice. Yours is the wealth of courage, adventure and steadiness. But you are overpowered by this strange detachment, which is pathetically out of place."

"This cowardice brings shame on you and even on your far-famed forefathers. Fie on you? You have dragged down the Kshatriya race into disgrace. War is the royal road for your kind, the road which leads to Heaven. How can you escape infamy, if you withdraw from the field now? You have earned the title, Vijaya, by the prowess of your arm; do not tarnish the reputation you have won by a lifetime of effort. Give up this weakening delusion."

"Listen to me; remind yourself of what happened at Amaravathi. You disregarded the approaches of the divine damsel, Urvashi and when she wanted a son through your grace, you replied, 'Take me as your son.' That revealed you as an incomparable hero. The curse that she spelt on you in her discomfiture helped you at the court of the Virata king to pass off as an eunuch, teaching dance to the royal princesses, is it not?"

"Where has that heroism gone, tell Me. How has this pusillanimity come over such a stalwart? You came to Me and disturbed Me in sleep with your request for help in this battle, from which you are now running away. Am I to help you thus? Have I to watch while you are fleeing? Pluck this delusion by the roots; reduce this fear into ashes. Become a hero again." Thus exhorted Krishna.

Krishna uses four words in this context: Kasmalam (ignorance), Anaarya-jushtam (character that is harmful to the divine nature in each), Aswargyam (quality that destroys the divine in man) and A-keerthikaram (quality that causes the decline of the wealth that is lasting).

These inspiring words that will make the blood of any Kshathriya boil had a tremendous effect on Arjuna. The thick cloud of ignorance, which had overwhelmed Arjuna, started to melt a little. The Thamas, which had made him forget the truth got removed; Rajo guna returned and Arjuna found words to ask, "Katham?" (How). That term reveals much. It shows that the Geetha expounds, not merely what has to be done but even how it has to be done.

Arjuna asks Krishna, "O Madhusudana! Listen to my words: Those who are in the forefront of the battle line are all worthy of worship. The great Bhishma took care of us when we lost our father and brought us up from childhood and shaped us into what we are. He is as a father to us, the grand old man of our clan. And what shall I say of Drona? He loved me more than he loved his own son, Aswatthama; I had all his love. He is the Guru

who through that love, took me as his favorite disciple and made me into the bowman that I am. Do you want me now to use the skill he taught to overthrow him? Is it right for a son of Bharath to do such a thing? In battle we have to kill our enemies, is it not? Or, can we fight with fathers and teachers, who deserve reverence?"

"You say that heaven can be won by battle. I cannot realise how heaven can be got through the killing of these revered Gurus. If this idea spreads, few Gurus can survive! Whatever you might say, let me tell you this: rather than earn happiness and power through these means, I feel it is better to live on alms collected from door to door. Food won through killing such men is mixed with their blood and I would prefer a meal got through beggary. Well, even if I give up all these qualms and fight, how can victory be counted upon? Expecting victory to come to us, how can I resolve to slaughter these elders and lose both worlds? If by chance they win, then beggary is inevitable, if we win, it is as bad as losing, for of what gain is victory, if the price we pay is the destruction of kith and kin? We gain but inconsolable grief for the rest of life. Krishna! I am at a loss to solve this problem. My intelligence has deserted me. My nature has undergone a vast change; I do not know why I cannot distinguish between right and wrong, Dharma and A-dharma."

"My Kshatriya blood rises up in protest when you prod it so; it is pushing me forward into battle. Fear of becoming the murderer of these revered elders is pulling me back. I am helpless. As you are guiding this chariot, guide me also and show me the way. Moreover, I am no more concerned with worldly prosperity; I crave for spiritual progress only," he said.

From that moment, Krishna became the Guru and Arjuna, the disciple. Arjuna prayed for that status and got it. Until Arjuna accepted that attitude of a learner, his heart was filled with egoism and weakness. The hero had become a zero. He had taken a position the very opposite of that taken up by Krishna.

The reason for all this, if you carefully study the situation, it is nothing but "egoism". Prema is the viewpoint of Krishna and Bhrama (delusion), of Arjuna. He suffered from agony because of that. Then he realised that egoism led only to further ignorance and confusion. He surrendered his judgment to the Lord and saved himself. He said he was but an instrument in the hands of the Lord. Recognising one's error is the first excellence of a good disciple; it is the beginning of wisdom. Only the foolish will feel they know all and suffer from the dire disease of a swollen head.

Chapter III

It is more useful for the student to search for his own faults, with a view to removing them, than to seek excellences so that he might exult over them. A student who does this can progress fast; he is not dragged behind by fear or anxiety; he can move on, with faith in the Lord, on whom he has placed all his burdens. He reaches a state of mental calm, which is the sign of the true aspirant. Arjuna arrived at that stage and then Krishna gave him (and, through him, to all mankind) the teaching that confers immortality.

For whom was the Gita spoken? Just think of that for one moment. Milk is not taken from the udder for the sake of the cows, for cows do not drink their own milk; Arjuna, the calf, has had his fill; Krishna is ever content and He needs nothing, not to mention, milk! For whose sake was it that the Upanishads were milked by Krishna to get this Geetha? Krishna says it is for the "Sudhee-jana," the persons who have "Su-dhee". Intelligence that is moderated by goodness; intelligence that is controlled by virtue.

And what of the place where the teaching was given? Between two opposing armies! Therein lies the great significance of the Geetha. On one side, the forces of Dharma; on the other, the forces of Adharma; on one side, the good, on the other, the bad; between these

two pulls, the individual, unable to decide which course to adopt, weeps in despair. And the Lord speaks the Geetha to all such and grants them light and courage. Do not think that the distress of Arjuna was just his affair, his problem and no more. It is a universal human problem.

For Arjuna sought from Krishna not Preyas - the pleasing, worldly glory of power and status and wealth; but Sreyas, the lasting glory of full joy. He said, "Preyas is available for human effort; it can be won by human activity or Karma. Why should I crave from You what I can win by my own endeavor? I am not so foolish as all that. Grant me that Sreyas that is beyond the reach of my effort. Sreyas is not the fruit of Karma, it is the fruit of grace!" Thus Arjuna rose to the height of Sharanaagathi, absolute self-surrender, the state called Prapaththi.

Much can be said of Sharanaagathi. Man surrenders his dignity and status to other men for various purposes in life - wealth, fame, possessions, pomp, power etc. But rarely does he get the chance to surrender to the Lord for the sake of the Lord! How can he get the urge so long as he craves for the Aadheya and not the Aadhaara? He longs for the object, but does not long for the base on which the object rests. How long can a baseless object satisfy? He wants the gift, not the giver! - the created not the creator, things from the hand, but not the hand! He is running after a nonexistent thing. Can there be an object without a preexistent cause? No; if there is one, it can only be the uncaused God. It is, therefore, sheer ignorance to surrender individuality for the sake of the transitory products of action, the 'caused' rather than the cause. Surrender rather to the basis, the cause and the origin of all, the Sarveswara. That is genuine Sharanaagathi.

There are three types of Sharanaagathi: Thavaivaaham (I am thine), Mamaiva-thwam (you are mine) and Thwame-vaaham (thou art I). The first affirms, I am yours; the second asserts, you are mine, and the third declares you and I are one, the same. Each is just a step in the rising series and the last is the highest step of all.

In the first stage, Thav-eva-aham, the Lord is fully free and the devotee is fully bound. It is like the cat and the kitten; the cat shifts the kitten about as it wills; the kitten just mews and accepts whatever happens. This attitude is very gentle and is within easy reach of all. In the second, Mama-eva-thwam, the devotee binds the Lord, who is to that extent 'un-free!' Surdas is a good example of this attitude. "Krishna! You may escape from my hold, from the clasp of these arms; but you cannot escape from my heart, where I have bound you," challenged Surdas. The Lord just smiled and assented; for, "I am bound by my devotees," He asserts so without any loss of self-respect. The devotee can tie up the Lord with his Prema; by Bhakthi that overwhelms and overpowers his egoism. When man is full of this type of Bhakthi, the Lord will Himself bless him with everything he needs. His grace will fulfill all his wants. Remind yourself here of the promise made by the Lord in the Geetha. "Yogakshemam vahaamyaham", "I carry the burden of his welfare."

Next, about the third stage: "Thwamevaaham ithi thridhaa;" this is the Avibhaktha-bhakthi, the inseparable devotion. The devotee offers all to the Lord, including himself, for he feels that he cannot withhold himself. That completes his surrender.

The Thwamevaaham feeling is the Adwaithic Saranagathi, based on the realisation that all this ('Idam') is Vaasudeva and nothing less, nothing else. So long as the consciousness of the Deha or body persists, the Bhakta is the servant and the Lord is master. So long as the individual feels that he is separate from other individuals, the Bhakta is a part and the Lord is the whole. When he progresses to the state when he gets beyond the limits of the body as well as of "I" and "mine", then there is no more distinction; Bhakta and Bhagawan are the same. In the Ramayana, Hanumantha achieved this third stage through Bhakthi.

This same subject is mentioned in the seventh sloka of the second chapter of the Geetha. The word Prapanna used there indicates that Arjuna has the qualification, the discipline of Bhakthi. Moreover, Arjuna had analysed his own faults and recognised them as such. Again, he had awakened from Tamas. Krishna appreciated this the moment it happened. He said, "You are called Guda-kesa, for you are Jitha-nidra - Nidra or sleep is the characteristic of Tamas; how can this Tamas overwhelm you now? It is just a temporary phase; it can never bind you fast."

If Arjuna has, by his efforts, won control over his senses and earned the name Gudakesa, Krishna is Hrishikesa, the Presiding Deity of all the senses! On the field of Kurukshetra both are in the same chariot, one as learner and the other as teacher!

What exactly is the cause of all grief? It is the attachment to the body that produces grief as well as its immediate precursors: affection and hate. These two are the results of the intellect considering some things and conditions as beneficial, and some other things and conditions as not. This is a delusion, this idea of beneficence and maleficence. Still you get attached to objects that are considered beneficial and you start hating the others. But from the highest point of view, there is neither; the distinction is just meaningless. There is no two at all; how can there be good and bad then? To see two where there is only one, that is Maya, or Ignorance. The ignorance that plunged Arjuna into grief was of this nature - seeing many, when there is only one.

Absence of the knowledge of the identity of Thath thwam (the word 'Thathwa,' used to mean principle, enshrines this great philosophical doctrine) is the cause of all ignorance. If this truth is not learnt, man has to flounder in the ocean of grief. But, if it is learnt and if man lives in that consciousness, then he can be free from grief. Many a prescription is recommended, used, published and repeated parrot-like by all kinds of quacks. But they do not go to the root of the matter; they are balms applied to the eye to cure an ache in the stomach. The disease and the drug have no coordination! The ache must be spotted and diagnosed and the drug must be such as will remove it. Then alone can it be cured. Narayana is the only medical expert who can do so. And, He has diagnosed Arjuna's illness correctly and decided on the treatment.

The wound that cannot be healed by external application of balms has to be cured by internal remedies. So Krishna prodded Arjuna with queries. "Why do you weep like a coward? Is it because, Bhishma, Drona and the rest are about to be killed? No; you weep because you feel they are 'your men'. It is egoism that makes you weep. People weep not for the dead, but because the dead are 'theirs'. Have you not killed until now many who were 'not yours?' You never shed any tears for them. Today you weep, since you are under the delusion that these whom you see before you are somehow 'yours' in a special way. When you sleep, you are unaffected by this feeling of "I" and "mine", so you are unaware what happens to your body or the bodies of these 'your men' or to your possessions, items which you carefully remember while awake. 'Mine' is the possessive case of 'I' and so it comes in its trail. The fundamental ignorance, my dear fool, is the identification of yourself with something that is not you; viz, the body. Deha is An-Atma; you believe that it is the Atma. What a topsy-turvy bit of knowledge is this! To cure this A-jnana, I must administer the medicine of Jnana itself."

Thus, Krishna started giving him, in the very first instance, the most effective drug, Jnana. This is detailed from the eleventh sloka of the second chapter. This is a key sloka for all students of the Geetha. Krishna condemns outright two objections that were haunting Arjuna for long, saying that the destruction of the body does not mean the destruction of the Atma and that he is grieving for those he need not grieve for. "Prajnaa-vaadaam-scha bhaashase: You talk like a wise man. You say this is Dharma and the other is Adharma, as if you know how to distinguish them," said Krishna.

Here attention has to be paid to one fact. Arjuna is suffering from two types of delusion: (1) Ordinary and (2) Out of the ordinary. To confuse the body with oneself and pine for the body as if something has happened to one is the ordinary delusion. To discard one's own Dharma - (in this case, the Dharma of a Kshatriya) - as A-dharma is a delusion out of the ordinary. Krishna destroys the first and removes the second. The first is dealt with from the 12th to the 30th sloka of the second chapter; Krishna has to tackle the second as a special problem and explain in eight slokas the idea of Swa-dharma or His own Dharma to Arjuna. These are collectively called Dharmashtakas. Swa-dharma does not bind and produce further birth; it can lead on to liberation; it has to be done as Karma yoga, without attachment to the fruit. Towards the close of the second chapter, there is also the description of the successful aspirant who has steadied himself in a purified intellect, the Sthithaprajna.

Krishna continued His discourse: "Arjuna! Think for a while who you are and what you are proposing to do. You declare you know everything but yet you weep like a helpless woman. Your words proclaim that you are a Pundit, but your acts reveal you as a simpleton. Hearing you, one would infer you are a Jnani; but seeing you, one would find that you are an Ajnani! Your condition is disgusting, to say the least. Well, if I take you to be a Pundit, I cannot reconcile that view with your tears; for Pundits do not grieve over life and death. If they grieve, they are no Pundits. Pundits have the capacity to discover what is fundamentally true. Those who know the secret of the physical, and the mystery of the spiritual, such alone can be called Pundits. How then can they weep over either the embodied or the disembodied? They will not forgo their inner calm, whatever the stress or distress."

The fully ignorant and the fully wise - both will have no grief over the living or the dead. Do you weep because the bodies of Bhishma and Drona will fall, or is it because the Atma of those two will be destroyed? For the bodies, do you say? Well. Are tears any good? If they are, certainly, people would have kept the corpses of their dead and revived them by their weeping. No, it can never be. Immerse the body in vessels of Amritha; it cannot come back to life. Why then weep over the inevitable, the unavoidable?

"You might say that you are weeping for the Atma, the spiritual core. That reveals greater foolishness. Death can never even approach the Atma. It is eternal, self-evident, pure. It is evident that you have no Atma-jnana at all."

"Again, for the Kshatriya, fighting is Swadharma. Do your duty regardless of other considerations. You ask, 'How can I cause the death of Bhishma in war? But they have all come to get killed and to kill; you are not killing them in their homes. Of course, it is A-dharma to kill them in their homes; but on the battlefield, how can it be against Dharma? I am sorry you have not got this much of Viveka."

"It is enough. Get up and get ready for the fray. Why slide to the ground under the weight of all this useless ego? The Lord is the cause of all, not you. There is a higher power that moves everything. Know this and bend your will to it."

"Bhishma, Drona and the rest have come like true soldiers and Kshatriyas to engage in battle. They do not weep like you. Consider that. They will never grieve or withdraw. Arjuna! This is the testing time for you, remember! Let Me tell you this also. There was never a time when I was not. Why? There was never a time when even you and all these kings and princes were not. That is the Paramatma, Thwam is the Jivatma; and both were the same, are the same, and will be so forever. Prior to the pot, in the pot and after the pot, it was, is and will be clay."

Arjuna was shocked into awareness and wakefulness by all this. He said, "May be You are God; may be You are indestructible. I weep not for You, but for such as us: come yesterday, present today, off tomorrow. What happens to us? Please enlighten me."

One point has to be carefully noticed here. That, that is the Godhead, is Nithyam, eternal; every one accepts it. But Thwam, the individual too is godhead! (Asi). It too is eternal, though it cannot be grasped so easily or so quickly. So Krishna elaborates this and says, "Arjuna! You too are eternal as the absolute. Seen apart from the limitations, the individual is the universal. Prior to the appearance of the jewel, there was just gold; during the existence of the jewel, there is just gold; and after the name-form of the jewel has gone, the gold persists. The Atma persists in the same way, body or no body.

"Though it is associated with the body, the Atma is unaffected by the Gunas and the Dharmas, that is to say, it has no qualities and characteristics. You are unaffected by the changes that the body undergoes when you grow from the infant to the boy, from the boy into the youth, from the youth to the middle-aged man and thence to the old man. You persist, in spite of all this. It is the same when the body is destroyed; the Atma persists. So the hero will not pine over the change called death." Krishna said this with such emphasis that the chariot shook!

Chapter IV



Arjuna was still doubt-ridden. "O Lord," he began, "You said that the bodily changes are like the stages of wakefulness, dream and sleep. But we do not forget our experiences when we awake from deep sleep. The experiences of previous births are destroyed in memory by the incident called death." Krishna replied that it was not possible to recall to memory all experiences, but it was possible to recall some. For the Atma persisted, though the vehicle changed.

Arjuna then shifted to another point; a point that pesters many besides Arjuna. That is why Krishna says, "Dheerasthathra na muhyathi, the Dheera is not deluded by this." He does not say Arjuna should not be deluded by this. He intends to teach all wavering minds. Krishna solves every doubt as soon as it arises. He said, "Arjuna! While passing through the three stages, Buddhi somehow manages to keep some points in its hold. But it too is destroyed when death comes to the body. At one stroke, all is forgotten. Memory is the function of the intellect, not the Atma.

"Now consider this: You cannot now tell exactly where you were on a definite day, ten years ago, can you? But you existed that day, ten years ago. About that there is no doubt. You dare not deny your existence then. The same is the case of the life before this, which you lived, though you have no recollection how and where. The wise man is not deluded by such doubts, nor agitated by them."

"The Atma does not die; the body does not stay. Do you think that your grief at their possible death will make the Atma of your opponents happy? That is an insane thought. The Atma does not derive joy or grief whatever happens or does not happen. Let the senses keep to their places; there is no reason to fear. It is only when they start contacts with objects, that the twin distractions, joy and grief, get produced. When you hear some one defaming you, you feel anger and grief; but no such agitation can take place if the words do not fall on your ears. The object-ward movement of the senses is the cause of grief and its twin, joy."

"I is like heat and cold; when it is the cold season, you crave for warmth and in the hot season you crave for coolness. The sense-object contact is exactly like this. So long as the world is there, objective contact cannot be avoided; so long as the burden of previous births is there, the joy-grief complex cannot be avoided. Still, one can master the art, the discipline, the secret, of avoiding them or bearing them without bother."

"Of what use is it to wait till the waves are silenced, before you wade into the sea for a bath? They will never cease. The wise man learns the trick of avoiding the blow of the onrushing wave and the drag of the receding wave. But a sea bath is essential. Some people avoid that very thing, because they are too idle to learn the art, Arjuna. Wear the armour of fortitude, of Thithiksha, and the blows of good and bad fortune can never harm you."

"Thithiksha means equanimity in the face of opposites, putting up boldly with duality. It is the privilege of the strong, the treasure of the brave. The weak will be as agitated as peacock feathers; they are ever restless, with no fixity even for a moment. They sway like the pendulum, this side and that; once towards joy, the next moment towards grief."

"Here, some pause has to be made on one point. Fortitude is different from patience. Thithiksha is not the same as Sahana. Sahana is putting up with something; tolerating it, bearing it, because you have no other go; having the capacity to overcome it, but yet, disregarding it - that is the spiritual discipline. Patiently putting up with the external world of duality combined with inner equanimity and peace - that is the path to liberation. Bearing all, with analytic discrimination - that is the type of Sahana that will yield good result."

(Viveka is the word used for such discrimination. It means the capacity to recognise what is called the "Aaga-maapaayina" nature of the objective world; that is to say, the world of objects that "come and go" and are not eternal).

"Generally, man seeks only happiness and joy; under no stress will he desire misery and grief! He treats happiness and joy as his closest well-wishers and misery and grief as his direct enemies. This is a great mistake. When one is happy, the risk of grief is great; fear of losing the happiness will haunt the man. Misery prompts inquiry, discrimination, self-examination and fear of worse things that might happen. It awakens you from sloth and conceit. Happiness makes one forget one's obligations to oneself as a human being. It drags man into egoism and the sins that egoism leads one to commit. Grief renders man alert and watchful."

"So misery is a real friend; happiness spends out the stock of merit and arouses the baser passions. So it is really an enemy. Really, misery is an eye-opener; it promotes thought and the task of self-improvement. It also endows one with new and valuable experiences. Happiness draws a veil over experiences that harden a person and make him tough. So, troubles and travails are to be treated as friends; at least, not as enemies. Only, it is best to regard both happiness and misery as gifts of God. That is the easiest path for one's own liberation."

"Not to know this is the basic ignorance. A person so ignorant is blind; really, happiness and misery are like the blind man who must be accompanied ever by one who sees. When the blind man is welcomed, you have inevitably to welcome the man with eyes, for he is the constant comrade of the blind man. So too, happiness and misery are inseparable; you cannot choose only one. Moreover, misery highlights the value of happiness. You feel happy, by contrast with misery." Thus said Krishna to Arjuna, to teach him the insignificance of all duality.

Then Arjuna resumed: "Madhava! What is the profit if your advice is followed and if the necessary Thithiksha is cultivated? Forbearance is perhaps the only result. There is no benefit, isn't it?" Krishna replied "O Sun of Kunthi! The hero is the steady person who is not agitated to the slightest extent by ups and downs caused by roaring waves on the sea of life; who does not lose the poise which has become part of his nature; who keeps to his schedule of spiritual discipline whatever the attraction or distraction. The wise man is he, who is unaffected by the ever-present dualism of the objective world. He is the person referred to as 'Dheera'."

'Dhee' means 'Buddhi;' it is the quality that makes a person a 'Purusha' or perfect man. It is not the dress or the moustache that marks out the 'man'. Manhood comes with the rejection of the dual. To deserve the status, he ought to earn victory over internal foes, rather than the external. His exploit is to conquer the twin foes of joy and grief.

"Well, you might have another doubt also. (Your heart is a nest of doubts!). You might still question, what is the gain of victory? The gain is immortality, let Me assure you. Things of the world cannot confer that state of bliss. All that they can give is relative, not absolute bliss. When you rise above joy and grief, bliss is absolute, independent, full. Arjuna! You are man among men. So, you have no need of this paltry victory over world enemies. You deserve the bliss of immortality." Thus saying, Krishna began telling him of the science of Atma and Anatma, the discipline by which one can discriminate between the two.

"The Atma-jnani is not bound by the results of Karma; it is only those who indulge in Karma without the awareness of the Atma, (their real Self, unaffected by what they do or feel or think) that do get bound. Like the person who has learnt swimming, the Jnani can safely wade into the sea of worldly activity. If you do not know swimming, but yet enter the sea, the waters will swallow you up and death is sure."

This explains why Krishna taught Arjuna the key science of Atma Jnana. The Atma does not kill, nor does it die. Those who believe that it kills or dies are unaware of its nature. The Atma of Arjuna does not kill; the Atma of Bhishma or Drona does not die, the Atma of Krishna does not prompt! These are just phases of the cause-consequence duality. The Atma cannot be the cause or consequence of any Karma; it is Nir-vikara, incapable of change.

"There are six forms of modulation or modification: Originating, existing, growing, altering, declining, getting destroyed. These are the Shad-vikaras. Originating or Janma is when it 'was not' and later, 'is'. When it 'is' and becomes 'is not', it is called 'maranam' or death. Janma happens to organic beings, not inorganic things. But the Atma has no organs, it is Nir-avayava. The Atma is not born and so how can it die? Whom does it kill? It is unborn, eternal."

"Just as a person discards old clothes and wears new ones, the Dehi (dweller in the body) discards one body and dons another. The body is to the individual what the clothes are to the body. If you understand the real nature of the Atma, then you would not give way to grief. All the weapons that you wield can harm but the material body; they cannot harm the modification-less Atma. Know this as truth and renounce this despondency."

"The foremost duty of a Kshatriya is to stay on the side of Dharma and destroy Adharma. Consider your good fortune! You have on this battlefield worthy foes like Bhishma and others. This same Bhishma fought in the past with his own Guru, the Brahmin who taught him all the arts, the great Parashurama himself in order, primarily, to carry out his Kshatriya duty. And now you, like a coward, are afraid to take arms against such stalwarts. A Kshatriya finds his duty fulfilled when he upholds the cause of Dharma in spite of all odds. That is the path of progress."

'Kshatham' means 'Dukham', 'Sorrow', and a Kshatriya is he who saves beings from sorrow. A chance like this to wage a war on behalf of Dharma against the forces of Adharma comes but rarely to man. You have been blessed as a Kshatriya to take part in this Dharmayuddha. Just imagine how much merit you will acquire by the service to the world, which you are set to do now. The war that is waged to establish Shanthi and Soukhya (peace and plenty) in the world is referred to as Dharmayuddha and this is just such a struggle, where justice is bound to win.

"The Kauravas have desisted from no sin, no injustice and no vice. They insulted elders, deserted the virtuous, defamed the chaste, and wounded the self-respect of the good. Countless are their misdeeds. Now, the moment for retribution has come; they are about to answer for all their crimes. And just at this hour, if you behave like a poltroon, you bring dishonour to your parents, your brothers and indeed to the entire Kshatriya caste."

"You imagine that it is a sin to engage in war. That is a great error. The sin, on the other hand, lies in avoiding the chance to destroy the wicked, in prolonging the agony of the virtuous. Give up your Dharma now and you run the risk of falling into perdition. Hold fast to it, and you are untouched by sin. Be of fixed mind; do not give way to either one or the other among all the dualities of the world." From the 31st sloka of this chapter, Krishna has spoken of this Swadharmanishta, in eight slokas.

One should engage in activity, with a mind steady in the midst of fortune, good and bad. This was what Krishna advised in the 37th sloka. The 39th is a transitional verse for after speaking of "Esha thebhihithaa saamkhya", (I have described to you the Saamkhya arguments), Krishna says that He will go on to teach him the Yogabuddhi or Buddhiyoga and asks him to listen with care.

When the desire to attain the fruit of action is renounced with full intellectual awareness, then it becomes what Krishna calls, "Buddhiyogam." The intellect has to be purified and trained; otherwise, it is impossible to give up attachment to the fruits of action and to continue doing things as either duty or dedication. Such a purified intellect is named "Yogabuddhi." Cultivate it and then, through it, liberate yourself from the bondage of Karma. Really speaking, you, the true you, are above and beyond Karma.

You might say that you will desist from Karma rather than practice the difficult discipline of renouncing the fruits thereof. But, that is impossible. No; Karma is inevitable; one has to do some Karma or other. Not for a single moment can one free oneself from Karma; "Nahi kaschith kshanamapi" says Krishna, in the 3rd chapter of the Geetha.

"Arjuna! Every Karya (deed) or Karma (activity) has a beginning and an end. But Nishkama Karma (desireless Karma) has no such. That is the difference between the two. When Karma is done with a view to the gain therefrom, one has to suffer the loss, the pain, and even the punishment. But Nishkama Karma frees you from all these."

"Desire the fruits of Karma and you get born again and again, caught up in that desire; give up that desire, you are liberated from the flux. The practice of this type of renunciation ends the state of bondage. The main point is to stick to the goal. The goal is Karma, not Karmaphala. Let me tell you that the desire for the fruit of one's acts is an indication of Rajoguna, which does not befit you. Perhaps you will prefer to remain inactive. Well, that is an indication of Thamoguna! It is even worse than Rajo guna." The Lord has laid down four commands: The first one a "do" and the other three "don'ts"; the first insisting on the cultivation of strength; the rest requiring the avoidance of weakness.

Of course, it is not Arjuna alone that got such advice; the whole of mankind needs it. Arjuna is only the representative "man". Students of the Geetha must learn this lesson first: that the Geetha is primarily for every seeker.

Another point to be noted is this: Geetha is addressed to man, not to birds and beasts or to the gods or Devatha. Man performs acts prompted by the desire for the fruits thereof; if the act does not yield fruit he will not do the act at all. Profit, gain, reward, result - these, man seeks. But this rule does not apply to those who take the Geetha in their hands, to drink the nectar of the Lord's message. Not all do yearn for the nectar; and, if you do so, it is evident that you aspire for eternal joy, eternal liberation. Then you must pay the price, the giving up of the desire for the fruit of action, and dedicate everything at the feet of the Lord.

Chapter V

If you have an eye on the fruits of your actions, you are liable to be affected by worry, anxiety and restlessness. The question may arise: if the fruits have to be given up, how can one manage to live? But why this weakness of heart, this nervousness? He who has assured, 'Yogakshemam vahamyaham,' will certainly look after that. He will give the wherewithal and the means. All you have to consider is where a happy life is important or is liberation from the cycle of life and death more important? Happy living is only of short duration; the joy of liberation is eternal, unshakable.

On this point many commentators have exercised their intelligence and written differently. Many have said that the giving up of Phala or fruit is advised because there is no right or authority for the doer to desire for the fruit.

This is a great blunder. The Lord has said in the Geetha, 'refuse the fruit' (maa phaleshu), that is to say: the deed yields results, but the doer should not desire the result, or do it with the result in view. If Krishna's intention was to say that the doer has no right for the fruit,

He would have said, 'It is fruitless', 'na phaleshu,' (na, meaning no). So if you desist from Karma, you will be transgressing the Lord's command. That will be a serious mistake.

When man has a right for engaging in Karma, he has a right also for the fruit; no one can deny this or refuse his right. But the doer can, out of his own free will and determination, refuse to be affected by the result, whether favourable or unfavorable. The Geetha shows the way: "Do... and deny the consequence." The desire for the result of your action is a sign of Rajoguna: the giving up of action since you cannot benefit by the fruit is a sign of Thamoguna. To engage oneself in Karma, to know that the result will follow; and yet not to be attached to it or getting concerned with it - that is the sign of Sathwaguna.

The Karmayogi who has learnt this secret of "Karma combined with Phalathyaga" should have Samabuddhi, more than Sangabuddhi. For the Sangabuddhi draws him into attachments and entanglements. "This Karma is mine; its results are due to my endeavours. I am the person entitled to it," such are the thoughts which bind the doer. Krishna advises that one should rise above this Sangabuddhi. He declares that Samathwam is the genuine Yoga. (Samathwam yogamuchyathe).

In the second chapter, Krishna has made clear in a general way four principle points: the Sharanaagathi principle, the Sankhya teaching, the Yoga attitude and the Sthithaprajna nature. We have noted the first three already. Now about the fourth:

Krishna taught Arjuna the nature and characteristics of the Sthithaprajna when Arjuna questioned him. Arjuna prayed "O Kesava!" and when that appellation was used, Krishna smiled. For He knew then that Arjuna had understood His splendor. Do you ask how? Well, what does Kesava mean? It means, "He who is Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, the Trimurthy." Through Krishna's grace, Arjuna had reached that stage of realisation.

When Arjuna prayed that Kesava must tell him the true characteristics of Sthithaprajna, He replied, "Pratha! He will be free from all desire. He will be stable in the knowledge and awareness of the Atma only."

Now, there are two processes in this: To give up all the promptings of desire in the mind is the negative process; to implant joy, ever-present joy therein, is the positive aspect. The negative process is to remove all the seedlings of wrong and evil from the mind; the positive process is to grow, in the field cleansed thus, the crop of attachment to God! The cultivation of the crop you need is positive, the plucking of the weeds is the negative stage. The pleasures the senses draw from the objective world are weeds; the crop is the attachment to God. The mind is a bundle of wishes; and unless their roots remove these wishes, there is no hope of destroying the mind, which is a great obstacle in the path of spiritual progress. When the yarn that comprises the cloth is taken out, one by one, what remains of the cloth? Nothing. The mind is made of the warp and woof of wishes. And when mind vanishes, the Sthithaprajna is made.

So the first thing to be conquered is Kama, the demon of desire. For this it is unnecessary to wage a huge war. It is also unnecessary to use pleasing words to persuade the desire to disappear. Desires will not disappear for fear of the one or for favour of the other. Desires are objective; they belong to the category of the "seen". When the conviction that "I am the see-er only, not the seen", the Sthithaprajna releases himself from attachment. By this means he conquers desire. You must watch the working of the mind, from outside it; you should not get involved in it. That is the meaning of this discipline.

The faculty of the mind is like a strong current of electricity. It has to be watched from a distance and not contacted or touched. Touch it, you are reduced to ashes. So too, contact and attachment give the chance for the mind to ruin you. The farther you are from it, the better. By skillful methods, you have to make the best use of it for your own welfare.

The bliss, which the Sthithaprajna is immersed in, does not arise from external objects; he has no need of them either. Ananda is in every one as part of his very nature. Those with pure consciousness find the highest bliss in the realisation of their own reality, the Atma. That joy is Swasampaadyam (self-earned, so to say). Only the individual knows it; it is self-evident.

Since Arjuna had not know this, Krishna had to clarify it in simple terms in the 56th, 57th and 58th slokas. Joy or grief can be met with in three forms: Aadhyaathmika, Aadibhouthika and Aadidaivika. It is well known that sins bring grief as retribution and meritorious deeds bring joy as reward. So advice is given to avoid sins and perform meritorious deeds. But the Sthithaprajna knows neither the pain of grief nor the thrill of joy. He is not repulsed by one or attracted by the other. He will not retreat before pain or run forward towards pleasure. Only those who are ignorant of the Atma will exult or droop when stricken with joy or grief.

The Sthithaprajna will be ever engaged in Manana, or contemplation and rumination. He is called Muni. His intellect is steady, because the senses do not harry it. One point has to be understood here. Conquest of the senses is essential for Sadhana; but that is not all. So long as the objective world continues to attract the mind, one cannot claim complete success. That is why Krishna says, "Arjuna! Establish mastery over the senses; then you need have no fear, for they become serpents with the fangs removed." But there is still danger from thoughts and impulses which draw you outwards. Desire has no limits; it can never be satiated.

So along with the mastery of the senses, one must establish mastery of the mind also. That is the sign of a Sthithaprajna, not a Gathaprajna (a no-wisdom individual, and not a steady-wisdom individual). Where does the Gathaprajna go? To perdition and nowhere else.

The upward path, the higher stage - that is for the Sthithaprajna. Of these two masteries, if the mind is subdued, that alone is enough; it is not necessary then to conquer the external senses. If the mind has no attachment with objects, the senses have nothing to cling on to; they perish by inanition; love and hate are both starved out of existence. The bonds with the objective world are cut, though the senses may yet be affected by it. For him who has been blessed by an awareness of the Atma, how can anything worldly bring grief or joy?

As the stars fade into invisibility when the sun rises, so too when the Sun of Knowledge or Jnana rises, grief, agitation and ignorance vanish.

Man has three chief instruments: the mind, the intellect, and the senses. It is when these three work in unison and cooperate with one another that either 'immersal in the flux' or 'liberation in the knowledge of the Atma,' is realised. Krishna anticipated that Arjuna will be puzzled to know what will happen "when which operates with which." So He himself provided the answer. "Arjuna", He said, "when the mind cooperates with the senses, you enter into the flux called Samsara; when it subordinates itself to the intellect, you attain the knowledge of the Atma. One path leads to Samsarapraapthi; the other, the Atma-Prapti. The intellect must resolve; the mind must carry out the resolution so made. That is the correct procedure."

The Indriyas or senses have to be fully destroyed. That is the hallmark of a Sthithaprajna. So when all beings are experiencing night, the Sthithaprajna would keep himself awake. When all beings are awake, the Sthithaprajna would be asleep. The literal meaning of this is that what is night for one is day for the other. But that would sound absurd. It would mean the Sthithaprajna is a person who sleeps during the day and keeps awake at night.

The inner meaning of this statement is very profound. Ordinary men are vigilant in affairs that concern the senses that arise out of this world. Wakefulness for them is the care they bestow on worldly pursuits. But the Sthithaprajna is unconcerned with these very things; he is, so to say, asleep. What does sleep mean? It means the happiness resulting from inactivity of the senses. And vigilance? It means yielding to the senses, and catering to them. When ordinary men are pursuing the senses and their demands, the Sthithaprajna is asleep. This can also be put in other words: forget the Atma sthithi and you relapse into Dehasthithi, from the Atma-consciousness-stage you fall into the body-consciousness-stage.

This is what happens to the ordinary man; he sleeps in the Atma stage and wakes into the Deha sthithi. The Sthithaprajna's case is different. He sleeps in the Deha-consciousness and wakes in the awareness of the Atma. He will not awake, even by mistake, in the sensory world, the world where the ordinary man is most vigilant! This is the inner meaning. It is far from the literal meaning, which, if taken as true, would entitle thieves, watchmen and others to the name Sthithaprajna, for all these keep awake at nights and sleep during the day! Only those who have given up traces of desire and become mere instruments can achieve Shanthi. Krishna ends the description of the Sthithaprajna with an emphasis on "Kaama naa thyaga" the giving up of desire.

To man sorrowing on the battlefield of life, bewildered by the attractions and the distractions, not knowing where to turn and which road to take, Madhava taught this Sankhya Yoga (second chapter). The other chapters are like commentaries on the teaching in this chapter. "Arjuna! prepare yourself for giving up the mind, for being merged in your own self. Withdraw the mind from the Sabda Sparsa Roopa Rasa Gandha categories, the five elements. Then you become a Sthithaprajna," said Krishna. In this second chapter He elaborated (in the 11th to the 30th sloka) on the Atma-thathwa in a simple, easily understandable style.

Then from the 39th to the 75th sloka, He taught the Dharma-Karma attitude that is essential for attaining the Godhead, an attitude that is based on the Karma Yoga which itself is embodied in the Samatha-buddhi already prescribed.

Chapter VI

In 17 verses, from the 56th to the 72nd, Krishna described in the 2nd chapter the characteristics of the Sthithaprajna, and the excellence of that stage. Then, saying that He Himself had established Jnanayoga for the Sankhyas and Karma yoga for the Yogis as means of attaining liberation, He spoke of the importance of Karma.

Every one has to bow to the demands of nature and engage himself in Karma; it is inevitable. Therefore, Krishna said, "Do the Karthavya-Karmas, Karma that is your bounden duty. Being engaged in Karma is to be preferred to not being so engaged. If you desist from Karma, the task of living becomes difficult, nay, impossible.

"The Karmas that do not bind by consequence are those referred to as Yajna. All the rest are bondage producing ones. Therefore, O Arjuna, give up all attachment and engage in acts, as if they are each a Yajna, sacrifice dedicated to the Lord." Krishna taught Arjuna the origins of Karma, the roots from where the urge to do Karma sprouts and grows; He taught them so clearly that Arjuna's heart was really moved and modified. "The Vedas emanated from God; Karmas emanated from the Vedas; from Karma originated Yajna, from Yajna, Rain; from Rain grew Food; from Food came all living beings. This is the cycle that has to be accepted and honoured.

"Consider this, O Arjuna, I have no need to do any Karma; no not anywhere in the three worlds. I am under no compulsion. Still I am ever engaged in Karma. Think of this. If I desist, the world will be no more. Have steady faith in the Atma; then dedicate all acts of

yours to Me: with no desire for the fruit thereof, no egoism and no sense of possession or pride, engage in battle," said Krishna.

If the wheel of Creation is to move smooth, each one has to keep on doing Karma. Whoever he is, he cannot get round this obligation. Even he who has achieved the highest Jnana has to observe this rule. Eating and drinking, intake and release of breath - these too are Karmas. Who can exist without these acts?

You derive benefit from the world and from the community and so some activity on your part is their due. This Brahamananda, this Viswa, is really speaking a huge workshop; every human being is a limb in this Organisation. The limb is allotted a task in accordance with its structure and it must find its fulfillment in doing that particular work. Whatever work one has been allotted has to be done as an offering to God. There is no single thing in the universe that does not engage itself in this great task. Plant and insect, stone and stump, wind and rain, heat and cold, if each of these does not work as per plan, the world cannot subsist. The sun and the moon carry on their routine tasks; wind and fire have to perform their duties without demur. If the earth and the sun refuse to do the allotted duties what is to happen to the world? So there is no one who is Karma-less, but yet with body! It is only when each performs his task without fail, and with care, that the wheel will move quick and smooth.

You may wonder why Jnanis should still do Karma; not only you, but many others may be worried at that statement. Well, people usually follow the ideal set by those in higher levels. Their acts form the basis of Dharma for all. If Jnanis are inactive, how are ordinary mortals to save themselves? They have no guide and so they lose themselves in the easy paths of sensory pleasure. The duty of the wise is to foster the right and to practice it before others, so that they too may be prompted to follow, drawn by the hope of becoming as contented and as joyful as they are. The wise have to do and get done, see and show, so that the rest might be persuaded to follow the example set by them.

"Arjuna! Pay attention to just one fact! How warm is your body now? It may be about 98 degrees; how did it happen? Because, the Sun bears many million times this heat at that distance, is it not? Now if the Sun feels that it will not put up with all that fire and becomes cool, what will happen to mankind? Again, if I desist from Karma, this vast Viswa Karma of working in and through this universe, imagine what will be the fate? That is why I am engaged in Karma, remember. Not that I derive any profit thereby, or get any good, or any fruit."

"Almost everyone in the world is bound by the rule of Karma. But people are so immersed in ignorance that they are unaware of their own moral or intellectual status and of the secrets of Karma. Only being inspired by the example of the great can save such. That is why the Jnani has to be engaged in activity; he has to remove the sloth and delusion of ordinary men. So all have to obey the rule of Karma, without any deviation."

Does the airplane stay on above, denouncing the earth below? Those who have earned the right to travel in it cannot fly towards it and into it! Therefore, to take them in, it has to come down at the places where they gather by previous arrangement, and then soar high into the sky with them. So too, though the Jnani has no desire or urge to do Karma, he comes down into the region of Karma and helps those who would not have otherwise put their talents into proper use. Even great personages like Janaka performed Dharma-Karmas with this view; Aswapathi too did likewise, to save the rest from sheer idleness or wickedness.

Then, in reply to another question of Arjuna, Krishna said, "Kama is the root cause of all evil" and He elaborated on its nature, cause and cure. "He who is bound by the Deha-atma buddhi (the false idea that he is just this body and nothing more) can never hope to

conquer Karma; one must acquire the Brahma-Atma-Buddhi (the awareness that he is just Brahman, and nothing less) in order to be sure of victory. All acts must be performed in the spirit of dedication to the Lord. The universe must be identified with the form of Vishnu, the universal transcendent."

In this chapter, three important subjects have been clarified:

1. Everyone has to do Karma for if this is not done, the world will come to naught.
2. The Karma of the great is the ideal that the rest have to keep in view.
3. Almost all in the world are bound by the obligation of Karma.

Krishna most graciously made Arjuna imbibe these lessons. Not satisfied with this, Krishna told him that Jnana is the final goal and gain of Karma; Jnana is the treasure that is won by man's efforts to purify the mind and to earn the grace of God; Jnana not merely grants Ananda but is itself the seat of Ananda. Thus He initiated him into Jnanamarga, the path of Jnana.

This subject is carried on till the fifth chapter. Jnanayoga shines as a precious jewel amidst the teachings of Bhagavadgeetha-sastra. Krishna declared "Nahi Jnanena sadrisam pavithramiha vidyathe" (nothing as holy as Jnana is known here)! Even later, in the 7th chapter, He has said, "Jnani thwathmaivame matham" (I consider the Jnani as Myself); the excellence of Jnanayoga has been similarly extolled in many other contexts also in the Geetha.

That is why Jnanayoga is believed to be the most fruitful of all spiritual Sadhanas. All Sastras find their fulfillment in Jnana alone. Dhyanam is just the contemplation of the Jnana Swarupa, which is one's real nature. All are in you, you are in all. You have to get this conviction fixed in your consciousness, by means of analysis, discrimination and intellectual exploration. You have to isolate and dismiss from the consciousness the impressions of the senses, the mind, the intelligence etc. These have nothing to do with the Atma, which you really are. The Atma is unaffected by any subject or object. Even if the senses, mind, intelligence etc. are inactive, that inactivity will not affect the Atma! To know the Atma as such an entity, unaffected and unattached, is the secret of Jnana.

Every single act of yours must be carried out with this Jnana as its background. That awareness of the Atma will guide you in both the out-moving and in-drawing paths, the Pravritti marga and the Nivritti marga; it will not block action but fill it with purpose and meaning; it will build up faith and moral life, it will take man to the realm of deliverance along the road of Nishkama Karma, the renunciation of the fruit of action, and not of action itself.

For the achievement of liberation, Jnana is the direct road. Therefore, it is declared to be incomparably sacred. And, naturally, it follows that ignorance is indubitably the most despicable. "See the universal in the particular; see the particular in the universal; that is the essence of Jnana," said Krishna. "All Kshethras know only one single Kshethrajna. And, who is that? The Atma, that is to say, you yourself, your own self! Know this and you become a Jnani. So realise that the Atma is Param atma; that is the Vijnana." Krishna, who is all-knowing, began to teach Arjuna this Yoga, in order to cast off all doubt from his mind.

"Arjuna! I taught this sacred Jnanayoga to Surya. Then it was handed down from one generation to another till Manu and Ikshwaku and from them, Rajarshis came to learn it. Then it (got) lost in the world. That ever-existing Yoga had to be restored to the world, and so I had to come."

You will not fail to notice the discrepancy of the Yoga being described as ever existing and the statement that it was lost! Of course the statement was not made without thought. The indestructible is here spoken of as having been destroyed! It is called indestructible or Avyaya for two reasons. Its origin is the Veda, which is free from decline. This yoga on account of passage of time, neglect and disuse, was forgotten. That is to say, it disappeared, it was lost to view, it declined. The statement does not mean anything more. Bringing it into life means, bringing it once again into use, not creating it ab initio! 'Lost to view' is the sense in which the word 'destroyed' is used in a general way. That is how you have to interpret it, for the Lord will never devise a thing that will suffer 'destruction'.

The reference to Surya also merits consideration. The people of Bharat are intimately associated with the Sun-god. The heroes of Bharat, the Kshathriyas, are from the beginning attached to Surya; even for ordinary men and women, Surya is so highly sacred that He has been raised to the status of the great Guru. The sacred scriptures and legends of India have not assigned a status of similar glory to any one else. It is a unique position that Surya occupies. Why, for the whole world, the sun is the visible manifestation of the Lord. And the sun is the source of time. Surya is the father of time (Kaala) as the Sastras declare. The sun limits and regulates the number of years each one lives; the sun diminishes every day a fraction of the allotted span. So the sun is the supreme arbiter, the maker of man's destiny. Whether one wills or not, every deed of his is performed under His auspices and dedicated to Him.

Above all, consider the service the Sun does to this world! That is within the daily experience of all; every one is witness to that. The Sun is the source of all life, plant and animal, upon this planet. Without His rays, it will be a desolate waste. He draws up into the sky the waters of seas and lakes, and from the clouds He pours rain on the crops. He is ever the Dharmadevatha, scattering His rays equally on all.

Surya is the great Thyagi for unequaled renunciation. He is the great Yogi; without a second's thought of His own glory or of rest. He performs His duty without thought of reward. He is humble and steady in work. The service He does is something no one else can fulfill. The happiness He contributes is something no one else can confer. But He has no pretensions to pride. He moves above unconcerned with the consequences of His energizing mission of service.

Imagine the patience with which the Sun puts up with all that extreme heat, for the sake of the world and of humanity. It is He who keeps the human body warm and comfortable. This material body is so full of energy and intelligence on account of the solar energy that it imbibes. If the sun is idle for a moment, the world will be consumed in flames. Instead, He is fostering the world. He feels it as His mission, His purpose, and not as His service.

It is only in the Karma that is your very nature that you can have fortitude; if it is just an assumed duty, you will find it difficult to put up with the troubles and travails. Assumed Karma is called A-sahaja Karma, and Karma that is the expression of one's genuine self is Sahajakarma. Now Sahajakarma will sit light and A-sahajakarma will induce conceit, or the feeling 'I am the doer,' so it will result in exhaustion or elation, disgust or pride.

Think of this one point: when a man is well, no one will inquire about his health. But if he is stricken with illness or sorrow, every one will inquire why and bombard him with anxious queries. Why this anxiety? Man is fundamentally happy and healthy. His nature is joy; that is his Sahajaswabhava. So when he is happy and healthy, no one is surprised or worried. But grief and sorrow are strange to his make-up; they are the result of a delusion that has overwhelmed his nature. So people get worried and they set about finding out how he got so deluded.

The Sun is teaching us that when one is oneself, there will be no exhaustion or elation, no disgust or pride. The task of Surya is not something imposed from outside and taken up under compulsion. That is why it is performed systematically, and smoothly. He is also exhorting mankind to use the time that He creates and allots, fully and fruitfully; not merely for living comfortably and safely, but for living a moral and elevating life, worthy of the destiny that is man's. Now you can realise why the Geetha was first taught by the Lord to the sun. He is the great Karmayogi, the great Nishkama Karma Yogi.

Krishna is now teaching this indestructible Geetha Sastra to Arjuna, the representative of man at the crossroads; and He chose him for he has the same excellences, is it not? Reflect on that for a moment. If Arjuna was not a vessel endowed with such virtues and splendor, Krishna would not have decided to use him as the recipient of the Geetha. The Lord will not give gifts to the undeserving. Arjuna had the dualities that were needed for receiving the teaching and he was chosen.

Chapter VII

"When decline descends on the Dharma which has been laid down, I incarnate as the Niraakaara, from the state of Niraakaara, in order to revive it and protect it and save the good from fear," said Krishna. Now this statement might cause some misgiving. You may ask: will not common people then conclude that Dharma is something liable to decline and decay? Will they not condemn Dharma as neither Nithya nor Sathya?

Well. You will grasp the importance of the task of protecting Dharma only when you consider its origin and purpose. God created this Jagath on His own initiative and he ordained various codes for its upkeep and smooth running. There were rules of correct conduct for every being. These form the Dharma.

The word Dharma is derived from the root, Dhr, meaning 'wear'. Dharma is that which is worn. Desa, the Deha of the Lord, is protected by the Dharma it wears; it also gives it beauty and joy; it is the Pithambara, the Holy Apparel of Bharat. It guards both honour and dignity; protects from chill and lends charm to life. Dharma preserves the self-respect of this land. As clothes maintain the dignity of the person who wears them, so, Dharma is the measure of the dignity of a people.

Not only this country, every single thing in the world, has its own special Dharma or uniqueness of duty, and nature. Each has its distinctive clothes! Dharma rules the group and the individual. Take the five elements, the components of Prapancha. Of these, water has movement and cold as its Dharma; combustion and light are the Dharma of fire. Each of the five has its unique Dharma. Humanity for man, animality for animals, these guard them from decline. How can fire be fire, if it has no power of combustion and light? It must manifest the Dharma to be itself. When it loses that, it becomes a lifeless bit of charcoal.

Similarly, man too has some natural characteristics that are his very life-breath. They are also called Sakthis or abilities. They can be identified as 'men' only so long as these abilities are found in them. If they are lost, they are no longer 'men'. To preserve and foster such qualities and abilities, certain modes of behaviour, lines of thought are laid down. Dharma will not decline if these (Aachaaras and Vichaaras) are kept up. Dharma is not imported from somewhere outside, nor can it be removed. It is your own genuine nature, your uniqueness. It is the thing, which makes a man out of an animal. How to observe Dharma? By being 'yourself'. If a thing breaks loose from its Dharma and behaves as the whim dictates, then it is doing A-dharma.

This Sahajadharm of man was overpowered in course of time; those who supported it, encouraged it and derived joy from it, declined. So, in common parlance, it was said to have been 'destroyed', though it is something that cannot be destroyed. It is only like the

weed overpowering the crop. So the 'establishment of Dharma' is only weeding the field. Now in this iron age or Kaliyug, Dharma has become a mere matter of words. Dharma is not just the magical manipulation of words. This must be clearly understood. What has to be spoken is Truth; what has to be acted is Dharma.

"Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara" - has been the clarion call of the Upanishads, the repositories of Indian culture. These glorious teachings have been forgotten today; they have been turned upside down, in fact. "Dharmam vada," "Speak Dharma" is the order of the day! That is the first step in the decline of Dharma, this descent from deed to word, the belief that a thing is done when it is only uttered! This is A-dharma, in fact.

But that which is not practiced cannot possess strength. The crocodile's strength depends upon its being in water; the strength of Dharma depends upon its being practiced. It becomes weak when it is taken out of practice and thrown on the sands of words. Sathya is a matter of speech, it gets strength when it is practiced in speech; it is difficult to practice it in action. "Strength" has two meanings here: Animal strength and Dharmic strength. Bhima had physical strength, but as his elder brother, Dharmaja, was by his side, Bhima's strength became Dharmic. The Pandavas were saved by their adherence to Dharmic strength! But for that, they would have suffered defeat even in the very beginning. The Pandavas, without Dharmaja, whatever their resources, would have been an easy match for their opponents. Just ponder over that. How were the Kauravas destroyed, in spite of their vastly superior resources? They did not have Dharmic strength. All that they could rely on was sheer animal strength. The day when Dharmaja and Bhima, those who had Dharmic strength, moved into the forest, A-dharma penetrated into the land of the Kauravas.

So the Dharma that has now been exiled into the forest has to be restored to the villages and towns in order to establish plenty, prosperity and peace in the world. From the reign of A-dharma, the world has to enter the era of Dharma. Special effort is called for when you cultivate a crop; no effort is necessary when weeds and wild grass are allowed to grow. The valuable crop of Sahajadharma has to be cultivated with all care and attention. When Dharma is practiced, A-dharma will decline by itself. No special exertion is needed for putting it out of action. Therefore, Dharmasthaapana means in this present context the growth of the practice of Dharma.

What does it mean when people say, "The sun has set?" Only, "It is not visible to us." So too, simply because Dharma is not evident, you cannot say it has gone out of existence. How can it go out of existence? If it goes, it cannot be truth or Dharma. Dharma, since it is associated with truth, is indestructible. To make the Dharma that has become hidden visible once again, that is real Dharmasthaapana. What Krishna is doing is exactly that.

Using Arjuna as an instrument, He is bringing to light the codes of conduct and modes of thought which are laid down as Dharma from the very beginning and once again enforcing their practice. This is referred to as Dharmoddharana. He is reviving something that is lost. This is not work that can be carried out by ordinary men. So, the universal basis, the universal Lord has Himself to assume the task. He alone is Sarvasaktha. He is teaching the world through Arjuna.

If Arjuna was an individual like others, he could not be the recipient and transmitter of this great teaching. So you must infer that Arjuna was really a great man. He is a hero who has defeated not merely the outer foes, but even the inner ones. Weak hearts cannot grasp the Geetha and put it into practice. It is with this full knowledge and this high purpose that Krishna selected Arjuna as the vehicle and showered on him His grace.

Once, while Krishna was conversing intimately with Arjuna, He made this statement: (Note the overpowering grace that Krishna showed!) "Arjuna, you are My closest Bhakta; not

only that; you are My dearest friend. I have no friend so dear as you are. That is the reason why I taught you this supreme, secret teaching."

Reflect on this. Many in the world are only self-styled Bhaktas. The Lord has not accepted them as such. To get the title from the Lord Himself is great good fortune and that is the highest credential. The Bhakta must melt the heart of the Lord and get from Him the acknowledgement of Bhakthi. If oneself takes the title, it gives paltry satisfaction, not genuine joy - Alpathrpthi, not Aatmathrpthi. Arjuna was the only person who got the title from the Lord Himself. So you can understand how pure-hearted, how deserving, was Arjuna. You might say a hundred thing about yourself; you might advance this claim and that; but you must show acknowledgement from the Lord. Without that all your talk is empty boast; Bhakthi must be won by implicit obedience. But that alone is not sufficient. That is why Krishna uses the word, Mithra, (friend) also. The friend has no fear; that makes him a more perfect recipient.

Now we shall resume the trend and go back to the Geetha. When Arjuna listened to Krishna's words, he developed a head full of doubts. He became agitated; not only he, but all men nowadays are worried by doubts. Moreover, in the complex spiritual field and the field of knowledge concerning godhead, there are two interpretations possible: the outer and the inner. Ordinary men accept the outer and those who have some experience of the Lord seek to know the inner.

As the saying goes, 'like the mote in the eye, the stone in the shoe, the thorn in the foot, the faction in the home,' is this 'doubt in the brain'. When such doubts assail Arjuna, who is the representative man, it means they are humanity's own doubts. Madhava, who is beyond and above humanity, can solve them. That is why Krishna is ready by his side to remove any doubt and plant joy in the heart.

Now, what exactly is the doubt? Krishna was born at the end of the Dwaparayuga; Surya and Manu are persons of the past. How then could these two meet Krishna? It cannot be physical relationship, for many generations separate Krishna from the other two. Krishna is Arjuna's contemporary. How did Krishna teach this Yoga to Surya? To sit quietly listening to unbelievable stories is itself a sign of poverty of intellect. Every moment, Arjuna's uneasiness increased. This was observed by Krishna, who is everywhere and in everything. He said, "What is the cause of the restlessness that I notice in you? Tell Me", and prodded him with a smile.

Arjuna was glad he got a chance. "Madhava! I do not understand your words. They confuse me so much that I am losing a little of the faith that I have in you. But I pray, excuse me for asking this, please solve my doubt. I cannot stand it any more," Arjuna pleaded with folded hands.

Gopala was glad and He asked him what the doubt was. Arjuna then said, "You said that this Yoga was taught to Surya and to Manu; of what distant past are these two? And to which age do you belong? Did you teach them while in this body? That is unbelievable. For this body is only four or five years older than mine. You are not more aged than that. When did You teach them, without my being aware of it? And the sun? He is greater than You, many times greater. He is there from the very beginning, from a past, which is beyond our imagination. I cannot believe it; no, not even the most intelligent person can prove it as true. Let it be! You may say, 'This is not the body, this is not the Yuga; it was while I was in another body and during another Yuga'. That makes it still more strange. For how can anyone remember what happened in any previous birth? If you say that it is possible to have the memory, then it must apply to me also, is it not? The Sastras declare that only a few divine beings keep such things in memory; the mortals cannot hold them in remembrance. Well, I may accept that you are divine. But I have to accept that Surya, the

sun is also divine. How can two persons equal in Divine status teach and learn from each other? When You teach and he learns, he becomes Your disciple, is it not? You must then be taken to be superior to Surya. Let us take it to be so. I accept that you are the Lord, God Himself. That creates further difficulties for me. For why should God be bound by birth and death and activity? When you assume the five-foot human form, is it not a limitation on the limitless? From that infinite limitless universal why should God incarnate as the limited particular? Howsoever I argue within myself, I cannot solve this doubt. Your words are meaningful for you only; they do not convey any meaning to me. My head is confused; give me some guidance, some convincing reply," prayed Arjuna.

Krishna laughed within Himself, recognising that the appropriate moment had come. He said "Arjuna! what exactly do people mean when they say the sun has risen and the sun has set? It is so far as their vision is concerned; that is all, is it not? The sun does not rise, it does not set. I am also like that; I am not born, nor do I die. Men of ordinary intellect consider that I am born many times and that I do many deeds during each birth. Whenever there is the need for the uplift of the world, I become manifest assuming a name and form, that is all; so I am conscious of all My appearance, all My manifestations. I am almighty, I am Sarvajna. Not only I, even you, know everything. But your Jnanasakthi is overwhelmed by Ajnana. I am Jnana itself and so I know everything. When the sun is seen in a mirror, He does not lose either his status or his glory. He is unaffected: his glory is undiminished. So also I am reflected in Prakriti; and that does not diminish any of my glory or status. I remain as almighty and as Sarvajna as ever. I am birthless, immortal. Humans are born as a result of the merit and demerit of previous births. Perhaps you think that this holds true for Avathars also. No. Yours is Karmajanma; mine is Leelajanma. Prayers of the good are the cause of My Janma. The misdeeds of the wicked are also the cause!"

Chapter VIII

"The Avathara Purushas have no merit or demerit accumulated in former births, which like ordinary mortals they have to pay off in this birth. Theirs is a Leela, a birth taken on. The goodness of the good and the wickedness of the bad provide the reasons for the Avathara of the Lord. For example, take the Avathara of Narasimha. The merit of Prahlada and the wickedness of Hiranyakasipu combined to cause it. As a result of the coming of the Lord, the good will be happy and the bad will suffer. The Avathara, however, has no joy or grief, even when it is enveloped in the body it has assumed. The Avathara is not constituted of the five elements; it is Chinmaya not Mrinmaya, spiritual not material; it can never be disturbed by egoism or the sense of "mine" and "thine"; it is untouched by the delusion born of ignorance. Though men may mistake an Avathara as just human, that does not affect the nature of the embodiment; It has come for a task and it is bound to accomplish it."

"I shall tell you what that task is. It is protecting the Sadhus, punishing the wicked and supporting Dharma. By Sadhus, I do not mean monks and ascetics, who are indicated generally by that word. It means Sadhu-guna, goodness, uprightness, virtue; and animals and even insects can possess these. Really speaking, the promotion of Satwa guna is the best means of fostering Sadhus. The Avathara is the embodiment of this sacred Guna and so It fosters it, wherever it is found; but since Sanyasins are striving to earn it, they are called Sadhus and supposed to be specially blessed by the attention of the Lord."

"But they are not the only Sadhus. All those who follow Sadachara, who have Sad-seela, who adhere to Sathya, who yearn for the Sannidhi (presence) of Sarveswara (the Lord), who observe Sad-dharma, who consider Sarvajana (all) as Samaana (equal); all of them are Sadhus. Such characteristics are found among the animals and birds even. In the Ramayana, Jatayu was saved as a result of this Guna. That is the reason why the elephant

was blessed and the monkeys were given a chance to serve and be blessed with His grace. The same reason prompted the Lord to bless the squirrel. A Sadhu is not made by a string of beads, an ochre robe and a stick in the hand. The clothes one wears and the language one has on the tongue do not decide who is a Sadhu and who is not; it is the Guna that settles it. All animals have the potentiality to be good; so fostering goodness in all is the best means of ensuring the welfare of the world."

"Next, the punishment of the wicked. Those who transgress the limits set for each type or genus of animals, those who indulge in A-Karma, A-nyaya and Anaachara, and who roam about caught in the coils of Ahamkaara have to be punished; those who have allowed Rajoguna and Thamoguna to predominate and Sathwaguna to be extinguished in them and who have thus lost all trace of Daya, Dharma and Daanam have to be punished."

Thirdly, Krishna informed Arjuna that the fostering of Dharma is also His work. The word Sadhu has another meaning, important in this context. A Sadhu is he who does not deviate from his duty, whatever the temptation and whatever the danger. The wicked revel in creating trouble for such men and in indulging in acts contrary to the injunctions of the Sastras. What then is the establishment of Dharma? It is acting strictly according to the Dharma laid down in the Sastras; spreading among people the glory and the splendor of a life lived in Dharma; stabilising reverence towards the Vedas and the Sastras, towards God and Avathars and Paramapurushas and the Sadhana that leads to liberation and blessedness beyond this life. It is called Dharma-samsthaapana, Dharmarakshana or Dharmodधारana. "Whatever I do, it is all for this high purpose; nothing is for My own advancement. Those who know this secret can escape birth and death," said Krishna.

To feel that the Lord is away, afar, separate from you - that is called Paroksha Jnana. To feel that the Lord who is immanent in the universe is in you also as the Atman - that is A-paroksha jnana. If the dedicatory spirit moves all activity, the Chiththa of man can be rendered pure. Only those who have pure consciousness can recognise the divine nature of the Lord's Janma and Karma, said Krishna. All cannot so recognise them as divine. Yet, no one should avoid contact with the Lord come in human form. Try your very best and utilise every chance. There should not be any lapse on your part.

This is emphasised in the tenth sloka of this chapter where the signs of the Adhikari, the deserving candidate, are given. "Arjuna! not all can understand the Divyathwam of My Janma and Karma. Only those who are free from attachment, hatred, fear and anger; only those who are immersed in the name and form of the Lord; who know of no other support than Me, who are sanctified by the knowledge of the Atma; only these can grasp it. Those who seek Me undeviatingly, possessing Sathya, Dharma and Prema, will reach Me. This is absolutely true, take it from Me. Give up any doubt you may have."

"Men render the inner consciousness impure by dwelling on the objective world through ignorance. They take delight in mere Sabda, Rasa, Rupa, etc. When they seek objective pleasure they are tempted to secure the objects that give the pleasure; foiled in the attempt, they get restless, hateful and afraid. Fear robs man of his mental resources. It creates anger that cannot be easily pacified. Thus, desire, anger and fear are aroused one after the other and these three have to be removed. Arjuna, revolve in your mind these facts and then act. Become reasonable. Have faith in My words."

Arjuna heard all this and asked, "Nandakumara! Why can Yoga not make this sacred and high stage available for all persons? You announced Yourself as Prema Swarupa and Dayamaya. Why then all this partiality? I must declare it as favoritism, for you endow this stage only on Jnanis and deny it to the Ajnanis. I would even say that the Ajnani, the ignorant person who has no discrimination, the person who swings like the pendulum of the clock from one thing to another, merits your grace more. The Jnani knows everything;

he is aware that the Jagath is Vishnumayam; why then should it be made further clear to him? Such men have no more need of grace."

Krishna replied, "Yes. Men are usually overwhelmed by such doubts. You represent humanity and so your doubt is humanity's doubt. By clearing your doubt, I can also announce My message to humanity. Listen. Those who seek Me are of four types:

- One is always worn out by ills that affect the body; he is the Aartha.
- Another is worried by the struggle for prosperity, power, self, property, posterity, etc. He is the Artha-arthi.
- A third yearns for the realisation of the Atma, reads the scriptures and sacred texts, moves ever in the company of spiritual Sadhakas, acts along the lines laid down by the sages as Sadachara, and is always motivated by the eagerness to reach the Sannidhi of the Lord. He is the Jijnaasu.
- The fourth is the Jnani. He is immersed in the Brahmathathwam."

"The first, the Aartha, worships Me only when he is in difficulty and suffers from grief or pain. When he prays to Me, I hear it and I satisfy him only in relation to that particular difficulty, that particular grief or pain. So too, when the Artha-arthi prays for riches or position or power or high status, I listen and award him only the particular thing he craves for. The Jijnaasu is blessed with chances to do Nishkaama-karma, with a proper Guru as guide, with an intellect that is sharp enough to discriminate between Atma and Anatma, and thus helped to achieve the Goal. I bless him so that he is saved from distractions and helped to concentrate on the single aim of liberation."

"I am like the Kalpavriksha. My task is to give each what he asks for. I have no prejudice and no favoritism. Not even the shadow of cruelty can touch Me. No fault can be imputed to Me. The rays of the sun fall equally upon all that are directly in their way; but if something is behind something else, inside a closed room for instance, how can the sun illumine? Cultivate the higher yearnings and you receive the higher stage. The fault lies in the aspirant and his aspiration, not in the attitude of the Lord."

"Arjuna! Man gives up revering and seeking Me, who is his very self. How foolish of him! He is not anxious to reach Me; on the other hand, he pursues lesser attainments that are temporary, untrue, transitory. I shall tell you the reason for this strange and stupid behaviour. Karmopasana gives quick result; man seeks only what is available here and now, in a concrete form, capable of being grasped by his senses. Man, generally, finds reality too difficult to attain; so he is carried away by the attraction of flimsy pleasures, away from the full joy derivable from transcending the senses."

"The achievement of Jnana is the inner victory; it is won after long and arduous struggle. Men do not generally have the needed patience; moreover, they attach greater importance to the gross body, the Sthula Sarira itself. The body can be happy only with objects that cater to the senses and so men do not seek Jnana, which will send them to paths where the senses are unwanted. They yearn for Karmasiddhi, not Jnanasiddhi. Those who are caught by urges of the intellect are fewer than those who are caught by the senses and their urges. The obvious, the patent, the perceptible and the physical draw the sensual-minded. The few who are spiritually minded yearn for the imperceptible, invisible bliss of merging with the universal absolute. Theirs is the correct path. Karmopasana is the incorrect path. My task is to make clear to all the value of Dharma-karmas which have to be adopted after due discrimination."

"But Arjuna, there is one method of reviving Dharma, the task for which I have come. That is Chaathurvarnyam, the Organisation of the four Varnas based on the Karma and

the Guna of the people. The Varna system is essential for the functioning of the world. Its significance is not easy to grasp. Some mislead themselves into the belief that it causes unrest and divides men from one another. If the problem is reasoned out, then the real truth will become clear. To conclude that the Varna system is not beneficial shows only ignorance. Such a judgment creates confusion. I have established this Organisation in order to promote the welfare of the world, i.e. Lokakshema. The Varnas help man to engage himself in acts that he finds congenial and to fulfill himself. Without it, man cannot earn happiness for a moment."

"For successful activity, Varna is the very breath. Those endowed with the Sathwa guna, who have understood the Brahmathathwam, who foster spiritual, moral and progressive living, who help others to earn the bliss of visualizing the reality of their nature, are the Brahmins. Those who stand by and guard the sound political system, law and justice, as well as the welfare and prosperity of the country, and the moral order laid down for the people; and who keep under control the wicked and the immoral and come to the rescue of the weak and the distressed - these are the Kshatriyas."

"Those who store and supply within proper limits to the people at large the wherewithal for happy physical living are Vaishyas. Those who lay the foundation for human welfare by service activities and provide the strength and sinews are Sudras. I have laid down these four Varnas in this manner. If these Varnas carry out their assigned duties, humanity will attain all-round progress. As a result of this system, a division of service is brought about; the individual leads a happy harmonious social life, without any grief or fear. This Varna system is an example of the grace that the Lord has bestowed on Bharath."

"The people of Bharat are indeed blessed, since they look upon every act as but the execution of His order and as leading to His grace. This point has to be reflected upon. It is an important issue. The divine command is now in great danger of being set at naught. If the rules change the face of this Varna system, the world will not have the welfare they strive for. Many people argue and teach that Bharat came to this sorry condition only because of this Varna system. But these folk have to sit quiet for some little time and ponder over the question: 'Has the country survived as a result of this system? Or has it come to this sorry condition because the system has weakened?' Then on the basis of their conclusion, they can advise the discarding of the Varnas. When people find fault with the Varna Organisation, without such impartial investigation their opinion cannot be valued."

"Of course, it is a fact that the system has veered from the proper path and taken to moving in wrong directions; this has been noted by many great men. But that cannot be sufficient reason to throw it overboard. For the reason that the leg is doing the work of the hand, and that the head is performing the function of the feet, it is not advisable to cut off hands and feet. Attempts have to be made to set things right, rather than destroying the very system itself."

"The Varna system is not the cause of all this confusion and unrest. The fault lies more in the haphazard manner in which it has developed. It became a plaything in the hands of all types of people; so it lost its original symmetry and harmony. The system is essential, not merely for Bharath, but even for the world. In countries outside India this system is not absent. The name may be different; the working is the same. There also are four classes - the Sikshaka Varga, the Rakshaka Varga, the Vanig Varga and the Sramika Varga. But in Bharath, the Varnas are decided by birth; in other parts of the world, they are decided by Karma, the work each is engaged in. That is the distinction."

"Now among the Brahmins who have been honoured by being established in the very first cadre, many can be found who have left off the path and strayed into mean ways. So too, in the fourth Varna, the Sudras, many can be found who are moved by holy ideals, high

spiritual aspirations, and who are striving to attain purity of mind as a means of realisation. Just because these things are possible, it is not proper to conclude that the Varna organisation of human society is useless."

Chapter IX

Though purity of mind is the primary thing for the protection of society and the individual in the realm of the divine, Varna Organisation too is very important. It can never be blown off by ridicule, criticism or condemnation. For welfare is essential for all; so rulers and scholars must give up feelings of anger and hatred and calmly delve into the pros and cons and bring the Organisation into some good order. That is the thing to do. It is not proper that wise men and intelligent scholars should support the meaningless criticisms of the envious and the ignorant. Those who deny caste are themselves forming a caste; those who deny religion are themselves forming a new religion. Even those who know much become prejudiced against Varna and talk as if they are as ignorant as the rest. That is the wonder!

Every object has certain limits; if it exceeds the limits or breaks through them it gets destroyed. What is the test of its identity? The coordination between its nature and its form. If it has the form but not the nature, then it is unreal, false. So too, if each class has no special limits, how can it be identified as a class? It will be neither this, nor that; an amorphous mass, a confused group. This is a divinely decided Organisation; so it was fostered and continued by the great sages, saints and elders, for many generations. But in this iron age of Kali the brainiest dismiss it as useless junk.

Without deep inquiry, without discrimination, if people look at this Organisation from the external, the individual standpoint, how can they arrive at right conclusions? Its sanctity and value will be revealed if you have the 'inner sight' and the 'universal outlook' and the 'inquiring spirit.' Just as the butter inherent in milk is made patent by the process of churning, so too the specific value of the four Varnas will become manifest only through the process of discriminating enquiry. Then prejudices will perish; reality will be revealed.

The four Varnas are like the limbs of the same body. They have evolved out of the same divine body - the Brahmins from the face, the Kshatriyas from the hands, the Vaishyas from the thighs and the Sudras from the feet. Of course, these expressions have a deeper inner meaning. Those who teach like the Guru the principles of Jnana are the voice; they are the Brahmins. The strong armed bear the burden of the earth, they are the Kshatriyas. The social edifice is upheld, as on pillars, the Vaishyas and so figuratively describe them as emanating from the thigh of the divine person. Like the feet that are engaged in going about on all kinds of activities, the Sudras are ever engaged in the basic tasks of society. The peace and happiness of society will suffer even if a single Varna is slack in its task. And all Varnas are worthwhile and valuable, as all limbs are important. There is no higher or lower. Hatred and rivalry in society are as harmful as the stoppage of work by all the limbs in anger against the stomach!

A sugar doll is sweet all over. Break off its head and eat it, it is sweet. Break off a leg and eat it; it is as sweet as the head. Then how can the Varnas, which are the limbs of the selfsame divinity, be pronounced higher or lower? Limbs are different, but the very same red blood flows in all and animates all. There is no special variety for the hand or leg or face. The system of Varnas is ordained by the Vedas and so there can be no injustice in it; it is not an artifice invented by man. So those who try to create differences and hatred by their inconsiderate remarks about it are only exhibiting their ignorance.

It looks as if those people who argue that "the abolition of the Varna system will bring about human welfare" are the only ones anxious to promote human welfare! They believe that those who consider the system to be beneficial are really eager to promote the downfall of the human society! Of course, both are delusions. But this much is true: Those who

support the Varnas are really more interested in the promotion of human welfare. The others think that if Varna goes, they will be saving the country. That is a deluded belief. If only virtues and faults are analysed carefully and without prejudice, there will be an end to this uninformed campaign of hatred and enmity. Then there will be a great change in the attitude of people towards the Varna system.

If hatred increases, it will not benefit any one. To pursue the ideal of "all are equal" is like running after the mirage to slake one's thirst. It will only breed discontent. The rulers must now assemble and consult the representatives of the people, namely, the pundits and experienced elders and discuss the value of this ancient system of social Organisation. Instead if they just decide on the basis of external forms and features that there is some poison in this and run into panic, that will only reveal their ignorance. The rulers as well as the pundits both have the happiness of the people at heart; why, this Varna system originated with that very end in view. It has led to comments because it was not practiced on the continued counsels of the wise.

Take one small example: some nations have manufactured bombs that can wipe out Lakhs of people at one burst. Though they know this is bad, the rulers are themselves encouraging it. If the bombs are used as the whim takes them, ruin will fall on all. When chaos threatens, they are to be used only for self-defense; the purpose is not the destruction of the world but the protection of the values of one's own country and culture. So also, the Varna system is to be treated as strong armament to protect the country and culture. The rules and regulations, the restrictions and recommendations are all to defend the people from ruin. They are disciplines, which have to be honoured in the way they are laid down and followed strictly and correctly. To deal with them as the whim dictates, without regard to the directing bounds, the limits and the boundaries is to invite anarchy.

Therefore, the elders, the rulers, the great pundits and the leaders of the community guarded and fostered this Organisation and preserved it; think of this for a while and the truth will flash on you - whether it is beneficial or not. If it was ruinous to society, would they have fostered it? Do you mean to say they were all foolish, or that they did not have the present type of scholarship or they were brainless?

No, no. Their intelligence, scholarship, spiritual eminence, their spirit of inquiry and their impartial unprejudiced approach to social problems can be found only among one in a hundred today. Ascetics who dedicated all their intellectual and moral strength for the welfare of the world, which task was the very breath of their life; yogis, spiritual warriors and maharshis who sought to confer true contentment on the human community, these were the framers of the social organisation, which the 'moderns' condemn. They were not like the reformers of today, who yearn for welfare in a profusion of words, but who undermine the very thing they profess to yearn for by their actions! This type of trick was unknown to the ancient sages. Modern ideas and plans are hollow and insincere. The present plans are all castles in the air. They cater more to the conceit of the planners and do not carry much meaning to others. The castles start falling down even while construction is proceeding in another place!

As the body is for the Jivi, the world is for the Lord. Whatever happens in any part of the body affects the Jivi; so too, all that affects any part of the world moves the Lord; He becomes cognisant of it and He reacts to it. Just as you are interested in all the limbs of the body being in perfect trim, the Lord too is interested in seeing that every country and every part of the world is happy and contented. Can He, will He, harm any country which is primarily a part of Himself? In matters relating to the Lord all have equal rights; all are equal.

Yet, one limb cannot carry out the duties of another; each must do the task allotted to it. So too, each Varna must carry out its allotted share of the activities of society and contribute its best to the welfare of the country. As the body has stages, society has the Varnas. If all start trading who will be the buyers? If all are engaged in fighting who is to provide the wherewithal for their upkeep and maintenance: the food, the armour and the equipment? So, each one has to do his share of social activity and ensure peace, harmony and happiness. That is the wise course, the best Organisation of society.

Now, instead of attending to essential tasks, people are engaged in internecine struggle fearing that the Varnas are great obstacles to progress. How can people who are unable to keep their body under control keep the country within limits? Consider that the fostering of the Varna system, which has been fostered so long by the ancients, is the most beneficial thing that has to be done.

The Lord has not shown any partiality while organising the Varnas. He has no such trait in Him. Some persons ask, why should the Lord have such differences? No, He has no sense of inferior or superior. He is sweet all over, as a lump of sugar. All differences and distinctions are the property of Jivis, who do not know the Atmic reality; they are illusions of the Jivis who falsely identify themselves with the non-Atma.

Consider this example: A mother has four children; but she does not pay the other three as much attention and care as she gives to the child in the cradle. Even if the child does not call out for it, she is ever vigilant to give it food. The other three have to come and worry her for food and things to play with. Observing this, you cannot pronounce her a bad mother or a partial mother. The mother adjusts her activities to the capacity and ability of the child. So too, though the entire world is His, though all are His children, He has fixed upon each a part of the responsibility of the work of society, according to the capacity and ability. To ascribe faults to such selfless, sincere, simple, ever-blissful providence is like attributing darkness to the sun! Darkness and the rays of the sun cannot exist together; how then can the sun be the home of darkness? People who carp so at the sun do not know the sun at all. It is sheer folly, complete ignorance.

Really, from the Adhyatmic point of view, these Varnas can be characterised also in another way: those who are established in the contemplation of Brahman are Brahmins; those who oppose untruth are Kshatriyas; those who systematically discriminate the true from the false are the Vaishyas; those who are ever active and follow truth in every day life are the Sudras. The happiness of humanity can be amply realised only when Varnas function in this way.

Now we shall revert to the subject: Krishna addressed Arjuna: "The four Varnas have been created by Me on the basis of Guna and Karma. Though I am the doer so far as they are concerned, I am still a non-doer! Pay attention to the fundamental principle and then you will realise that Karma which is basically Jada, or consciousnessless and material, cannot affect the Atma, which is Chaitanya or suffused with consciousness. The Atma is inherently devoid of attachment. It has no awareness of agency or of its own needs or nature of its possessions. It has no 'I' or 'mine' for these are the marks of Ajnana. Only those afflicted with Ajnana will suffer from the ego or sense of 'mine'. Though it may appear to ordinary eyes that I am the doer, I am a non-doer!"

"Not only this. Karma does not cease to affect the doer as soon as it is finished. In fact, it is never finished. Karma yields fruits; fruits of Karma breed desire for them; that results in impulses for further Karma; the impulses bring about further births. Thus, Karma leads to the cycle of births and deaths; it is a vicious whirlpool, making you revolve round and round and finally dragging you down into the depths."

"Arjuna, listen well to another point also. Karma as such has no capacity to bind; it is the conceit 'I am the doer' that brings about the attachment and the bond; it is the desire to earn the fruit that produces the bondage. For example: the zero gets value only with the association of a digit. Karma is zero; agency or the feeling of 'doer' is associated with the Karma; then it breeds bonds. So Arjuna, give up the sense of 'I' and the Karma that you do will never harm you. Karma done without any desire for the fruits thereof will not produce impulses; that is to say, there will be no impulse for birth even. The aspirants of past ages performed Karma with this high ideal in view. They never felt that they were the "doers" or "enjoyers of the fruits" of any act. The Lord did, the Lord gave the fruit, the Lord enjoyed the fruit, that was their conviction. This world has only a relative value; it has no absolute existence; that was their faith. Arjuna! You too should cultivate that faith and earn that conviction. Do so; then your mind will become clarified and pure."

"Know also the distinction between Karma, Vikarma and Akarma. I shall tell you the main points of difference now. Listen. Many aspirants get confused about this. Not all can grasp the distinction. They take it that Swa-dharma is Karma and that all Karma done, not as Dharma, but with a view to earn Atma-jnana are Vikarmas! Whatever the Karma, if it is done in the darkness and confusion of Ajnana, however hard you may have exercised your abilities during the activity, its result can only be worry, grief and travail. It can never result in equanimity, balance or calm. Man has to win Karma in Akarma and Akarma through Karma - that is the hallmark of the wise."

"Akarma means action-lessness according to some. But to explain it in simpler language, understand that the activities of the limbs, the senses, intelligence, the feelings, the emotions and mind are all Karmas. Now, Akarma means among other things non-activity too. That is to say, it is the attribute of the Atma. So Akarma means Atma-sthithi, the characteristic of the Atma." When you travel in a bus or train or boat, the illusion is created that the trees and hills on either side travel along and the person feels that he is stationary! "The movement of the chariot imposes on hill and tree the quality of movement; so too, the person unaware of the principles enunciated in the Sastras deludes himself into the belief that the Atma is doing all the activities of the senses and the body. Which then is the genuine Akarma, activity-lessness? The experience of the Atma is the perfect activity-lessness; that is your real nature. It will not do if you simply desist from external acts. You should realise the Atmic fundamental, not merely renounce Karma; for it is impossible to be completely activityless."

Chapter X

"Dhananjaya! Only he is entitled to be called a Pundit, who has seen clearly the distinction between Karma and A-karma. If he has only stuffed in his head the matter contained in books, he is not a Pundit. The Pundit must have an intellect, which grants the vision of the Truth, Samyag-darsana. When that vision is gained, all Karma becomes ineffective and harmless. The fire of Jnana has the power to consume and burn Karma."

"Some people say that a Jnani must perforce suffer the consequences of Prarabdha karma; he cannot escape from it. This is a conclusion that other persons draw; not the experience of the Jnani himself. To those who watch him, he might appear to be reaping the fruit of past Karma, but he is absolutely unaffected. Whoever is dependent on objects for happiness, or pursues sensory pleasures; whoever is motivated by impulses and desires, is bound by Karma. But those free from these cannot be affected by the temptations of sound, touch, form, taste, smell and other attractions of the senses. Such is the true Sanyasin. He is unmoved. The Jnani is supremely happy by himself, without the need to be dependent on other things. He finds Karma in A-Karma and A-Karma in Karma. He may be engaged in Karma but he is not affected in the least. He has no eye on the fruit of actions."

"You may ask how he is able to do that. Listen: He is ever content. The contented man is free, he does not depend upon others; he is unaffected by the feeling of agency. He is content with whatever happens to him, well or ill, for he is convinced that the Lord's will must prevail. His mind is unshaken and steady; he is ever jubilant. Want of contentment is a sign of the Ajnani. Those who give up the Purusharthas and walk the path of sloth, how can they be said to be happy, whatever happens? Contentment is the treasure that is won by the Jnani; it cannot be won by the A-jnani who piles one wish on another, and builds one plan after another, who pines perpetually, worries himself and sets his heart ablaze with greed."

"The Jnani is not mastered by the dualities of joy and grief, victory and defeat, gain and loss. He is Dwandvaatheetha. He scorns hatred and never allows it to affect him. Both the Swarupa and the Swabhava of the Atma guarantee that It is un-affected. It is A-sanga. It is un-influenced by any thing that is not Atma. It has neither birth nor death, hunger nor thirst, grief, delusion. Hunger and thirst are qualities of the Prana; birth and death are characteristics of the body; grief and delusion are afflictions of the mind. So, Arjuna, do not assign any status for these; know yourself as the Atma; give up all delusion and become unattached. Be like the lotus leaf in the marshy lake of Samsara; do not get smeared with the mud around you. That is the sign of A-sanga: In it but yet outside it. Be like the lotus leaf, not like the porous 'blotting paper' that gets tainted with whatever it comes in contact with."

"Do Abhishekam to the Atma-Linga, with the pure waters of your own pure Chittha-vritthi, mental impulse. When the chittha moves in one direction and the Indriyas move towards another, the person is doubly confused. So, keep attachment afar. When that is done, whatever you do becomes a sacrifice, a Yajna. Whatever you speak becomes a holy mantra; wherever you plant your foot, the place is rendered holy."

"Arjuna! I shall tell you something about Yajna also. Listen calmly, controlling all agitations of the mind. People talk of Dravyayajna, Thapoyajna, Yogayajna, etc. If a pit is dug, the earth excavated becomes a mound by its side. There is no pit without a mound; when riches accumulate in one place, there must be corresponding charity too. The proper utilisation of one's riches is Dravyayajna. What is proper utilisation? Gift of cows, of lands, of skill are included under Dravyayajna. Again, when all physical activities, mental activities and speech are utilised for Sadhana, then it becomes Thapoyajna. How can it be Thapas if you have lain down due to weakness arising from missing a meal? Doing Karma but yet remaining unbound by Karma - that is Yogayajna."

"And Swadhyaya Yajna? It means studying with humility and reverence the sacred scriptures that lead you to liberation or Moksha. This study is the means to repay the debt to the Rishis who put the scriptures together. The next one is Jnana Yajna. By this is meant not the knowledge of the visible and perceptible but the Jnana of the invisible, the imperceptible, (the Parokshajnana, not the Aparokshajnana). Listen to the Sastras that are related to this Jnana, study them and ponder over the teaching in your mind, weighing the pros and cons: this is called Jnanayajna. Jnana means also the eagerness to realise the Atma thathwa through inquiry from elders and those who have spiritual experience."

"Arjuna! You may ask Me about the means whereby this can be acquired. Those anxious to get it have to go to realised souls and win their grace and studying well their moods and manners, they must await the chance to ask them for the help. When doubts arise, they should approach them calmly and courageously. Studying bundles of books and delivering hours-long discourses and wearing the ochre do not make the genuine Jnani. Jnana can be won only from and through elders who have experienced the absolute. You have to serve them and win their love. How can doubts be ended by the study of books? They only tend to confuse the mind."

"Books can at best inform; they cannot demonstrate by direct proof. Only the realised can convince by direct demonstration. So they have to be sought after and served reverentially. Then only can this precious Jnana be won. No amount of sea water can slake one's thirst; no amount of Sastric study can solve doubt."

"Besides, the aspirant for Jnana must have not only Bhakthi and Shraddha but he should also be simple and pure. He should not grow impatient and irritate the teacher. Haste ruins chances of success. Whatever the Guru tells should be practiced and experienced. You should not try out every single item of advice that you hear or learn, thus changing the Sadhana as fancy takes hold, even from the desire to become Jnani quick. Doing thus, you will only end as a complete A-jnani. Why, it is sometimes preferable to remain an A-jnani; for such people tend to end up in madness. Therefore, one has to be very careful."

"You must endeavor to please the Guru and win his favour by obeying his orders and serving him lovingly. You should have no other thought than his welfare and happiness. Give up all else and win his grace; then, Jnana is yours. Instead, if you are disobedient and critical through egoism and want of faith, you cannot be blessed by the vision of the truth; you will be plunged in gloom."

"As the cow takes her calf near when it sees it, so the Guru will draw the Sishya to his presence and give him the milk of grace. The Sishya ought to be a sterling character; then, just as a clean piece of iron will be attracted by the magnet, he will receive the immediate attention of the teacher."

"The qualification of the Guru can be inquired into by the Sishya; in fact he ought to. For, he needs a teacher. Arjuna! I shall describe the characteristics, which a teacher should possess. He must have not merely book-knowledge, but the wisdom derived through direct experience. He must be established in reality, that is, in Brahmanishta. Mere Sastrajnana is incompetent to grant Mukthi; it can at best help in gaining Bhukthi (a living). Why, there are some who by sheer Anubhavajnana have won Mukthi, without a grain of Sastrajnana. But such persons cannot save disciples who are pestered by doubt; they cannot understand their difficulties and sympathise with them.

"There are Lakhs and Lakhs of persons who are Gurus in name only. All those in gerua are now 'Gurus;' even those who smoke Ganja are 'Gurus;' all those who indulge in discourses are 'Gurus;' all who write books are 'Gurus!' Wandering over the country and learning to argue, no one can claim the name. He should possess the power through direct experience to uplift the disciple and put him on the track of Sadhana prescribed by Sastras. Of what use is argumentative skill? Whatever is said and done by him must have the sanction of the Sastras. Spouting of things imbibed from books in long speeches, which move the listeners from one wave of excitement to another, does not make a Guru. They may be heroes in lecturing; but they are zeros in Sadhana and in the mystery of the spiritual field. They can be schoolmasters, but they cannot confer Bhakthi or point out the way of liberation. These 'Gurus' attain only that stage and the Sishyas who resort to them get just that. They have as much value as the books which contain all the matter that they pour forth. Many unwary Sadhakas are attracted by the magic of words and the verbal gymnastics of such showy 'Gurus'. They may be called Pundits; they may give lectures; but, just because of this, they do not become entitled to grant the boon of Jnana. That can be done only by Avatharas, Devamsa-sambhuthas, and Thatwavidis who have realised the absolute. (The Lord come in human form, persons who represent divine attributes and glory, and Jnanis who have attained the summum bonum of spiritual Sadhana and tasted the supreme bliss.) It is no use claiming a fraction of this or that experience. The experience must be of the full and itself full. Those who know only a fraction will take you up to a certain point and leave you there, in the middle region, like Thrisanku, who was hung between heaven and earth."

"The Guru must study the virtues and qualities of the aspirant who seeks his guidance; he must not be moved or prejudiced by his wealth, status, or position. He must be able to judge the aspirant's heart, his real nature. The Guru must act as the alarm-clock to the disciples who are caught in the sleep of A-jnan. If the Guru is a miser and the disciple is a sloth, woe be to both."

Thus, Krishna taught Arjuna very clearly the qualifications of both the Guru and the Sishya: their conduct, scholarship, virtues and weaknesses, activities and characteristics. These valuable gems of advice were addressed not only to Arjuna, but to the whole world. All who seek to become either Gurus or Sishyas must pay attention to these precious words.

The natures of the Gurus and Sishyas of today are in keeping with the low standards of today. In ancient times a Guru could be found only with great difficulty; thousands of eager seekers searched in the forests for them, for they were so rare and so precious. Now, Gurus are available at every street corner by the dozen but true Sishyas are declining in number. Both are deteriorating fast and each is becoming as the other, suited to the other's level. The Gurus have been reduced to necessity of feeding and fostering Sishyas; not that it is wrong, when the Sishyas are worthy; but the Gurus are afraid of the Sishyas deserting them and so they have to cater to their tastes and fancies. The Sishyas claim to be Guruputhras, to be Asramavasis, Sadhakas, etc., but their lives are untouched by the Ashram atmosphere, Sadhana or Sadhu qualities. They have not even elementary gratitude to the Guru. They mouth slogans like Krishnarpanam but their acts reveal only Deharpanam (dedication to the body, not to God)!

Besides, the Sishyas lay down conditions! Their desire for recreation, easy living and comfort has to be honoured by the Guru. The Guru must ensure the happiness of the Sishya without insisting on any Sadhana, or causing any loss or worry. Moksha must fall like a fruit right into their lap. The Guru should not recommend any rigorous discipline or rule of life. The Guru must respect all the wishes of the Sishya. If he goes against him, the Guru is immediately given up and condemned.

Chapter XI

How can such coddled comfort-loving persons attain Moksha? If a Guru is not able to secure such disciples, why should he deplore his fate? It is strange that there are Gurus who lament when they are not able to attract such disciples towards them! Opium eaters, Ganja smokers, are unfit to be Gurus. They are cheats. How can those who spend all their energies in securing the wherewithal for their living to be Gurus? How can those who seek to fulfill their sensual fancies be disciples? These are Dhana (money) gurus, those are Mada (pride) disciples! To consider such as Gurus and Sishyas is to drag those holy names into the dust of disgrace.

Who, then, is the genuine Guru? It is he who teaches the path of destroying Moha or delusion. And who is the genuine Sishya or disciple? It is he who seeks to control and conquer the outward fleeing mind. The Gurus of today shout every day from platforms what they stuffed into their heads the previous day under the midnight lamp. Their performance is only like regurgitating the food once swallowed and nothing more. They talk like parrots reproducing what they have learnt by rote. Even children know that greed and anger have to be mastered; but in these people, greed and anger, envy and hatred, lust and pride pop up their devilish heads through every little word that they utter, every little deed they do. If those who claim to be Gurus do not themselves master these propensities, how can the unfortunate disciples who resort to them succeed?

If the Guru is supremely self-sacrificing, saturated with selfless Sarvajana-samaana sympathy, seeking to sustain Sathya, his soul suffused with strength-giving thoughts, striving to secure sorrow-less lives for all, leading a sweet and simple life, satisfied only by

the chance to show others San-marga and Sath-guna - then perhaps only a few disciples will gather around him. They will impose upon him faults that sully him and cast doubt upon his integrity and genuineness! But the Guru will be as serene as ever, for he suffers no loss. The loss is all for the Sishyas, who let go the great chance.

Of one thing, be certain. So long as the delusion that one is the body is not cast aside, God cannot be realised; however far one may wander, whatever the number of Gurus one might select and serve. Stick to that delusion and all the Dhyana, all the Japam, all the waters of all the holy Theerthams that you bathe in, cannot win success for you! All your effort is as useless as trying to bale out water with a vessel riddled with leaks.

Householders who carry out their duties are anyway preferable to such Sadhus; they follow their Ashram dharma and they tread the correct path in unceasing remembrance of the Lord and so these householders realise the goal. If the nature of the Gurus and Sishyas of today is to be considered, volumes can be written; but that will be using precious time for inessential discussion. So we shall revert to our main topic.

For, even to dwell in the sacred Guru-sishya bond of Krishna-Arjuna in the same breath as the relationship of the present day "Gurus" and "Sishyas" will be a sacrilege. They are unique, incomparable, the supreme pair, unapproachable by any other. They have to be taken as the ideal by all aspirants and teachers. Arjuna bowed in humility and carried out sincerely the prospects of the Guru. Krishna fostered what was really beneficial to Arjuna; He paid full consideration to what will really promote the reputation, the Atma-ananda and the Dharma of Arjuna. He tended him and fended him, as the very breath of His life. That was the type of Guru the Lord was for him.

Krishna is Parama-Atma; Arjuna is Jiva-Atma; Krishna is Purushothama; Arjuna is Narothama. That is the reason why they are the ideal Guru-Sishya. Others are Guru-Sishya only in name. Self willed Sishyas and power-drunk Gurus are simply wasting their lives in vain pursuits. Krishna is an ocean of Prema; He watched over Arjuna as one watches over the eye or the heart. He taught holiness and transformed into holiness; He loved and was loved beyond compare. That makes the Guru a genuine guru. And Arjuna? He too is no ordinary being. His Thyaga is unapproachable. Whatever the crisis, he stuck to Krishna's command and Krishna's word; he wore the comradeship with the Lord as the armour that will save him from all harm, as the very body in which he dwelt, as something, which he must foster, strengthen and guard; though a mighty force, he was ready to efface it when necessary. This is how Guru and Sishya should be bound together.

The Lord who is the embodiment of Prema realised the sincerity of the disciple and estimated his attainments and then detailed to him the benefits and glory of Atma-jnana. "Kauntheya," He said, "by means of Jnana, you can see in yourself and in Me, all things; then duality and the consequent delusion will disappear, as darkness disperses before the rising sun."

"Arjuna, I know well your past and the background of your birth. Yours is no ordinary birth; you are born with divine (Daivi) accomplishments and heritage. I alone am aware of it, no one else. Since you are unaware of it, you are now condemning yourself as a sinner who kills kith and kin, teachers and elders."

"Even if you have sinned, are not sinners saved? Repentance is enough to transmute sin into sanctity. The Lord graciously accepts contrition and pours His blessings. The Rathnakara who was engaged in acts of sin until the moment when wisdom dawned became a saint through repentance. He became the sage Valmiki. His story is proof of the value of contrition. You may ask, is it enough if one is free from the effects of sin? Should not the effects of Punya be also given up? Why, one has the freedom to give up merits of Punya, though one may not have equal freedom to give up the demerits of Paapa. The

roaring forest fire reduced to ashes everything in its way; so too the mighty conflagration of Jnana will consume and destroy all sin and all Punya."

"To acquire this sacred spiritual Jnana, one thing is essential: Sraddha, steady faith in the Sastras and the teachers, and in the acquisition of Jnana. Without earnestness born of faith, man can accomplish no task however tiny. Therefore, you can yourselves see how essential it is for earning Jnana. Sraddha is the incomparable treasure-chest of Sama, Dama, Uparathi, Thithiksha and Samadhana, each one a coveted possession."

"Shraddha is only the first step. You must have been yearning to imbibe the teachings I am imparting. This is very necessary. Along with these, you must also be vigilant; do not yield to sloth. Again, you may fall into company that is not congenial or encouraging. To escape the evil influence of such company and to strengthen your mind to avoid it altogether, mastery over the senses is required."

"Do not admit doubt into you. Want of faith or steadiness is not as destructive as the venom of doubt. In its operation and consequence, it is like the tubercular bacilli. It is born in A-jnana and it penetrates into the cavity of the heart of man and breeds there. It is the parent of disaster."

"Therefore, destroy this demon with the sword of Self-knowledge or Atma-jnana. Arise, Arjuna! Engage in activity as if duty bound, have full faith in My words, do as I bid you, with no thought of the fruit therefrom. Be a practitioner of Nishkaama-karma. By that renunciation, you will get established in Jnana; you will win liberation from change, from birth and death."

"Give up the idea that you are the doer and that you are the beneficiary. You can do this by dedicating both deed and fruit to the Lord. Then no sin can affect you, for you are not the doer and the deed must perforce be holy. Like oil on tongue, collyrium on the eye, lotus leaf on water, the deed is with you, but of you. Whatever you do or hear or see, you remain unaffected, devoid of deeds, innocent of listening or seeing. The joy derived from the external world opens the gateways of grief; it is fleeting; but you are eternal, the very source of bliss, above and beyond all this, the Atma Swarupa itself. That is your genuine nature. You are unrelated to these activities that are called deeds and these consequences, which you now mistake as real. You are not the doer; you are just the witness, the see-er! All your perplexity has arisen from the delusion that you are the doer, from your ego and the sense of 'mine'. Know the Brahman; take up all tasks but renounce the consequences; giving up the fruit of activity is far superior to the giving up of activity itself. Karma yoga is far superior to Karma-Sanyasa."

"Well. Superior to both these is Dhyana yoga. I shall tell you why. Dhyana Yoga needs the support of Karma yoga and so Karma yoga was first taught to you. Those who renounce the fruits while actively engaged in Karma are very dear to Me; they are the true Sanyasins, the real renunciators. I have no affection for those who give up the ritual fire and desist from all activity except eating, sleeping and craving for sensory pleasures and behave like Kumbhakarna's kinsmen, idling and wasting their time. I am unapproachably far from idlers. He who has not renounced the pursuit of wishes can never become a Yogi however busy he may be in Sadhana. Only he who is careful not to get entangled in the senses and who is unattached to the consequences of his deeds can become a Sarva-sanga-parithyaagi (renouncer of all attachments)."

"Dhyana yoga is possible only on the basis of this Nishkaama-karma. If the mind is not under control and amenable to one's orders, it can become one's greatest foe. So live in solitude so that you can master the senses. A horse without reins, a bull unused to the yoke and a Sadhaka whose senses are not mastered are like a river without water. Such Sadhana is a waste."

"So arise, Arjuna! Practice Dhyanyoga. Resolve to master the senses through this Yoga and follow it steadily, systematically, regularly, at a stated time and in a stated place, without changing them as the whim takes you. A regular system is essential for this Yoga. Observe it strictly. Do not alter as fancy dictates; that will bring about dire consequences. For those who eat too much and get exhausted with the task of assimilating it, for those who eat less and suffer from exhaustion, for those who sleep too much or too little, for those who indulge in Dhyana according to 'convenience' (that is to say, those who do it for long hours one day because they have no other work, and do just token Dhyana the next day, because they have lots of work), for those who give free rein to the six inner enemies (Kama, Krodha and the rest), for those who do not confer joy on parents, and specially the mother - more than all these, for those who entertain doubt and have little faith in the Lord, or in the Guru, whom they have chosen and installed in their hearts - Dhyana will yield no fruit at all."

"The mind of the Yoga adept should be like the steady upright unshaken flame of the lamp, kept in a windless windowsill. Whenever the slightest sin of unsteadiness occurs, you should endeavor to curb the mind and not allow it to wander. Develop the consciousness that you are in all and the feeling of oneness that all is in you. Then you can take up and succeed in all the Yogas. Then you are free from all distinctions like 'I' and 'others', or as 'Atma and Paramatma'. The joy and grief of others will then become equally yours. You can then never harm others; then all can be loved and adored in the awareness that they are Sarveswara." Lord Krishna declared that those who have attained this vision are really the supreme Yogis.

Meanwhile, Arjuna is beset by doubt and he asks for some elucidation and explanation so that he may get convinced. "Krishna! All that you have been telling me is very pleasant to the ear and I can well imagine that it must be a source of Ananda to those who attain success. But it is so difficult, beyond the reach of all. The Yoga wherein everything has to be realised as equal (Samathwam) is fraught with obstacles even for the fully equipped Sadhaka; what then am I to say of people like me who are common aspirants? Is it ever possible for us? Krishna! Is the mind so easily controllable? Alas! Even an elephant cannot drag as the mind does; it is the nursery of waywardness; its mulishness and obstinacy are also very powerful; it is a terrible shrew. It can never be caught; it will never halt at one place. It is like capturing the wind or building up water - the attempt to catch the mind and tame it. How can any one enter upon Yoga with such a mind? One seems as hard as the other: the twin tasks of controlling the mind and practicing the Yoga. Krishna, you are advising an impossible task, beyond the capacity of any one.

The Lord broke into a smile on hearing these words. "Arjuna! you have described the mind and known its nature very well. But it is not an impossible task; the mind can be mastered, however difficult the task might be. By systematic practice (Abhyasa) and by relentless inquiry (Vichara) and detachment (Vairagya) - the mind can be mastered. There is no task that cannot be accomplished by steady practice. Place faith in the Lord and practice with the certainty that you have the power and the grace - and all tasks become easy.

"Therefore, whoever enters upon this Sadhana with determination will attain the supreme goal, available only for souls transmuted through several births. Remember, the person who has achieved Yoga is superior to the person who is the master of ritual Karma; so strive, O Arjuna, to become a Yogi, to attain that high and holy status. But this is not all you have to do. There is a status higher than even this. Whoever fixes his entire consciousness in Me, whoever earnestly meditates on Me, to the exclusion of everything else, he is superior to all, he is a Maha-yogi."

"Dhyana yoga and Jnana yoga both are inner disciplines; they are based on Sadhana and Bhakthi. Without these two they are both unattainable; the pursuit itself is vain. A Sadhaka deprived of them is as a wooden doll, lifeless, unaware of the goal. The basic requisite is deep-rooted Prema towards the Lord. How can you get this? By getting to know the glory, the splendor, the nature and characteristics of the Lord, His Swabhava and Swarupa. That is why I am now instructing you about these. I am imparting to you fully the wisdom of the Sastras, supplemented by the wisdom of inner experience. Know that there is nothing further for you to know. Of the thousands of aspirants, there are a few who strive to acquire this Jnana. And of these only some one single individual achieves success. All who start do not reach the goal."

"Arjuna! Note that there is nothing higher than Me in the world. All are strung in Me like flowers on a string. The five elements, Manas, Buddhi and Ahamkaram - these eight varieties of Prakriti have produced the Sthula-Sukshma Prapancha, the gross and the subtle in creation. This is called A-paraa Prakriti. There is another Prakriti distinct from this. That is known as Paraaprakrithi. It is neither Sthula nor Sukshma; it is Chaitanya, indwelling in the Jivi, the Jagath itself is its aspiration."

"The Lord first created the gross world and then as Jiva, He entered it and rendered it Chith, by His Chaitanya. This is declared clearly in the Vedas. You must consider the A-paraa Prakriti to be the Swabhava of Parameswara and the Paraa-prakrithi to be His Swarupa. Dwell on the meaning of these Swabhava and Swarupa and grasp it well. The gross is bound by the dictates of Chaitanya, which is Sarvaswathanthra, complete master, ever free."

"Jivi" means that which assumes Prana, the Jivi holds on to Prana, through his skill and intelligence. He is the Antharyamin, who has penetrated into everything and who sustains everything. So the Paraaprakrithi is just Paramatma itself. All that becomes manifest with the same Chaitanya has to be taken as one.

"Jada, Chaitanya are the two essentials for the entire creation. They are the same as Prakriti, Purusha. The Chaitanya shakti, when it entertains the idea of Bhoga, expresses the world out of its own Swakarma. The Jada assumes the form of the Deha. Both these are My Nature. The Easwara, who causes creation, preservation and dissolution through these is I Myself, remember. There is no substance other than Me; there is no reality other than Me, I am the primal cause, the primal substance. 'I am One; let Me become Many'; thus, I Myself resolved upon this expansion into manifoldness, called Srishti. That resolution affected and motivated the Mayasakthi and so the Mahath-thathwa got produced. That was the first step in the evolution of Prakrithi.

"If a seed is planted in the earth and watered, in a day or two it will drink in the moisture and swell in size. The sprouting has not yet taken place but the first change is this. The Mahath-thathwam is happening of this type. Next, in accordance with the will of the Lord, a sprout arises. That is called Mahadahamkaram. From it, five leaves break forth, the subtle principles of the five elements. The entire Jagath is the combined product of these eight; Prakriti shakti, Mahath-thathwam, Ahamkaram and the five elements or Panchabhuthas."

Chapter XII

"The A-paraa Prakriti, about which I speak, is just a manifestation of My Shakti, My glory, remember. Seen superficially, with the gross vision, the Sthuladrishti, the universe might appear as many; but that is wrong. There is no many at all. The yearning of the inner consciousness, the Anthah-karana, is towards the one; that is the real Drishti. When the inner vision is saturated with Jnana, the Jagath or creation will be seen as Brahman and as nothing else. Therefore the inner consciousness must be educated to interest itself

only in Jnana." The Jagath is saturated with the Jagad-isa. Creation is nothing but the creation in that form. Isavasyam idam sarvam, it is said (all this is God).

Though there is only one, it appears as many. Let us remind ourselves of an example with reference to this statement of Krishna. We walk in the thick dusk of evening when things are seen but dimly; a rope lies higgledy-piggledy on the path; each one who sees it has his own idea of what it is, though it is really just a length of rope. One steps across it, taking it to be a garland. Another takes it to be a mark made by running water and treads on it. A third man imagines it to be a vine, a creeper plucked from a tree that has fallen on the path. Some others are scared that it is a snake; is it not?

Similarly, the one Parabrahmah, without any change or transformation affecting It, being all the time It and It only, manifests as the Prapancha of manifold names and forms, the cause of all this seeming being the dusk of Maya. The rope might appear as many things; it might provoke various feelings and reactions on various people; it has become the basis for variety. But it never changes into the many; it is ever one. The rope is ever the rope. It does not become the garland or the streak of water or the creeper or the snake. Brahman might be misinterpreted in a variety of ways but it is ever Brahman only. For all the various interpretations, Brahman is the one real basis. Like the string for the garland, the foundation for the building, Brahman is the string that penetrates and holds together the garland of Jivis; it is the foundation for the structure of Prakriti. Note this. The string and the structure are not visible. Only the flowers and the building are evident. That does not mean they are nonexistent! In fact, they support the flowers and the building. Well, you can know of their existence and their value by a little effort at reasoning. If you do not take that trouble, they escape your notice. Reason, examine - and you can arrive at the string that holds the flowers together and the foundation, hidden in the earth. Do not be misled by the Aadheya (the contained, the thing held) into denying the Aadhaar, the holder, the container, the basis, the support. If you deny it, you miss the truth and hold on to a delusion. Reason and discriminate; then believe and experience.

For the seen, there is an unseen basis; to grasp the unseen, the best means is inquiry; and the best proof is experience. For those who have experienced, no description is needed.

The nature and qualification of individual beads are not important at all; they should not distract our attention. Concentrate rather on the inner reality, the basis of all the beads, the Brahman; that is the essential quest. There may be many varieties of flowers in a garland, even trivial ones (Tamasic jivis) or flashy ones (Rajasic jivis) or nice pure ones (Satwic jivis) but the string, the basis, the Paramatma is independent of all of them. It is unaffected; it is Sathya, Nithya, Nirmala.

Flowers cannot become a garland without the string; so too, Brahman unites all Jivis. You cannot separate the two in all things and substances; Brahman fills everything. The five elements are but its manifestations. It is the inner motive, unseen by those who look only at the surface. It is the Antharyamin, in other words. That is why Krishna said "I am Rasa in water; I am effulgence, Prabha in the sun and moon; I am the Pranava in the Vedas; I am sound in the Akasa; I am Pourusham (heroism, adventure and aspiration) in man."

Let us consider the topic of Pranava, which has been mentioned. Krishna said that the Pranava is the very life of the Vedas, is it not? The Vedas are reputedly "An-aadi" or "beginning-less." Pranava is spoken of as the very life-breath of the Vedas, which are themselves beyond all beginning. Take it that the Pranava is the subtle essence, the underlying form of every particle and substance in the universe.

There are two parts in every single substance in the universe: name and form, Nama and Rupa. Take away these two and there is no Prapancha or universe any more. The form is no Prapancha or universe any more. The form is conceived and controlled by the name.

The Rupa is dependent on the name; so if you reason out which is more lasting, you will find that the name is Nithyam and the Rupam is A-nithyam. Consider the case of persons who have done various good works, achieved meritorious deeds, constructed hospitals or schools or temples or places of worship; now, even their form is absent from the world for men to see, their names with all the associated fame are ever present in human memory, is it not? The Rupam lasts but for a brief time; but the Namam continues.

Names are countless, and so are Rupams. But there is one matter which you have to take into consideration here, a matter which is within the daily experience of all, from the Pundit down to the ignoramus: Aksharas or letters. In Telugu, there are 52 letters; in English, there are just 26. Even if you pile up the entire literary output in Telugu or in English and the piles rise mountain high, it is all composed of either the 52 Telugu letters or the 26 English ones, not a single letter more.

Similarly, in the human body there are six nerve centres, all in the form of the lotus-flower. All the six lotus-forms have one letter or sound attached to each petal. Like the reeds in the harmonium, when the petals are moved, each one emits a distinct sound. Those who follow this statement intelligently may get a doubt; if the petals are said to move, who or what is moving them? Yes, the force that moves them is the Anaahathadhvani, the primeval sound, the undistinguished indistinguishable sound, emanating without effort, irrespective of conscious will. That is the Pranava. As beads in the string, all letters and the sounds they represent are strung on the Pranava. That is the meaning of the statement that He is the "Pranava of the Vedas." Krishna's teaching is that you should merge your mind in the Pranava, which is the universal basis.

The mind has an innate tendency to merge in whatever it contacts; it craves for this. So, it is ever agitated and restless. But by constant practice and training, it can be directed towards the Pranava and taught to merge with it. It is also naturally drawn towards sound. That is the reason why it is compared to a serpent. The serpent has two crude qualities; one, its crooked gait and two, its tendency to bite all that comes in its way. These two are also the characteristics of man. He too seeks to hold and possess all that he sets his eyes on. He too moves crookedly.

But there is in the serpent one praiseworthy trait; however poisonous and deadly its nature might be, when the strains of the charmer's music are played, it spreads its hood and merges itself in the sweetness of that sound, forgetting everything else. Similarly man too can, by practice, merge himself into the bliss of Pranava. This Sabdopasana is a principal means of realising the Paramatma, who is "the Pranava of the Vedas." He is not other than Sabda. That is the reason why the Lord said that He is the "Pourusha of man." Pourusha is the vitality, the Prana of man. Without it, man has no manliness. However strong may be the force of the drag of previous births, it has to yield to the strength of adventure and achievement emanating from Pourusha. Unaware of this potentiality, foolish man is misled into cursing his fate; cursing the "inescapable" effects of what he dreads as 'Prarabdha!'

Every one has to exercise Pourusha: for without it life itself is impossible. Living is struggling, striving, achieving. God has created man so that he might wield the talent of 'Pourusha' and achieve victory. His purpose is not to make man a consumer of food, a burden upon the earth, an animal that is a slave to its senses. He does not aim at creating a horde of idlers and loungers, who shy at hard work, and accumulating fat, grow into monstrous shapes. He does not create man with the idea that he should, while alive, ignore his creator and deny Atma and wander about like animals, allowing both intelligence and discrimination to go to waste, moving about without an iota of gratitude to the giver of all the gifts which he consumes and enjoys!

Prakriti too punishes those who exploit it for self-aggrandizement, saying, "This is mine, that too is mine, that belongs to those who belong to me." She punishes heavily those who break her code; that is the reason why Krishna describes to Arjuna the way of Upasana or worship in great detail for Upasana is using Prakriti to reach the Lord who transcends it.

"Arjuna! Many people anxious to offer uninterrupted worship to Me go into the thick forest. That is an insane step. There is no need to seek the jungle as if I am only there. There is no place where I am not; there is no form which is not Mine. I am the five elements: earth, water, fire, air, ether! Where can you find a place devoid of one or other of these five? To experience My presence and My glory, there is no special place, for I am everything, everywhere, ever. The fiery nature of fire is I Myself, I am life in all living beings. I am the strength of the strong, the strength that is free from greed and lust. Mine is the nature which prompts beings to desire Dharmic things and means."

"Of course, when I say strength, I mean the strength of the intellect, Buddhibalam. For the world knows many varieties of balams: Dhanabalam, born of wealth; Vidyabalam, born of scholarship; Janabalam, coming from the consciousness that one has a large following; Manobalam, arising from one's determination, Dehabalam, which is just muscular force, etc. All these are to be considered as Mine for I am the Parameswara. Only, all forms of strength have to be free from Kama and Raga, desire and attachment. If Kama and Raga adhere, then it becomes bestial strength, not divine; it is Pasu-balam, not Pasu-pathi-balam."

"Kama means the desire to possess a thing which is so strong that even when there is no chance of securing it, the mind hankers for it. Raga is the feeling that a thing must be in one's possession, even though it is evident that it cannot be there long, for it is after all an evanescent thing. Ranjana is the root of the word, Raga. Ranjana indicates the capacity to give pleasure. Any form of strength that is polluted by either of these two cannot claim the dignity of divinity."

"Some forms of Balam attain height or depth, according to the status they are allotted by the owners. For example, riches. If riches reach a wicked man, they create vanity, pride, cruelty and contempt. If they are with a good man, they are directed along the paths of charity and good work. Physical strength is used by the wicked to injure others while the good use it to protect others from harm."

Another point has to be noted here. Krishna said that even Krodha (anger) and Lobha (greed), which are not opposed to Dharma, are forms of expression of the divine. Therefore, why repeat it a thousand times; all feelings, all forms, all things and beings are born out of the Paraa and the A-paraa nature of the selfsame divine essence. But, to have higher feelings and emotions, one must accustom one self to see His form in the higher feelings, higher forms and higher beings. Still one must not get away with the idea that only the higher is divine and the lower is not. That is not correct; the objective world with all its Satwic, Rajasic, Tamasic things, reactions, impulses - all originate in God. This conviction can grow in one and get firmly fixed only by reasoning it out and getting its truth affirmed.

The Lord Himself declared: "Arjuna! All this originated from Me, all this exists in Me, but I am not dependent on all this; remember; I am unattached to all this." Here, there are two points of view; the Jivi point of view and the Lord's point of view. The Jivi has the dual experience of good and bad, the Lord has no duality at all. When all is God, when God is the inner Atma in all, how can there be two, one good and another bad?

Now ordinary folk may get some doubts on this point. The Lord says that all things both good and bad originated from Him and that He is the prime cause; but at the same time, He declares that He is neither bound nor affected by the effects or defects of all that has

thus originated! He says He has no relationship with them and that He is above and beyond that for which He is the cause.

You might infer that man too is not in the least responsible for the good and the evil that is done through him by the divine, that his real nature is beyond both good and evil, that his acts, however evil, were basically prompted by the Lord himself, for man has nothing he can claim as his act. True; but faith in this attitude that "nothing is done by you," that "it is all the Lord's will that is being worked through you," must be steady, sincere, deep and unshaken. There should be no trace of ego. If that is so, then certainly such a one has attained the highest goal of life. He is blessed to the uttermost. That reality has to be known; that knowledge has to be stabilised. Indeed he who has the conviction that all this is God, that he has no sort of relationship or kinship with the objective world, that he is above and beyond it, is the Sathya-jivi, the individual whose sojourn here has been worthwhile.

Words however are futile; you may repeat like a parrot what has been taught for long, certain phrases like "Every thing is the Lord's," "I am but a puppet; He pulls the strings and I dance as He wills," "Nothing is mine; I am just carrying out His will." But what do you usually do? When a praiseworthy act is done, you claim it to be your own; when a blameworthy act is done, you ascribe it to the prompting of the Lord! You shout from platforms till your throats get dry that you won by your own effort, honour, fame, status and standards, authority and position, property and possessions, attainments and achievements; but when it comes to confessing your share in earning ill fame and defeat, evil and wrong, you conveniently transfer the responsibility to the Lord, saying, "I am but an instrument in His hands, He is the master, I am but a tool." This has become the habit of man today. Nay, it has developed into a fashion. People swing from "I", to "He" like the pendulum of the clock. This is sheer deceit, hollow spiritual sham.

Mind, word and act, all three must be filled with the belief that all is His play; that is the genuine path. It is a human frailty to separate things as good and as evil; to impute this to God is sacrilege. It might appear sometimes that the Lord too has that weakness, but it is a passing phase, a cloud that hides His glory, not a blemish that adheres to Him.

Though Gunas emanate from the Lord, He is unaffected: smoke arises from fire, but fire is unaffected; clouds form in the sky and move about in the sky; but the sky is unaffected by them. All are attached to Him, like beads; but He is free, unattached. The universe is based on Him but he has no need for the universe as base.

Take the example of cloth; cloth is based on yarn, it is dependent on yarn; but yarn does not depend on cloth, it is unaffected, unattached to cloth. The pot depends on clay, but clay is independent. Again, cloth is yarn, pot is clay. Clay is Brahman; the pot is Prakriti. Yarn is Brahman; cloth is Prakriti, (the universe of Nama Rupa, of manifold variety). Ignore the shape, the form and the name - the pot is just clay. Ignore the form of the cloth and the name; observe the basic thing that stays in and through the cloth, then you know it is but yarn. Without clay you can have no pot; without yarn, there can be no cloth. So too, without Brahman, there can be no Prakriti. It is truer to say that all is Brahman than to say, "Brahman-is-in-everything." It is grander to picture Brahman as Sarva-aadhaara, the basis of all, rather than to conceive It as Sarvabhutha-antharaatma, the inner reality of all beings. That is truth.

Chapter XIII

This universe itself is a superstructure, the basis being Paramatma, Godhead; this is apparent, the other is the real. People ignore the basis and crave for the 'based'. They do not stop to inquire how the 'based' can exist without a base! This too is an example of faulty vision. When this Drishti-dosha is set right, Srishti-kartha can be seen. When the defect in the vision is removed, the author of this universe can be cognised.

This subject was raised by Arjuna before Krishna. He asked, "What exactly is faulty vision? Please tell me in detail, o Krishna." He also sought to know how the fault originates and develops. Now Arjuna is not just an ordinary individual. He is not one to nod his head whatever is told him. He is bold enough to stop Krishna in the middle of a sentence if he feels a doubt rising in his mind. He had the courage and the steadfastness needed. He persisted until he got from Krishna an answer that was verifiable by experience, that was in accordance with the wisdom enshrined in the Sastras. So the Lord too provided the answers immediately, with a smile!

For this question, on faulty vision, Krishna had the answer. He said, "Listen, Arjuna! Between Me and this universe there moves Maya, called delusion. It is indeed a hard task for man to see beyond Maya, for Maya too is Mine. It is of the same substance; you cannot deem it separate from Me. It is my creation and under My control. It will turn in a trice, even the mightiest among men, head over heels! You might wonder why it is so difficult to overcome. Of course, it is by no means easy. Only those who are wholeheartedly attached to Me can conquer this, Maya. Arjuna, do not take Maya to mean some ugly thing that has descended from somewhere else; it is an attribute of the mind; it makes you ignore the true and the eternal Paramatma and value instead the attributeful created manifold multiplicity of name and form. It causes the error of believing the body as the self, instead of the embodied (the Deha instead of the Dehi). Maya is not something that was and will disappear; nor is it something that was not, but later came in and is. It never was, or is, will be.

"Maya is a name for a nonexistent phenomenon. But this nonexistent thing comes within view! It is like the mirage in the desert, a sheet of water that never was or is. He who knows the truth does not see it; only those ignorant with the ways of the desert are drawn by it. They run towards it and suffer grief, exhaustion and despair. Like darkness arising in the room hiding the room itself, like moss growing on the water hiding the water itself, like cataract growing in the eye hiding the vision, Maya too attaches itself to whoever helps it to grow. It overpowers the three Gunas and the three Gods. That is to say, all who identify themselves with the limited, the named, the formed, the individualised, are affected by it. Jiva-bhranthi (identification with Jiva) bring it about; Thathwa-bhranthi (identification with the Thath thwa, That-this entity) removes it. It hides the Thathwa; it does not hold sway over those who have once known the Thathwa."

"Arjuna, you might ask Me whether this Maya which pervades and injures the very place where it originates has not tarnished Me, in whom it has taken birth. It is natural that such a doubt should arise. But that is a baseless doubt. Maya is the cause of all this Jagath but it is not the cause of God. I am the authority that wields Maya. This Jagath which is the product of Maya moves and behaves according to My will. So whoever is attached to Me and acts according to My will cannot be harmed by Maya. Maya acknowledges their authority also. To overcome Maya, the only method is to acquire the Jnana of the universal, and to rediscover your own universal nature. For, you attribute the limit of life on that which is eternal and it is this which causes Maya. Hunger and thirst are the characteristics of life. Joy and grief, impulse and imagination, birth and death are all characteristics of the body. They are all an-Atma, un-Atmic. They are not the characteristics of the universal, the Atma."

"To believe that the universal which is you is limited and subject to all these un-Atmic characteristics, that is Maya. But remember, Maya dare not approach any one who has taken refuge in Me. For those who fix their attention on Maya, it operates as a vast oceanic obstacle. But for those who fix their attention on God, Maya will present itself as Madhava! The hurdle of Maya can be crossed either by developing the attitude of oneness with the

infinite God or the attitude of complete surrender to the Lord. The first is called Jnanayoga, the second is named Bhakthiyoga."

"All men do not get the inner prompting to conquer Maya, by surrendering their all to the Lord. It depends on the merit or demerit, accumulated during many births. Those who have only demerit as their earnings will pursue the fleeting pleasure of the senses. Like the birds and the beasts, they revel in food and frolic; they take these as the purpose of life; they do not entertain any thoughts of God; they dislike the company of the virtuous and the good; they stray away from good acts; they become outlaws from the realm of God."

"On the other hand, those who have earned merit strive to grow in virtue, in uplifting thoughts, in the contemplation of the divine presence and they yearn for the Lord. Seekers such as these may be drawn to the Lord through suffering or want or the thirst for knowledge or keenness to acquire wisdom. But the fact that they turn towards the Lord for relief shows that they have grown into the higher path through many births."

The Geetha does not approve Sa-kama karmas, act done with intention to benefit therefrom or with the result as the prime motive. It is only Nishkama karma, acts done without being concerned with the benefit that may accrue, that will free you from delusion.

Now a doubt may arise about the Aartha-bhaktha, the one who turns to the Lord to relieve his suffering. The question may be raised whether such a person can be called a Bhakta. There is no single person on earth who is free from some want or other. Each depends on some one or other to fulfill his wants, is it not? Now, to have such wants, wants relating to objects, is itself wrong; and to lean on a man like oneself to fulfill them is an even greater wrong. The Aartha-bhaktha turns not to man, but to the Lord whom he trusts and reveres: He implores Him only to fulfil them. Though it is wrong to cultivate wants, he avoids the greater wrong of putting trust on inferior instruments. So he is superior, is it not? The superiority of his attitude can be seen when you know that it is not what you want that is important, but whom you ask for its fulfillment. The goal is the Lord; He is the giver. His grace alone can confer boons. When this faith is fixed, you can be certain that the Aartha-bhaktha is really worthy.

The first three of the types of Bhaktas mentioned in the Geetha - the Aartha, the Artharthi, and the Jijnaasu - all adore the Lord in an implicit form, as Paroksha. They seek the Lord as a means for the realisation of their desires or goals. Of course, they will always be in prayerful and worshipful mood and remembering the Lord at all times.

The Jnani, the fourth type mentioned in the Geetha has Ekabhakthi, while the others have Anekabhakthi; the others are attached to the objects or the states they desire and for their sake are attached to the Lord also. They are devoted not merely to the Lord, but to the objective world also. The Jnani will not raise his eyes towards anything other than the Lord. Even if he does, he sees the Lord wherever his eyes are cast. That is the reason why the Lord has declared that the Jnani is the dearest to Him. Of course, all are the same for the Lord; but among those who have reached His presence and are present there, Prema is explicit, Prathyaksha, immediate, directly cognisable and experienceable. Therefore, it can be inferred that the Jnani is nearest to the Lord and so, the dearest.

Of course, it is the nature of fire to warm you up when you shiver from cold. But how can it help you to keep warm if you do not approach it but keep away at a distance! Similarly, those who are earnest to remove the chillness of worldly ills have to seek the fire of Jnana, which is won by the grace of God, and be in the immediacy of God.

The Sadhakas in the midst of their efforts sometimes imagine God to be less glorious than He really is! They feel that the Lord differentiates between sinners and saints, good and bad, Jnanis and A-jnanis. These are unsound inferences. The Lord does not separate men

thus. If He really did so, no sinner can survive His anger on earth for even a minute. All are living on the earth, since the Lord has no such distinction. Only the Jnani knows this truth. Others are unaware of this. They suffer under the false belief that the Lord is somewhere far far away from them.

The Jnani is free from Maya, he is unaffected by the Gunas: Rajas, Tamas or even Satwa. The Jijnaasu, the seeker of knowledge, however, is different. He uses his time for unbroken contemplation of the divine, in pious deeds and holy thoughts. And the other two, the Artharthi and the Aartha, they gather elevating experience and ruminate over the real and the unreal and transform themselves into Jijnasus, seekers of knowledge. And later, they become Jnanis and are saved. The goal is reached thus, stage by stage. You cannot attain the goal in one leap.

This can be better understood by an example; Jnana is like the "through train." That is to say, the passenger need not detrain and enter another train to reach the destination. The Jijnasu has entered the "through carriage;" he too need not detrain and board another train, but the carriage will be detained and attached to other trains en-route; and he reaches at last the place he wants to reach. The Aartha boards the ordinary train and since the carriage he is in is not "through" nor is he in a through train, he has to alight at a number of places en-route and wait until another train comes by, so that he can reach the goal by stages. It is a long and arduous journey. But, in spite of these difficulties, it can be accomplished by the Aartha, if he persists; The goal is attained by all; only the process and the pace are different. No wonder the Lord has declared more than once that all these four types of Bhaktas are "My Own." Why has He so declared? Because they all seek the same high goal.

"Therefore, yearn always for the vast, the immeasurable. Do not limit your desires to the little. They are misers who crave for little things. Those who yearn for the Lord are generous, large-hearted," said Krishna.

The Bhakthi or devotion of the Jnani is what is termed Sahajabhakthi, direct Bhakthi. The Bhakthi of the others can be called Gouna-bhakthi or derived Bhakthi, indirect Bhakthi. The Jnani cognises the Lord as his own Atma; his Bhakthi is Anu-rakthi, attachment towards or affection for God. 'Poojyaeshvanura ago bhakthi,' it is said; 'affection towards the venerable is Bhakthi', said Krishna. The Jnani becomes so as the result of the merit accumulated through many lives. It is not a stage attainable on the spur of the moment; nor is it available ready-made in shops for a price. It is not a marketable commodity. It is the culmination of the spiritual endeavor practiced in many lives. It is desired that many good doctors must be produced for ministering to the people. But years of study and experience alone can supply them; if those unequipped are appointed as doctors in the hospitals and if they start prescribing and operating, they are bound to kill where they should cure. So too, if a person has become a Jnani today, you can imagine the years and years of Sadhana that won for him that height. That inheritance of spiritual impulses from previous births also helps his endeavors.

All kinds of people now name themselves as Jnanis. They do not know, perhaps, that a Jnani is marked by certain characteristics. The mark that proves him genuine is, of course, his declaration based on his own experience that "Vaasudevassarvamidam," "Vaasudeva is all this." The steady assimilation of that experience is the true sign of the Jnani. By Vaasudeva is meant here not the son of Vasudev, but He who has made all beings His home, His Nivaasa. It is only a person who perceives the Lord in all beings that deserves to be called a Jnani. Instead, if others name themselves as Jnanis, they are so only in name. They have no genuine experience of Jnana. What exactly is that Jnana? It is the possession of that knowledge which enables you to have knowledge of all; and so enables you to dispense with the knowledge of all else.

This is the height, which the Jnani reaches. On the other hand, no one can claim to be a Jnani who has simply learnt a few slokas by heart, or skipped through a few books, or ascended platforms with ten others and lectured for hours in the full pride of scholarship, reeling off ponderous sentences (like magician and his ball of thread), pouring out what has earlier been swallowed. We have large numbers of such self-styled Jnanis going about now. Their dress is ochre, but their hearts are ogre. Well, how can stones shine as gems? All stones are not precious stones. Who will assess a stone as equal to a gem? Only fools will be misled. For they know neither the one nor the other.

Shri Krishna declared the king of Manthras, "Vaasudevassarvam" in the Geetha, just to counteract such pseudo-Jnanis, whose emergence He anticipated. That one Mantra is sufficient to save all mankind. That is His indirect gift; consider it as such and concentrate on it and its meaning. That is the highest good; that is the highest goal. Those six letters can alone make human lives worth while. Without the inner ever-present experience of those words, there are many who have named themselves Mahatma, Jagatguru, Bhagawan, Paramahansa, Jnani, Thyagi, Ananda, etc; and who, alas, though counterfeit, receive currency among people as genuine. No one conferred these titles on them; they were selected and assumed by their present owners and worn as plumage to catch the people's eye. They are not genuine and so the glamour too wears out soon enough. The exterior is Sanyas, but the interior is Athyaas, (too full of desires). Outwardly the form is Yoga, but inwardly they suffer from Roga (disease). Their names all speak of Ananda but they roam around in the alleys. Their words are honey; their acts are spoony, and often za'ny. A householder who is immersed in the daily duties of his stage of life is far better spiritually than these dressed-up specimens of Thyaga and Yoga.

The chief reason for the decline of the culture of India, of its ancient way of life and its moral rectitude is this: the evil perpetrated by such fakes. Faith in God has declined for the same reason. They advise Thyaga and aspire for Bhoga; they glorify morality and operate through hatred. This behaviour cuts at the very root of Sanyasa; they inevitably rush towards doom. Where words and deeds are not coordinated, there is no trace of truth.

Well, householders do hold on to truth, more or less tenaciously. There are among them many who are devoid of hate, are of pure unsullied hearts, and who tread the path of morality and virtue. But we find that the Thyagis and Yogis who parade as such are full of all possible types of hatred and all the manifestations of desire. They fall into the pit, which these dig for trapping them. Egoism, envy, and exhibitionism - these bring to end all the efforts of the Sadhaka. Therefore, seekers and devotees must be ever vigilant; they must keep away from all these undesirable traits and they should try to grow in the contemplation of the glory of God; and in the practice of morality, eagerly striving to experience the real bliss of attainment. This bliss has then to be shared with the world. That will inaugurate world peace and world prosperity.

Krishna was referring to such real Jnanis when He said that the world would shine in splendor through the Jnanis. A man without Jnana is as a home without light.

Chapter XIV

"Nahi Jnanena Sadrsam." There is nothing to equal Jnana. And what is Jnana? That which makes you cross this sea of flux, this Sam-saara. Of course, it is of two kinds; the first is objective knowledge (Vishayajnana) and the second, integral knowledge, or A-bhedajnana.

The first type is knowledge of the world; the second is the knowledge of the identity of Brahmam and the individual Atma, which is called A-bheda or undifferentiated or integral Jnana. This Jnana is not a function of the intellect or Buddhi; it is a feature of something beyond it, something which witnesses the activities of even the Buddhi. It destroys the

delusion about this constant flux, mistaken to be a reality; it removes fear from the heart of man; it reveals to him the Brahman which he and all this is. So it is called the right Jnana or Samyak Jnana, the Sameepa Jnana or the nearest Jnana.

There are two paths by which man can approach this A-bheda Jnana; the inner and the outer. The outer Sadhana is "Nishkama Karma," engaging in activity without attachment towards the result of those activities as dedicated to the Lord. The inner Sadhana is Dhyana and Samadhi. In Vedantic terminology, this is named Nididhyasana. Listen and meditate on what you have listened to - these two steps are the bases of this Nididhyasana or inner concentration. Without these, Dhyana is impossible of achievement.

This is the meaning of what is called Atma-samyama, the control of the senses, detachment from the outer sensory world, the withdrawal of the mind from the outer world. This is the goal of all life; knowing the Paramatma, attaining liberation. There can be no second aim for man. Man is endowed with life, not for the purpose of building bungalows, the requisition of estates, the accumulation of wealth, the addition of progeny, the earning of titles or ascent into higher rungs of social life. His greatness does not depend on these. The supreme success in life lies in the winning of permanent bliss, permanent escape from grief and agitation.

"Srinvanthu visve amruthasya puthraah!" is the call. "Listen, O! Ye, children of immortality, all over the world!," that is the invitation. The heritage of immortality must be recognised and experienced; it must be won back. The bonds of name and form must be removed; they are but bonds made of dream-stuff. They are changeable and temporary. They are not genuine natural characteristics of the Jiva. Real wisdom consists in recognising that man is pure bliss; bliss that persists from the past into the present and the future. Escape from grief for a brief period of time and the attainment of joy for a short time - these are not signs of real liberation. "If you seek this steady, genuine pure state of bliss, you must be attached to Me," said Krishna.

"Arjuna! Whoever does spiritual practice after attaching himself to Me with a view to liberate himself from old age and senility will know all-that-is-to-be-known of Brahman, Karma, and Atma. I am master of Adhibhutha, Adhidaiva and Adhiyajna and if I am thus worshipped, the worshipper will develop equanimity and full control of the vagaries of the mind. Besides, such a person will dwell on Me without forgetting Me even in his last moments. For that reason he will reach Me too. That is to say, he will merge in Me."

"Arjuna! Every one is anxious to avoid old age and death; it is human nature so to be anxious. But of what avail is mere anxiety? One's conduct and behaviour should be in accordance with one's objective. If one has sincere yearning and if one places full trust and faithfully surrenders to the Lord, the fog of grief will be dispersed by the rays of His grace. If on the other hand one places his trust on the objects of this world, the consequent grief will never end; nor can they be ended by any other than the Lord. Serve the master of Maya, the designer of all this dreamland rather than the dream itself. How can attachments to delusion yield anything but disappointment? How can joy be won by such pursuits? If joy is not won and grief avoided, how can liberation be achieved!" Krishna asked.

Arjuna intervened. "Krishna," he said, "cannot such men attain you? You say that grief must be conquered before one can attain you. Well, what is the origin of that grief? How is it to be tackled? How does it arise? How can one try to overcome it without knowing its origin and course of development? Please tell me how this grief arises in the human mind?"

"Listen, Arjuna," Krishna condescended to reply. "The source of all types of sorrow is ignorance, A-jnana. You might ask Me now what is the source of A-jnana? I shall tell you. It is the identification with the body, the delusion that you are the body. This can be

removed only by the acquisition of right knowledge. To remove darkness, light is what is needed; you cannot frighten it away, nor can you make it yield by prayer or petition or protest. Unless light is on, darkness will not disappear, howsoever you may try. So too, A-jnana will not disappear by merely wishing for disappearance. Once you understand the nature and ramifications of this trait, this A-jnana, the truth will be laid bare and grief will vanish."

"When A-jnana goes, grief too goes. So attach yourself to Me and earn the light of true knowledge and tread the path of no-grief," said Krishna.

Immediately, Arjuna interjected, "Krishna! You were saying till now of certain paths by which we can reach you. Now, at the end of it all, if you throw this cannonball, how can I ever grasp its meaning? You did not even confer, as a preliminary, a little power to do so! Please, therefore, make me happy by describing this point in greater detail so that I might follow You better and attain You."

Krishna replied, "My dear brother-in-law! Listen, My mystery can be understood once you are clear about the meaning of Brahman, Adhyaatmam, Karma, Adhibhootam, Adhidaivam and Adhiyajnam. And let Me tell you this also. Whoever understands My mystery attains Me."

"Then, O Lord, tell me about the first of these, Brahman," exclaimed Arjuna.

"Arjuna! Aksharam-Brahma Paramam," Brahman is referred to as the Akshara which is Param. Akshara means without Kshara or destruction, indestructible. Brahman comes from a root which means big, vast, etc. How vast, you may ask. Vaster than whatever you call vast, that is the answer. The word Akshara has another meaning also. It means omnipresent, immanent everywhere. Brahman is not mere Aksharam, as you will have noticed. It is Param Aksharam. What does that mean? It is that type of Akshara which is beyond the reach of time and space and knowability; it cannot be known by any or all the categories; it never declines or ends; it is Param Aksharam, the highest indestructible, indescribable.

"The Goal of Humanity is to attain that Brahman; Aksharam and Brahman signify the same goal. They indicate the Saguna and the Nirguna aspects of the same truth. For Akshara means also a letter, the Pranava, Om, which is a symbol of Brahman. That is why it is called Aksharaparabrahma Yoga. Brahman has two adjectives, Paramam and Aksharam. Akshara indicates the Pranava as well as Maya. Maya too is subsumed by Pranava. These two are "attribute-ful," qualified; Savishesha. Brahman, however, is Nirvishesha, qualificationless, attribute-less, pure, in its own right. He who understands this attains me.

"Now for a second point: It is Brahman that dwells in every body in the form of 'I'. In fact, every body hangs around this entity called 'I'. In the body, each part and organ in the organisation performs one chief task. Each sense contacts and informs about one particular set of impressions from the outer world. But though related to the senses, there is an 'I' shining in the body, above and behind all of them. If that relationship is broken, everything becomes inert material!

When the 'I' power flows through the senses, they are able to carry on their allotted tasks. That power is Aashyaatmam; it cannot be known without great effort. Use the sharpest discrimination and you know it to some small extent. Brahman is the "That" entity; Adhyaatmam is the "Thwam" entity. To make the matter clearer to you, take these two as appearance and character, form and substance. Brahman is the form, Adhyaatmam is substance," said Krishna.

Let us dwell on this matter a little. The Sastras describe Brahman as Sath-chid-aananda. This is a way of denoting it, in Vedantic vocabulary. It is also described as Asthi-bhaathi-priyam. Are both the same? Or do they mean differently? Sath means that which persists in the past, present and future. The same meaning is conveyed by the word, Asthi. Chith means that which is conscious of everything; the same meaning is conveyed by the word Bhaathi. Ananda means unending source of joy; Priyam also means the same. These three are found in every human being; why, in every beast and bird.

Take the first of these - Sath, and this will become clearer. The body is subject to destruction, sooner or later. Every one is aware of this; no one is ignorant of this elementary fact. Nevertheless, everyone is apprehensive of death! No one welcomes death, or is eager to meet it. Death is inevitable; you have to meet with it, even though you do not welcome it, or try to avoid it. All that is born has to die some day; still, no one likes to die.

What is the key to this paradox? Note this: What is it that does not welcome death? What is it that meets with death? What is it that leaves and what is it that remains? The answer: it is the body that dies; it is the body that falls. What does not die is the Atma. Only you delude yourselves into thinking that it is the Atma or "you" that dies. The Atma has nothing to do with death or birth. The body experiences death; the Atma which is Nithya, Sathya, and Nirmala - Eternal true and pure - does not die. You are the Atma that does not like to die. That is to say, you are Sath; your nature is Sath. The Atma is the "child of immortality," not the Deha or the body. The Atma is the Sath, not the body.

You are the Sath; the Atma; the entity that has no death. It is this Atma that is in every case and so, every being feels the force of that Sath in the form of eternal unchanging existence. This is clear and unmistakable.

Now take the second: Chith - the force that urges you to know everything. Every person is eager to know about anything that is apparent to his consciousness; he asks the questions: "What is this? How does this happen?" The number, which actually succeeds in knowing, may be only a few. Others may have the eagerness only and not the steady intelligence needed to persist and win. That makes no difference. The essential fact is the thirst, the urge.

Take a little boy with you when you go to the market or the bazaar or an exhibition. You will note that the boy does not simply move along seeing the various things on both sides. He will be continuously asking the person who is leading him by the hand what this is and what that is. It may be something he does need or something that is beyond his power of understanding; but yet, the stream of questions will not get dry.

Just consider the inner significance of this hunger for knowledge. It is the Chith-sakthi that expresses itself. It is not its nature to leave things alone. It cannot rest until knowledge is gained; so the hunger emerges as a stream of questions. The Chith-shakti is self-luminous; so it has the power of illumining even inert things. That is why these qualities shine in man and make other things clearer to him. This is enough to make it plain that man has in him the principle of intelligence or Chithsakthi.

Now for the third: Anandam. Even beasts and birds crave for joy without any prompting or persuasion from others. They make every effort to win it. Not one of them craves for grief or pain; they make every effort to escape from pain and grief and put an end to them, when they become unavoidable.

As for man, no further elaboration is necessary. He seeks unbroken joy at all times and in all acts and activities. At no time, at no place, at no stage in life, does he desire grief. He prays for the joy and happiness of himself and his kindred through whatever worship he offers, or whatever Bhajan he shares in, or whatever vows he fulfils or rites he performs, or

pilgrimages he undertakes or gifts he makes for spiritual merit. Why? When the body suffers from any illness and the doctor prescribes a medicine to cure it and make him whole, man wants even that to be sweet, soothing and pleasant!

What is at the root of this desire? Man is fundamentally happy-natured, Sukha-swabhava. Bliss is his very personality. He is not of the nature of the body he occupies. He is the Atma. Happiness is the nature of the Atma. That is why no one is surprised when you are happy; they are not inquisitive about your happiness, for it is something natural to you. Surprise arises only when you observe something that was not there before. What you see every day does not arouse your curiosity. It comes only when something unnatural happens or is observed.

Take this instance. A child is in the cradle. It playfully laughs at either the jingling of bells or some toy or perhaps some sensation which is pleasant enough to make it bloom; no one is surprised or worried at all this. No one loses his peace of mind as a result of this. Now, let the child that was playing and laughing, start shrieking and weeping - every one within earshot will run towards the cradle and frantically search the bed and bedclothes to discover the causes of all this commotion. This is the experience of all who have something to do with children. No one was worried to find out the reason why the child was happy; but all sought for the cause when it wept. Why? Because Ananda or joy is the nature; grief is unnatural, against its inner composition.

This is not the entire point; there is something more. Let us take another example from experience. When some friend or kinsman of yours is happy and affluent, no one takes the trouble to inquire from him why he is so happy; they ignore him and do not harry him with questions regarding himself. But when grief strikes him and he is unhappy, you start worrying him and yourselves. Why? Happiness is natural, it is to be expected, it is nothing surprising. For it is the nature of the Atma, which every one is. That is why one is craving for constant happiness, Ananda.

The above three, Sath, Chith and Ananda, we see in every being as the very core of its very existence, as its reality itself. So it is the Lord Himself who has assumed the Jiva pose and plays as an individual, in that role. It is this inner meaning that Krishna elaborates upon, so that the relationship of the Brahman and Aadhyathmam, that is to say, the identity of both with him, could be understood by Arjuna.

Then Arjuna prayed that the third subject, Karma, may be fully explained to him. Krishna was quite ready to oblige him. He began, "Arjuna! The limitation that is necessary for the creation, fostering and destruction of beings is what is called Karma. The moveable and the immovable, all are beings; why, the very act of the resolution for creation is Karma, the very first, which still activates all everywhere - this entire universe and the movements and agitations and activities in it are the direct consequence of primal Karma, My Sankalpa. And as long as My resolution lasts, the stream of Karma will flow along. It can never go dry so long as I do not will it. All that you do is to get drawn into this flood; why, you are but currents in this rush, or ripples or waves. My will has prompted all Karma and so Karma done in consonance with My will, becomes part of Me."

Chapter XV

"Karma is of My Nature; I manifest Myself as Karma," said Krishna, to the great consternation of Arjuna. He made it clear that all Karma is divine, of His essence! "It is enough if you know that Brahman, the universal Atma, the individual and Karma are all three in Me; knowledge of this will confer release. You need not worry about the rest," said Krishna, as if He wanted to avoid further discussion. Evidently, Krishna wanted to take the chariot into the ranks of the foes and start the conflict, for time was flying fast.

But, Arjuna was adamant; he was different. Ordinary men would not have argued even so long with Krishna. When Krishna says, "Do not worry about the rest," one should stop worrying. But Arjuna was the right interrogator for Krishna and Krishna was the right teacher for Arjuna; in fact, they are Nara-Narayana, is it not? Hence, the appropriateness, the interest and value of this dialogue.

Arjuna was not content to leave the matter at that; he did not accept Krishna's assurance. "Tell me about the remaining three also, O Lord," he pleaded. "Save me from the coils of doubt," he prayed. "Destroy the darkness and reveal to me Your reality," he insisted. At this Krishna melted a little. He fondly stroked Arjuna's back and replied, "Do not grieve; I shall tell you all. Adhibhutham, about which I mentioned, is not such a formidable tangle. It is something quite within the reach of all. Everything that declines and dies, everything that has Rupa and Nama, form and name, is included in Adhibutham."

"To put it in other words, Adhibutham is Aparaa-prakrithi; all these embodied things, on this side and on the other and everywhere are Adhibutham. In spite of this, they are not different from Me," said Krishna, pausing meaningfully. He did not continue the exposition!

Only he knows the ways of the Lord. No one else can make out their meaning and purpose. Attempting to unravel them is a fruitless task.

"They are not different from Me!" At these words Arjuna was petrified with surprise. His head became heavy with doubt. His intelligence was befogged. His conviction was shaken. Doubts multiplied in his brain in frightening sequence. Why did he suffer like this? What was the reason for all this upset?

After declaring, "I am the Sath-Chith-Ananda, the Sathya-Nithya-entity," "I am unaffected by death, decline or destruction," Krishna made the devastating admission that He was the temporary, transitional, destructible Deha also! This was the cause of all this confusion in Arjuna's brain! Anyone would be confounded by doubt at these conflicting statements. Krishna laughed as He saw Arjuna's plight.

Still, since He had no intention of causing delay, and since He knew the source of Arjuna's dilemma, Krishna immediately set about resolving the doubt. "Arjuna! Why do you feel lost? You are confounded because I said I am the short-lived Deha too, is it? Common folk will be shocked on hearing this. Their reaction will be to reject the idea, for it is difficult to reconcile the two. This Deha, which is temporary, transitional, and transient, has affinity with Me; for I am the base from which it springs. Without Me, the Deha or body can never be. This will become clear to you, on a resume of its origin. Listen to the story of the origins of the body, which clarifies the mystery. The body is primarily indebted for its emergence to the food (Anna) that the parents consume, is it not? Where did that Anna come from? From the earth-element: the grains and other materials, which grew on the earth. And the earth? The Prithvi-element? It evolved from Jalatathwam, the Water-element. Tracing back, we find that the Jalatathwam emerged from Agni or the fire-element, the Agni from Vayu, the Vayu from Aakaasa and the Aakaasa from the Maya of Godhead! That Maya is merely My apparel."

"My apparel, which I willed and folded around Me became Aakaasa, the Aakaasa got transformed into Vaayu, the Vaayu changed into Agni, the Agni into Jala, the Jala became Prithvi or earth, the Earth grew grains of food, the food developed into the body! So, it is clear, is it not, that the Deha too is Myself? Why doubt this?"

"Therefore, I am Adhibhutham also, as much as I am as I said before, Brahmam, Aadhyaathmam and Karma. The cause if the same as the effect; I am the primal cause and so I am all these effects also. I am the Paramatma; the rest are all Adhidaivam. In every

physical citadel or body, the divine personality named Hiranyagarbha is immanent. Just as a man is served by his senses, the Hiranyagarbha is served by the Adhidaivas."

"You might wonder what the role of these Adhidaivas is! They are deities that serve the divine purpose; that is to say, Surya, the ear by the deities of the quarters, illumines the eye and Indra motivates the hand; these and other presiding deities are the senses of Hiranyagarbha. However great a Sadhaka might be, whatever eminence he might have reached, he can attain the highest only through Hiranyagarbha. Hiranyagarbha is indeed Godhead; there is no distinction between the two. Is this clear, Arjuna? I am as much Adhidaivam as I am Adhibutham; as much as these two I am Brahmam, Aadhyaathmam and Karma. They are all fully divine."

"Now for the next entity - Adhiyajnam. That is also Me! This is the entity that consumes joy and grief, the result of the multifarious Karmas they are engaged in. I am the recipient of the Sabda, Sparsa, Rupa, Rasa, and Gandha; through the five senses in all beings, the Adhiyajna principle! I am not only the Kartha, the entity responsible for the Karma; I am also the Bhoktha, the entity for which that Karma is gone through, the recipient of the fruits; I am the benefactor as well as the beneficiary."

Of course, Krishna was able to open the eyes of Arjuna and clarify this truth, this fact of His being the Adhiyajna. But, ordinary intellects may not be able to grasp its implications. It will be easy if we take some illustrations from life. When you want breeze, you switch on the fan; when you want light, you switch on the lamp; when you want to cook, you light the stove; when you want to address a vast audience, you fix up a mike and loudspeakers and switch them on. Or if it is printing you require, you operate the press with a switch. Consider these as separate operations and you will notice that they are unrelated to one another. Light and air, heat and sound, are unrelated; they are distinct in every way, it would seem. But for all these, the Kartha, the motivator is the same, viz., the electric current. The expressions, the manifestations may be different; but the basis, the inspiration, the latent potency, the base is the same.

Like the current, Godhead too operates through all instruments, and awards the consequences of all the activities of all the instruments. He is the Daatha of Sarva-karma-phala. Like the current, He is the inner motivator of all beings, Sarva-bhuthaanthara-atma. Since He is the activator of all Karmas, He is called Adhiyajnam.

"The seventh is Pranava, which, when pronounced at the moment of death, awards merger with the Akshara-Parabrahmah Itself!" When Krishna said this, Arjuna immediately prayed to Him to elaborate the point a little more, so that he might grasp it clearly. Krishna was only too glad to do so. 'The moment of death' does not mean 'some future point of time.' It means, 'this very moment!' Any moment might turn out to be the 'moment of death.' So every moment is the 'last'. Every moment must be filled with Pranava. The fate of man after death is moulded by the thought that predominated at the moment of death. That thought is the foundation on which the next birth is built. "Whoever at that time remembers Me attains My glory, reaches me in fact," declares Krishna. So each Karma of man, every striving of his, every Sadhana, should be aimed at sanctifying that fateful moment; the years of life must be devoted to the discipline that will bring up at that moment the thought of Parama or Pranava.

"What has to be discarded is the Deha, this physical case; what has to be earned is Parabrahmam, the universal absolute. The Deha has your reality, your Swarupam, the undiscardable, indestructible, undying Sathyam and Nithyam. That reality is the entity called Atma, or what is the same thing, Paramatma. Since you are that, you cannot cast it off. Casting off the body is akin to shifting from a house occupied for some years, and birth is your entry into a new one. Both these are physical acts, not affecting the Atma. Arjuna!

The Atma does not come in, nor does it go out. Those who are toiling in the falsehood of Dehatathwa cannot have the Atma revealed to them. The Dehatathwa is liable to decay and death. Therefore, more than the six items mentioned by Me already, the Pranava which is such a potent instrument of liberation has to be understood clearly. All the long years of life are to be utilised for this consummation - the mind being fixed on Pranava when the body is being cast off. You belch the flavour of the food you have taken; your last thought indicates the food you have fed on."

"Your Sadgathi is in accordance with your Sadhana; progress is in accordance with practice. Be always aware of the need to fix the mind on holy thoughts, when the body is got rid of. That is to say, immerse yourself in holy thought every moment of your life."

Arjuna inquired, "O Lord! Has one to strive for it from now on, if one wishes to get holy thoughts at the last moment of life? Can we not get them at that time itself?" The Lord realised his doubt and replied, "Your intelligence seems to have been blunted a great deal! For you are hesitating to accept the need to develop holy thoughts from now on. Arjuna! The mind has to be educated into the habit, through what is called Abhyasayoga, the discipline of constant practice. It has to be trained to avoid other thoughts and concentrate on the Lord only. Then only can you reach the Paramapurusha, the oversoul, the supreme spirit. Unless you systematically teach it and train it, you will not remember the Paramapurusha at the moment of death."

"You might ask me the reason. Well. Think of your own case. You are able to use these weapons of offence and defence in the battle that is imminent because you taught yourself the art of handling them over many years, is it not? Could you have used them with confidence, without preparation, on the spur of the moment? Is it ever possible? The Kshatriya will be called upon to wield weapons some day, so he is taught the art from childhood so that he may be ready for any emergency."

"Similarly, whatever else a man may not meet during life, he is certain to meet with death. So each one must be trained to have at that time the attitude and thought that are most beneficial to him. Otherwise, life is a failure, a waste. A person unready for this consummation has to suffer the fate that will befall him. No one enters a battlefield in order to suffer defeat. So too, no one voluntarily accepts a fall; he seeks only progress. Will it not be wise, therefore, to strive for the end that is in your own best interest? Hence, every man must take earnest steps to secure the thought of the seventh item, Pranava, at the last moment of life. Whoever dies in that thought attains Me," said Krishna.

This is the entire essence of the Geetha. For the goal of all man's actions is to attain the acme of progress, is it not? That is the urge, which makes him, engage himself in prayers, in Japam and Dhyanam, in Archana and Thapas. All those who have placed faith in these have to remember the goal throughout.

Krishna said that Om or Pranava has to be remembered at the moment of death. There are certain points that require elucidation in connection with this for there are many who argue that the Pranava can be repeated only by a few and that others are not entitled to it. This is wrong. This false conclusion has been arrived at since they do not know the truth. It springs from a mistaken belief.

The Geetha does not mention this group or that group. Krishna declares "whoever" without any qualifying words, limiting it to one class or sex. He has not even said, "who deserves or who does not deserve," "who is authorised or who is unauthorised." He has only said that for meditation on the Pranava, (mere 'calling it to memory' is of no use) some preliminary disciplines have to be gone through, like control of the senses, the concentration of the mind, etc.

For, when the mind is flitting from one fancy to another, how can the production of a sound Om, Om, by the vocal organs be of any benefit? The sound will not help the attainment of liberation. The senses have to be curbed, thoughts have to be one-pointed, the glory has to be apprehended. That is why the Lord advised that from birth to death, one must be engaged in the search for truth. Instead, if you postpone Sadhana until the last moment, you will be like the student who turns over the pages of his textbook for the first time, just before he enters the examination hall! If the student feels that he has before him one full year and if he neglects to learn from the teacher and from lecture-notes and from books, how can anything enter his brain when he opens the pages of his book that very morning? It will only add to his despair. He can be pronounced proficient only in indolence.

No tree will yield fruits the moment you plant the seedling in your backyard. To reach that stage, you have to foster it with care over a long period of time, is it not? Similarly, whatever result you seek, you have to follow carefully, without break, preparatory disciplines. No one can acquire the fruit without vigilance and steadfastness.

Sadhakas must be always aware of this. This yearning must be directed away from "how to be born" towards "how to die!" For birth depends on how death takes place. Death comes first, birth happens later. Folks believe that men are born to die and they die so that they may be born. This is wrong. You are born so that you may not be born again, you die, so that you may not die again. That is to say, the man who dies must so die that he is not born again. When once you die, you should not be born again to meet another death. Death is inevitable, if you are born; so, avoid birth and avoid death.

So, the Sadhaka should not aspire for a good birth; he should seek a good death. You may be born well, in a good family or with many favourable circumstances; but subsequent Karma may not ensure a good death. So, if a good death is aimed at, the trouble of being born and becoming once again subject to death can be avoided.

Every man born must have the end always in view. Cultivate good habits of thought and action in order to make that end genuinely auspicious. Attaining such an end is the unmistakable sign of having won the grace of God.

Chapter XVI

Ordinary folk do not get the mind fixed on Madhava so easily at the point of death. It presupposes long training, previous achievement of certain accomplishments; what is called Purva Samskara. The mind should have gone through a certain course of discipline; it has to be Yogayuktha, possessed of Yoga. Even that is not enough. The mind must discard all other thoughts as low and inferior, even as defiling. This disgust towards all other objects should grow in strength. When these two are present, the thought of Madhava will certainly emerge and be steady during the last moments.

So your mind is the important thing; when the mind rots, all else rots. Man moves as fast as his mind, in the direction that the mind takes. To tame and train the mind, good habits and disciplines have to be sought. Therefore, Krishna began describing how the Lord has to be pictured in the mind during the Sadhana stages and with what feelings and emotions He has to be fixed in the mind.

"Arjuna! People describe Me in three different ways:

1. as Nirguna Niraakaara
2. as Saguna Niraakaara and
3. as Saguna Saakaara.

I shall tell you about the second, the Saguna Niraakaara first, and how you have to picture the Lord in this aspect. Listen, He is described as Kavi, Puraanam, Anusaasitha, subtler than the subtle, the sustenance and basis of all, having unpicturable form, with the splendour of the sun as His complexion, beyond all trace of ignorance and darkness."

At this point, Arjuna interrupted Krishna. He asked, "Lord! You said, He is a Kavi! There are Kavis among ordinary mortals too. How then can you call the Lord too a Kavi and discredit Him? Or, does Kavi denote something special when applied to Him? Make that point a little clearer." Krishna said, "Kavi does not mean merely a poet; it means also one who is aware of the past, present and future and so it is a description of the Lord. He knows all; He sees all. Hence, the derivation of Kavi is mentioned as 'Sarvajna, Kraantha-darsi,' He who sees the next step. It is the Lord who revolves in every heart and effects changes from step to step. For all creation the Kavi is the motivator, the prime basis. He is the poet; His poem is all this." Arjuna again inquired, "Lord, secondly, you said 'Puraana,' that He is Puraana, or ancient; what is the significance of that?" Krishna replied, "Of course, the Lord is the most ancient, but He is as modern as He is ancient. He is Sanathanaa, primeval, beyond the beginning; He is also Noothana, new every moment. Puraana means, Puraa navamithi, formerly new, new every minute of the past and the present."

"What about the word, Anusaasitha?"

"Independent, unchecked, master. He lays down the conduct of all. The five elements execute His orders. They cannot overstep the limits laid down by Him. His laws govern also the inner world of all beings as no human law can. He operates in the regions of the mind."

"The fourth expression you used was that He is Anoraneeyan, subtler than the subtle."

"Subtle...? Perhaps, you thought that subtle indicates a diminutive microscopic body! No, no. The expression, 'subtler than the subtle' means, Nirguna, characteristicless, devoid of qualities; something that you cannot fathom with the help of the eye and the ear and the rest of the senses. A thing becomes subtler with the reduction of its characteristics; if it has more it is less subtle."

"Sabda Sparsa Roopa Rasa Gandha - these are the characteristics of the five elements - Akasa, Vayu, Agni, Jala, and Prithvi. Prithvi has all the five; Jala has only four; Agni has three: Roopa Sparsa and Sabda; Vayu has just Sparsa and Sabda; Akasa has only one, Sabda. That is to say, each of these is subtler than the rest and Akasa is the subtlest of all."

"This is self-evident. Prithvi or the earth is just stationary; water or Jala is subtler and so it flows. Agni or fire is subtler than water and so it rises up. Vayu or air which is even more subtle can travel on all sides. Akasa has just one characteristic, Sabda; it has no touch, or form or taste or scent; the Lord who is beyond these five elements has none of these characteristics. He is subtler than the subtlest. He is all-pervasive, immanent in all. It is the characteristic that makes a thing heavy. The Lord has no such burden; so, He is subtler than everything else."

"Next, about the fifth expression: Sarvaadhaara. There are two categories: Aadhaara and Aadheya. All that exists is seen by the eye or heard by the ear; why, the entire creation is Aadheya, the based; they are all composed of the five elements. Well, the five elements are all Aadheya; for they are based on the basis, Brahmam. Brahmam is the only basis; It is not based on another entity for there is no second. Therefore, He is Sarvaadhaara, the basis of all."

"The sixth too, I shall make clear to you. Achinthya rupam, with an un-picturable form, a form that cannot be delineated or imagined. For He is beyond the reach of the mind and it is the mind that pictures, delineates or imagines. So His Rupam or form is Achinthya or

incapable of being imagined by the mind. You might hesitate to accept this. But the mind is matter; it is inert. It is fleeting. But Brahman or Paramatma is pure 'consciousness.' It is eternal, everlasting, imperishable. It and mind are at opposite poles; the fixed and the fleeting - they are totally unrelated. The mind dies, the other remains! The inert and the active are unrelated."

"The question may arise in your mind: what then is the Sadhaka to do? Oh, he is not deprived of hope. Let him picture the Paramatma as unpicturable that is enough. Dwell on such thought as this and the fruit will be vouchsafed unto you. The Sadhaka must first learn the channels along which his thoughts should run."

At this, Arjuna pleaded with Krishna thus: "Lord, let us proceed; time is running fast. We cannot be stationary in this battlefield without assuming responsibility or making a decision. War is facing us with open jaws, ready to swallow and overwhelm us. I am ready to obey the instruction you may be pleased to give me; only, let there be no delay. Hence, quickly enlighten me about the seventh attribute of the Saguna-nirakaara."

"Yes; the seventh is: Aadhithya-varnam, with the splendour of the sun as His complexion." This means, "He is self-effulgent as the sun; he is independent; He is the source of the light He shines with." He is the effulgence of the sun, He makes the sun shine. So He is named Adithya. I shall tell you about the eighth too, straight away. 'Thamasah Parasthaath' - 'beyond darkness' - He is the witness of darkness or Ajnana. For Para means witness, one unaffected; and, no darkness is as dark as Ajnana; it is so deep and so Thamasah parasthaath, means, 'beyond maya.'

"Arjuna! Just close your eyes for a moment; what is it that you experience? Complete darkness, is it not? How did you know that it is dark? You cannot see darkness; then how did you announce that there was darkness there? There are two entities there - darkness and he who sees the darkness, is it not so? If you are yourself darkness, how can you see the darkness? No; you are the seer and so you are not darkness. Darkness is that which is seen; the seer is you, you are the witness.

"Now consider another fact: Man very often condemns himself as an ignoramus, but if he really were an ignoramus or a fool, how is he able to recognise his own ignorance? From where did he get that knowledge? When did that Jnana enter him? And how?"

"A-jnana is the 'seen'; Jnana is the 'seer'. You are the dark, which sees the Drisya of A-jnana. In the same way, all the eight descriptions above have to be contemplated upon. That is the correct meditation of the form of the Lord."

Arjuna asked, "Krishna! Is such meditation alone enough or has it to be supplemented?"

"Of course, when this meditation is practiced, care should be taken to see that the mind is concentrated on that thing only. It should not pursue diverse objects. It must attach itself to that one supreme, with love and devotion, Prema and Bhakthi. Usually, man's love gets fastened on trifling temporary things and so gets entangled in setbacks and sorrows. So the love has to be withdrawn from such objects and centered on the Lord."

"I shall tell you briefly what Bhakthi consists of, listen! Bhakthi is the complete identification of one's mental activities with those of the ideal on which the attachment is centred."

Here Arjuna intercepted and asked, "How is that ever possible, O Lord?" "It is possible, Arjuna. Control the senses, let the mind be effaced as much as possible and let the heart be purified, let the vital airs be uplifted into the highest region of the Seersha, let the individual be established in the Atmic truth, and let the Pranava be the only point of

attention at the moment of the Prana leaving the body - such a one comes to Me and joins with Me; His mental activities become the same as Mine," said Krishna.

Here, readers should fix their attention on what the Lord told Arjuna. The Lord spoke of the control of the senses, not their destruction. Control means: under one's behests, obedient to the will. Destruction means: denial of activity, full inaction. The Lord also said of all the senses, not of any one or two only. Man must keep all senses under his control and use them only when the purpose for which they have been devised are to be fulfilled. They should not be let loose, just because one has them. Give them the functions they are designed for, but do not allow them to master you and ruin you. Let them work strictly on regulated lines. That is the Lord's intention.

There is another thing too. You must yourself reason out and discover what exactly will expand your heart and what will breed disquiet; then, hold fast to the former and give up the latter. Or else, straying in devious paths like an insane ape, you will have to twist and turn in confusion. What is the cause of all the troubles and discontent to which many are subjected nowadays? It is the improper use they make of the senses.

Who are the proper people to enter through each door of your home you should decide and carefully watch. Those who must enter by one door should not use some other door; if they do, then that house will have only discontent, confusion, disorder. It is wiser to take precautions against such disorder before entrance is effected, rather than deal with the intruders after they have come in, through the wrong door. You may excuse the trespass, for the first time; but certainly, you must take enough care to see that it is not repeated. That is the better method, though not the best.

Again, Arjuna felt a doubt arising in him; if the senses are bound, how can the Om be pronounced? Krishna understood this. He took up the matter Himself. "Arjuna! Om has to be pronounced in the mind, not through the mouth as a sensory organ!" Next, Arjuna raised another question to relieve himself of another doubt. "You said, Japathonaasthi paathakam, he who does Japam has no sin; but if Japam cures one from sin, what happens to liberation, Moksha? Evidently, Japam is powerless to bring that about; Japam will not enable one to concretise the Lord."

The Lord was happy when Arjuna mentioned this doubt. "Partha! Your question is important; but let Me tell you: Moksha need not be sought after separately, apart from other objectives. If Om is recited and the significance of the Om, that is to say, the Lord, is meditated upon, then the Lord is attained by you; in other words, you are liberated." Arjuna insisted on his point; he asked, "Lord! Is it ever possible for Japam to bring about both results? Of course, it is easy for You to declare so, but trouble starts when we follow the path of Japam and Dhyanam."

Krishna replied, "It is just for this purpose that I mentioned at the very start about Abhyasa-yoga, the value, of practice or Abhyasa. Practice, steady practice, will ensure you both results, freedom from sin and liberation. Probably, you do not realise the importance of practice. O foolish Arjuna! Do you not see here how practice makes an animal execute difficult tasks? Look at these horses yoked to your chariot, these elephants ranged on the field; they render the assistance in battle which even man with the superior equipment of reason cannot give! Consider how this was made possible. Where have elephants dwelling in the forest observed the tactics of battle? Or do you hold that fighting on the battlefield is their nature? No, their present skill is proof of the value of practice, Abhyasa."

"Similarly, practice the withdrawal of the mind from the sense, steadily; then it will develop skills which will release you from bondage. Let Me tell you, those who repeat with their last breath the sacred Pranava do attain the Lord." Krishna said this with emphasis.

Arjuna made bold to put another query. "Lord! It is good that those who repeat the Pranava with their last breath attain the Lord. But, what about those who do not? Their number is certainly much larger. Have they no chance of release? In the court of the almighty, are only some to be honoured with seats? Have the miserable and the poor no accommodation at all? Tell me, where they go, where they will be admitted."

"Arjuna! You are falling into a great error, beware. The Lord does not discriminate between the weak and the strong or the high and the low. Such an attitude will never warp His vision. All are entitled to His grace; all are entitled to enter His Durbar hall. Its doors are ever open. No guards are there to bar the entrance of anyone. No one is prevented; no one is invited. All are welcome to enter. What can any one do if some do not approach the door? Those who desire warmth have to go near enough to the fireside and sit there. Those who stand afar can know only the light that emerges from that fireside. What do you say of that man who, standing afar, declares that the fire has no warmth? He certainly is not sane."

"All who yearn for the presence, all who desire to enter the Durbar of the Lord and who strive in their mind constantly for the function of that desire, all have admission and accommodation there. It is not everyone that can repeat the Pranava at the last moment; that is the reason why constant remembrance of the Lord is said to have the power of inducing the Lord to bear the burden of your Yogakshema, happiness here and hereafter. Of course, this too has to be practiced long. Sadhana gains everything, Sadhana, steady and strong."

Chapter XVII

"Whoever is busy with no other thoughts than those about Me, whoever is ever remembering Me, he certainly will release his dying breath through the centre of the head; he will attain Me. I am as near him, as he is near Me. My dear Arjuna! How can I forget him, who never forgets Me? Forgetting is a human frailty, not the characteristic of God, let Me tell you! There is no need for Yoga or Thapas, or even Jnana; whether you give these up since you are too weak or whether, in spite of having the strength, you do not feel like struggling to master these, it does not matter. I do not ask for Yoga or Thapas; I only ask that your mind be fixed on me. Devote your mind to Me, dedicate it to Me, that is all I ask for."

"If a Sadhaka cannot do at least this act of dedication to the Lord, I wonder what his Sadhana is capable of! If you plead that you have not the strength of mind, I ask where the strength comes from to dedicate yourself as you do now to hollow ideals, the vain fantasies of family, fortune and fame. Can you not direct this strength to that supreme dedication? Man easily offers his all to poisonous objective pleasures, but squirms and protests as if a mountain is tumbling on him when the call is made to dedicate his thoughts, feelings and acts to the almighty! Salvation in his eyes is as cheap and as easy to attain as greens in the vegetable market! He seeks to escape from bondage as easily as that. He does not yearn much; but he desires to earn much in the spiritual field! He is sunk more in Tamas than in Thapas. But he wishes for the fruits that Thapas alone can offer."

"Those who are prompted by genuine desire for the fruit must overcome all obstacles and temptations, doubts and disappointments, and dwell on the thought of the Lord. Then the Lord will not keep apart; He will confer on that Sadhaka the status of Sameness, described as Aham Brahmasmi. ('I am you, You are I, We are one') And the Sadhaka will be contemplating this unity without break. This is referred to as Ananyabhaava."

Arjuna asked, "You say that this Ananyabhaava, this Ananya-bhakthi is quite easy and that there is no need to take any great trouble; you also declare that for those who have acquired it, You are readily attainable! Well, what exactly is the benefit of attaining you?"

Krishna smiled at this and replied, "Arjuna! What greater benefit is there than that? That holy victory makes mortal man a Mahatma. You may still pose the question: Of what benefit is it to become a Mahatma? Listen. The Mahatma is far superior to the ordinary man. The latter is established in the body and the Jiva, he identifies himself with the body and with breath, with the particular, 'the wave'. So, he is tossed about by joy and grief; he rises or falls with each experience. Between snatches of calm and storm, he reels under many a blow."

"The Mahatma is free from all dual experience. He is above and beyond. He has released himself from identity with the particularised; he is in the universal, the eternal, the changeless, the Brahmabhaava, not the Jiva bhaava. He knows that the Atma is not a limited entity, he feels that it extends beyond all limits; he is free from the blemish of Tamas and Rajas; he is neither dull nor driven about by desire; he has pure consciousness, unaffected by attachment or hate. Many who style themselves as such, nowadays, have no purity in their hearts; their consciousness is soiled by foulness. But the pure in heart have no further birth and death. They are under no obligation to appear again on earth. Without attaining that purity, you cannot escape the round of birth and death, however many your meritorious deeds, however high your spiritual status, however glorious the heaven you have secured! Only those who are perpetually in that Brahmabhaava can attain this timeless Me, and be freed from the chain, by merging in Me."

At this Arjuna gave expression to another doubt that worried him. He asked, "If that is so, why do the Upanishads declare that those who reach heaven, Brahmaloaka, need not be born again? Please explain who exactly are those that are freed from this cycle of birth and death?"

"Arjuna! There are two types of liberation mentioned in the Upanishads, Sadyomukthi and Kramamukthi. Sadyomukthi is also referred to as Kaivalyamukthi. For earning this, no one need aspire for any heaven. They get this on the spot, and not by stages, step by step. Liberation secured thus is a possession for ever. The rest are liable to change. When the effect of the merit acquired wears out, heaven has to be given up, and life on earth starts anew. Such souls know no merging; only, those who attain Kaivalya, merge and become one with the eternal, the universal."

"This is to say," intercepted Arjuna, "the souls that attain Kaivalya are destroyed, is it not? Or is there any difference between merging and destruction, Laya and Naasam?"

"No, Partha! Layam is not Naasam, merging is not destruction. Layam happens when it becomes invisible."

"That is what happens when a thing is destroyed; it becomes invisible, we cannot see it any more."

"But, just because a thing has gone out of sight, how can you pronounce it 'destroyed'? No. A lump of sugar or salt placed in water disappears. You can see it no more; but can you say it has been destroyed? Or, do you say it has merged? It is there, the taste declares it; it has lost the form, but is present in its quality, its Guna. The Jiva also merges like this in Brahmam. It is not destroyed at all. When the Jiva is not merged like this, it can at best only wander between heaven and earth, deserving life in heaven for some time and descending again to earth for further efforts towards salvation."

Arjuna was still afflicted with doubt. He asked "Krishna! You say that no heaven, even the highest Brahmaloaka, can save man from the cycle of birth and death; then, what is the royal road to salvation? Do you mean to say that those who strive for those heavens have to satisfy themselves with just that and no more?"

Krishna answered, "Partha! There is a state that knows no decline, beyond all these heavens. There are many roads by which that state can be won. Unaware of these roads or of the joy of that state, man is taking to others that are either crooked or comfortable. He does not know how to distinguish between the right road and the wrong.

"I may tell you that there are four roads which are now used by mankind:

1. Karma-atheetha, beyond Karma, unaffected by Karma;
2. Nishkaama-karma, Karma without any desire for the fruit thereof, Karma unaffected by any craving for the result thereof;
3. Sakaama Karma that is, action with the desire to reap and enjoy its fruit and
4. Karma-bhrashta, Karma that knows no restraint or control."

"The Karma-atheethas are the Jivan-mukthas, all their Karmas have been burnt up by the fire of Jnana; their impulses for action have been scorched by the wisdom they have gained. They have no further need for injunction and prohibition, (Vidhi and Nishedha). They need no Sadhana, like Dana, (charity), Dharma (virtuous living), Thapas (austerity). All that they do or feel or think will be divine, holy, virtuous, beneficial to mankind. The very earth they tread on is sacrosanct; every word they utter will be the word of God; their breath need not take them, on death, to realms that are heavenly; they merge, on the falling away of the bodily raiment, without delay, in Brahmam. Such are the Jivis who were described by Me now as having Kaivalyamukthi, Brahma-praapthi or Sadyomukthi."

"Next, the second group; the adepts at Nishkamakarma. These are the Mumukshus, alert on the path of liberation, who are intent on attaining it. They perform each act as a step in the realisation of the Lord. So they can never do anything bad; they do not look forward to the result; they leave it to the Lord to give it, or withhold it. They are not prompted by worldly motives or even by the desire to gain heavenly pleasure. Their aim is just this: Liberation from the bondage of the objective world. They win the grace of the Lord in proportion to the steadiness of their faith and practice."

The third group, which believes in Sa-kama-karma, performs all acts through the desire for the fruit thereof. Since they have an eye on the successful earning of the fruit, they will engage themselves only in acts that are approved by the Sastras; they will not do any sinful or prohibited act. They will equate each act with the merit it will confer, the happiness it will ensure, the heaven it will win. Such men, when they depart from this world, will enter the Lokas (supra-mundane worlds) they have sought and worked for, and having stayed there as long as their merit entitles them, they have to return to earth."

"The fourth group is not guided by any rule of conduct. They have no norms, no discrimination between virtue and vice, right and wrong, proper and improper. They have no horror of hell, no conception of heaven, no dread of the devil, no reverence for God, no respect for the Sastras, no vision of Dharma! They are best pictured as beasts in human form. The majority of humans are members of this unfortunate group. They strive for momentary pleasure, short-lived happiness, temporary joy and evanescent comfort. To call them apes with human physique will be a big mistake; for the ape only jumps from branch to branch or from tree to tree. It releases itself from one branch or one tree before landing on another. Men are more like caterpillars, which move from leaf to leaf, fixing their foreparts on a new leaf, before releasing their hindparts from the leaf on which they were resting till then."

"That is to say, man by his acts in this life decides on his next birth, where and how it will be, even before leaving this world. The new place is ready for him, his foreparts are already there; it is only after setting this that he relieves himself of the hold on this world! Men of

this category move round in the wheel of birth and death. To be born and to die, one must have auspicious moments, which will guarantee a wise life and a worthwhile end. Arjuna! Yogis, for example, give up life only when auspicious moments are available, not at other times. That is why people say, death is the witness for the good. An auspicious moment is to be chosen even for the act of death."

Arjuna asked, "Krishna! Tell me when the body has to be yielded to death, so that one can escape the cycle of birth and death; tell me also which period of time one should avoid." Krishna replied, "Partha! Your question is very timely and urgent. Sometimes, you make Me marvel at your intelligence and you make Me very happy. At other times, you make Me laugh at your ignorance. Your egoism and sense of attachment cause this confusion. Let that pass. Let us come to your question."

"The Yogis who practise Nish-kama-karma pass away in Tejas, during day, while there is light, in the bright half of the month, and in the six month period of Uttarayana. They have as their first state Agni or fire. Hence, their path is known as Devayana, or since Agni is known also as Archi in the Vedas, Archiraadimarga. Such Yogis emerge from Prakaasa (effulgence) and travelling through Prakaasa they merge in Prakaasa itself. They attain Brahmam and are not born again."

"The Yogis who practice Sa-kama-karma pass away in Dhuma (smoke) at night, during the dark half of the month during the six months of Dakshinayana; they pass along Dhumadi-marga and reach Swarga or heaven and there enjoy the pleasures they have yearned for and worked for; when the stock of merit is exhausted, they get born again."

"Both these categories of men are called Yogis; they will exist so long as aspirants and active progressive individuals exist in the world."

"Here, a doubt may reasonably arise: How is it that the bright half of the month is auspicious, while the dark half is not? What, again, is to happen to those who die, when it is neither bright nor dark, neither day nor night? This is a legitimate doubt and everyone has a right to know the answer."

"Now you must first understand what is meant by Sukla Paksha or the bright fortnight. It is the half-month when the light of the moon increases day by day. But what is the relationship of the light of the moon to man and his death? The moon is the symbol of the mind of man. 'Chandramaa manaso jaathah; out of the moon was the Manas (mind) born.' The bright half of the moon, therefore signifies the progress of the mind spiritually, in divine discipline; the full-moon signifies the fullness of that achievement. The bright half is, thus, the period when spiritual progress is attained. For the body, the visible moon; for the mind, the symbolic moon-deity presiding over the mind! The increasing splendor of the mind due to the increasing realisation of one's own divinity is what is meant by the word, 'Suklapaksha'."

"And what of Uttarayana? Be free from doubt on that score, too. Worship offered knowing the meaning of every rite, Sadhana practiced knowing the implications of every step, these cleanse the heart more effectively, and loosen the chains of doubt.

"Uttarayana is the period when no dot of cloud or whiff of fog contaminates the vast dome and the sun shines in all His glory. This is the gross meaning; but there is a subtle one, too. The heart is the inner sky. There, the sun that shines is Buddhi or intelligence. When the clouds of ignorance, the fog of egoism and the smoke of attachment hover in that inner sky, the sun of intelligence is hidden and things look murky and are mistaken. Uttarayana of the heart is when the inner sky is clear of all these, and when the sun shines in full splendor. You must have heard the expression, 'Jnanabhaskara,' the sun of wisdom. The sun is always associated with wisdom and intelligence. When a person passes away with

this equipment of the effulgent sun of wisdom in his clear heart, he can certainly escape rebirth. He takes the path of Agni, the Archiraadi path, as said already, and merges in Brahman!"

"Those who pass away in the other half of the year, the Dakshinayana, have the opposite destiny; then the heart is beset with smoke and fog and cloud. The sun is hidden and His effulgence has no splendour. And in the dark half of the month the moon wanes, symbolising the waning of godward thoughts. The new moon night is enveloped in complete darkness, all spiritual impulses suffer defeat. The thick smoke of Ajnana lies heavily on the mind. This is the meaning of the expression, Krishna paksha. Those who die at such an inauspicious time reap an inauspicious result."

Chapter XVIII

"Since the Uttarayana Marga is lit by the holy splendor of Jnana, it is praised as the Sukla marga or the white path. The Dakshinayana marga is dark, filled with Tamas and Ajnana; so it is called the dark path or the Krishna marga. Those who discard the body and journey on during the Uttarayana move along the white path and reach the stage of liberation or Moksha, which is devoid of delusion, which is the seat and source of Brahmaananda, from which there is no return to this world of name and form, this arena of embodied beings. Those who leave the body during the Dakshinayana and move along the dark path, have to bear again this physical encasement called Deha, subject to birth and death."

"Uttarayana is not so much a period of time; it is a state of mind. Those who discard the body with the glory of self-knowledge move along the Uttarayana marga and those who die in ignorance of their Atmic reality move along the Pithryana, or Dakshinaya or the dark path."

"Of the Gunas, Sathwaguna is pure and effulgent; the Thamoguna is dark and so they are distinguished by the opposite colours of white and black. Again there are two Nadis, Ida and Pingala by name, subtle nerves; Ida to the left and Pingala to the right of the Sushumna. The Ida-naadimarga is the lunar path and the Pingala-naadimarga is the solar path. The Yogis proceed along the solar and the others along the lunar path. This is another of the unobserved mysteries."

"The end of everything that is born is death; Samyoga leads to Viyoga; construction must result in the destruction of that which is constructed. It is the law of nature that birth ends in death and death leads to birth. The stage which knows no coming and going is the stage when the universal Brahman is visualised, for since Brahman is all-pervasive, where is the other place from which the 'coming' can be effected and to which the 'going' can be performed?"

"There is no need to doubt whether such a stage is within the reach of all, whether all can achieve this victory. Nor is any special effort, or peculiar good fortune or a specially designed act necessary. It is enough if the mind is always fixed on Paramatma, if the Lord is meditated upon without break. That will cleanse the mind; the delusion clogging it will disappear. This by itself comprises Moksha, for what is Moksha but Moha-kshaya, the decline of delusion? A person who has achieved this Moha-kshaya will attain Brahmahva, the stage of Brahman, howsoever he might die. Such a person is called a 'Jnani'."

At this, Arjuna put in a query. He said, "Krishna! I do not quite understand the meaning of what you call Jnana. Is it the knowledge learnt through the ear from the teacher? Or is it the knowledge culled from the Sastras? Or is it the knowledge imparted by those rich in actual experience? Which among these liberates man from bondage?"

Krishna replied: "The types of knowledge you mentioned now are all useful at some stage or the other of one's spiritual development; but by none of them can you escape the cycle of

birth and death! That which releases you is known as Anubhavajnana, the knowledge that you yourself experience; that alone can help you to be free. The teacher can be of some help in the process; but he cannot show you your real self. You have to visualise it yourself; besides, you have to be free from vices like envy. Then only can you be called a Purna Jnani, one who has attained full Jnana. He who has faith in this Jnana, who is devoted in acquiring it, and who is full of yearning to earn it, only such a person can realise Me."

"He must be free from envy; besides, he must be earnest, steeped in Shraddha. Earnestness is essential even for the performance of the smallest act by man. Not man alone, but bird and beast, worm and virus, all have to be earnest to succeed. When you have no earnestness or Sraddha in the act, you cannot gather the fruit.

"Arjuna! I am the witness; through Me, this Prakriti, this conglomeration of the five elements called Prapancha, all these moveable and immoveable objects, are formed. Through Me as the cause, the Prapancha behaves in various ways. Fools who cannot understand Me as the highest principle and as the master of all the elements whose will they have to obey, take Me to be just a man. Some great men reverently meditate on Me as Brahmam; others worship Me under various names and in various forms; some then worship Me through Jnanayajna and Atmayajna."

"Whatever the name, whatever the form of worship, I am the recipient; for I am the goal of all. I am the only one; there is no other. I Myself become the worshipped, through My many names and forms. Not only this; I am the fruit of all actions, the bestower of the fruit, the basis. The prompter, the prompter of all. Why recount and repeat? I am the force behind the birth, existence and death of everything and of every life. I am the birthless, deathless cause."

"Realise Me, the primal cause; that is indeed Moksha. He is the Jivanmuktha (liberated even while alive) who attains that Moksha. Therefore, Arjuna, if one yearns to become a Jivanmuktha, to attain Moksha, he must accomplish some simple disciplines. He has to eradicate fully the attachment to the body."

Hearing this, Arjuna intercepted, "Krishna! Do you speak of this Sadhana of complete detachment as a simple discipline? Is it so easy to practice? Even accomplished ascetics find it difficult and you recommend it so glibly to people like me! You speak of it as if it were a very simple task; but it is a formidable endeavor. I feel you are putting me on trial with such suggestions. Can I ever attain that state? Can I win liberation, can I attain Moksha? I have no hope" he said and sat dispirited.

Krishna was watching him steadily losing courage. He went close to him and patted his back in a reassuring manner. He said, "Arjuna! There is no need to get perturbed and desperate just for this. No one will get faith as soon as one hears of it. One must delve into I with the help of reason; then it will be found that this discipline is not as hard as it is imagined to be. To become completely detached it is not necessary to grow matted hair, wear ochre robes and torture the body into skin and bone. It is enough if you do all acts as dedicated to the Lord, without any desire. This is the secret of liberation."

"Performing all activities in this manner is not difficult. Only, one should have steady faith and earnestness. Of course, these are essential for every type of activity and so, you can realise that they are indispensable for spiritual activity too."

"Whoever among devotees dedicates all acts to Me with no other thought, whoever meditates on Me, serves Me, worships Me, remembers Me, knows that I am always with him, ever providing for him in this world and the next. I bear the burden of his Yogakshema. Do you hear Me?" asked Krishna, patting Arjuna again on the back and imparting courage to his drooping heart.

This statement about the Lord guaranteeing the Yogakshema of the devotee has given rise to a great deal of misunderstanding. Even pundits, not to speak of others, have failed to grasp its real import. The commentators on the Geetha explain this declaration in manifold ways.

This most sacred sentence is as the navel to the Geetha-body. The navel of Vishnu was the place where Brahma took birth; this sloka is the navel or place of nativity for those who thirst for Brahmajnana. If this sloka is followed in practice, the entire Geetha can be understood.

There are a number of interesting stories current about this sloka. I shall give one example: A learned pundit was once giving discourses on the Geetha in the august presence of a Maharaja. One day the turn of this sloka came:

Ananyaaschinthayantho maam
Ye janaah paryupaasathe
Theshaam nithyaabhiyukthaanaam
Yogakshemam vahamyaham.

The pundit was explaining enthusiastically the many-sided implications of this sloka, but the Maharaja shook his head and said: "This meaning is not correct." He continued to dispute the correctness of every one of the explanations the pundit gave. The poor pundit had won meritorious distinctions at the court of many a Maharaja and was honoured by them all with pompous titles. He felt as if he was stabbed when the Maharaja in the presence of the entire band of courtiers condemned his explanation of this sloka a 'wrong'. He smarted under the insult; but plucking up courage, he again set upon his task, and marshalling all his scholarship, he plunged into an eloquent discourse on the multiple meaning of the words, "Yoga" and "Kshema." The Maharaja did not approve of even this; he ordered: "Find out the meaning of this sloka and having understood it well, come to me again tomorrow." With this, the Maharaja rose from his throne and went into the inner apartments.

The pundit lost even the few grains of courage left in him. He was weighed down by anxiety; he tottered under the insult; he reached home and, placing the copy of the Geetha aside, he dropped on his bed.

Surprised at this, the pundit's wife asked, "Tell me why you came home from the palace today in such grief? What exactly did happen?" She rained one anxious question after another so that the pundit was obliged to describe to her all that had happened, the insults heaped on his head, the command with which the Maharaja sent him home, etc. The wife listened calmly to the account of what had happened and after pondering deeply over the incident, she said, "Yes; it is true. What the Maharaja said is right. The explanation you gave for the sloka is not the correct one. How could the Maharaja approve it? The fault is yours." At this, the pundit rose in anger from the cot, like a cobra whose tail is trodden hard. "What do you know, you silly woman? Am I inferior in intelligence to you? Do you, who are engaged in the kitchen all the time, cooking and serving, claim to know more than I? Shut your mouth and quit my presence," he roared.

But the lady stood her ground. She replied, "Lord! Why do you fly into such a rage at a statement of mere truth? Repeat the sloka once again to yourself and ponder over its meaning. You will then arrive at the right answer yourself." Thus by her soft words the wife brought calm into the mind of her husband.

The pundit started analysing the meaning of each individual word in the sloka. Ananyaaschinthayantho maam, he began, deliberately and slowly, repeating aloud the various meanings. The wife intervened and said, "What use is it to learn and expound the

meanings of words? Tell me what your intention was when you approached this Maharaja. What was the purpose?" At this, the pundit got wild. "Should I not run this family, this home? How am I to meet the cost of food and drink, of clothes and things, for you and all the rest? It is for the sake of these that I went to him, of course; or else, what business have I with him?" he shouted.

The wife then replied. "If you had only understood what lord Krishna has declared in this sloka, the urge to go to this Maharaja would not have arisen! If He is worshipped without any other thought, if one but surrenders to Him, if at all times the mind is fixed on him, then the Lord has declared in this sloka that He would provide everything for the devotee. You have not done these three; you approach the Maharaja, believing that he would provide everything! That is where you have gone against the meaning of the verse. That is the reason why he did not accept your explanation."

Hearing this, that reputed scholar sat awhile, ruminating on her remarks. He realised his mistake. He did not proceed to the palace the next day. Instead, he got immersed in the worship of Krishna at home. When the king inquired why the pundit had not appeared, courtiers said that he was staying at home and had not started out. The king sent a messenger, but the pundit declined to move out. He said, "There is no need for me to go to any one; my Krishna will provide me with everything; He will bear my Yogakshema Himself. I suffered insult because I did not realise this so long, being blinded by eagerness to know the manifold meanings of mere words. Surrendering to Him, if I am ceaselessly engaged in worshipping Him, He will Himself provide me with all I need."

When the messenger took this message to the palace, the Maharaja proceeded to the dwelling of the pundit on foot; he fell at the feet of the pundit, saying "I thank you sincerely for explaining to me this day, out of your own experience, the meaning of the sloka which you expounded yesterday." Thus, the king taught the pundit that any propagation of spiritual matters which does not come out of the crucible of experience is mere glitter and show.

Even today, many learned men who go about discoursing on the Geetha and doing propaganda for it, do not observe its principles in practice; they are engaged in simply expounding to the world the valueless rind, the textual meaning, the sense of the words and nothing more. Trying to spread the Geetha, without actually practicing it, is tantamount to ruining the cause and insulting the sacred book. They extol the Geetha as the very breath of their life, as the crown of all scriptures, and as having emanated from the lips of the Lord Himself.

They show so much reverence for the book that their eyes overflow with tears at the very mention of its name; they place it on their heads; they press it on their eyes; they keep it in their shrines and offer Puja to it with great bursts of demonstrative devotion. All the respect, all the worship is only for the paper, the book!

If indeed they have reverence for the words of the Lord, the contents of the book, they would have striven to put them into practice, is it not? No; they do not strive, they have no iota of experience. If they have the experience, none of them would barter the spread of that experience for money. They would yearn only for grace.

Not even one in a million among the Geethapracharakas today, among those who talk about their mission of spreading the Geetha, has the yearning for the grace of the Lord. No; if they had that yearning, they would not have thought of income or of money.

Chapter XIX

Speakers who are out to spread the Geetha have multiplied nowadays and as a consequence, and a variety of interpretations, most of them far removed from the genuine

one, has emanated, clouding the true significance. Interpretations follow the nature and character of the exponent. Once an opinion is formed, he tries to buttress it with appropriate arguments and prove all others wrong. It is then repeated parrot-like on every occasion; no attempt is made to practice the Geetha and make it part of one's actual life. Such persons pretend to be great Geetha Pracharaks and go about heavy with the burden of credentials and titles. They ruin themselves by this deception and undermine the trust placed on the Geetha.

The words of God are, each one, for translation into actual life, not for scattering into the ears of men to reap fame. But the times have gone so awry, that they are today misused for acquiring publicity and praise! Those who listen to the expositions of these Pracharaks are also failing to question their bona fides; they do not care to examine whether the persons who extol the Geetha to the skies have tasted the sweetness of its teachings. Words and deeds are far apart; they exhort others but those who are exhorted find that the teachers do not themselves follow the lesson! No, not even one in a million.

There are some who boast that they have the entire Geetha on the tip of the tongue; that they can roll out, on the spot, any sloka from the Geetha which you want to hear, if only the chapter and number are given; or, they can quote chapter and number for any phrase or word you give. I am inclined to laugh when such scholarship is exhibited. Poor tongue, that it should carry so much on its tip, without any of it being absorbed in actual life! A gramophone record can repeat as well as they, and with equal benefit to itself. Practicing one verse certainly yields more benefit than learning all the verses by rote and retaining them in memory. Arjuna proved every word of Krishna true, by practicing it. His sincerity won him the Grace of Krishna.

It is a pity that even extremely learned pundits at the present time are unaware of the thrill of putting into practice a single word of the Geetha. What then are we to say of the unlearned, the ignorant? In short, even some very reputed exponents of the Geetha are playing false to its teaching, acting contrary to the message. To the song of the Lord, each one adds a fancy note of his own to demonstrate his special twist in scholarship, or his favorite predilection. Let us consider one example of this type. The 10th verse of the 6th chapter of the Geetha declares that "Parigraha" is a great sin.

Now those who accept the Gita as authority should act accordingly, avoiding Parigraha, is it not so? Parigraha means, "accepting" even for the upkeep of the body and the maintenance of Dharma! These Pracharaks however, do accept, 99 per cent of them! The condemnation of Parigraha applies to all forms; there are no modifying circumstances or exceptions. Yet, collections and contributions are asked for Geethayajnas, as 'offering' during Harathi, as expenses for the Geetha Pracharaka Sanghas, as Nazar or Kanuka for the Guru; tickets are sold for the lectures as tickets for entertainments (like the drama and cinema) are sold. People who do this have no faith in the words of Krishna; for had they the faith, they would not behave in such contrary ways. If they were convinced that it is wrong, they would not be tempted to act so. They explain the sloka and feel that their duty is done; they do not feel the need to follow the advice. This is the spirit of the times, for this is the age of hypocrisy. People who watch this type of Geetha Prachar lose faith in the Pracharak and later in the Geetha itself. The publicity dissolves into mere pomp and vanity.

The teachings of the Geetha do not get the respect that the book gets. Thousands of people, when they see the sacred books, Geetha, Ramayana, Bhagavatha, Bharatha, etc., bow their heads, press them to their eyes, place them on their heads, keep them on a special seat in the shrine and reverentially placing a few flowers on them, they sit with closed eyes and with teardrops rolling down their cheeks, fall prostrate before the books and rise very

much satisfied with themselves! All that reverence is for the stack of paper, not for the contents of the books, the subjects they deal with.

What the head must carry is not the weight of the paper, but the message contained thereon. Attach value not to the book, but to the subject; revere, not the volume, but the matter expounded therein. Install it not on the altar, but in the heart. For it is only then that the authority of the Gita will be honoured steadily, at all times. The mind will not be cleansed of egoism or like evils by all this outward reverence: learning by rote, offering worship in the shrine room, holding on the head, pressing on the eyes, etc. Let the message enter the heart; put it into practice and taste the joy that comes therefrom. That is the way of honoring the Gita.

The tastiest dish can never quell your hunger if you place it on the head or press it to your eye or fall prostrate before it. The Geetha too is on par with this. The Geetha is a tasty dish, full of the sweet ingredients of Bhakthi, Jnana, Vairagya. Eat it; drink it. One morsel is enough. The Karma and hungry man does not need all the grain that is harvested; a handful of rice suffices. The thirsty man need not drink the Godavari dry; a glass of water is enough.

He who has hunger for God need not consume the entire Gita; practicing even one sloka can quench it. A box of matches has many sticks; if you want to light a fire you need strike only one; you can nurture the little flame into a huge fire, with care and diligence. The entire stock of sticks need not be struck. There are 700 sticks in the Gita; each one is a stick from which you can light the flame of Jnana. Strike one on the stone of experience, that is enough.

The Gita has to be used thus for self-realisation; that is the holy task for which it is designed. It is a great wrong to misuse it; all attempts to use it for fame and fortune, for titles and display, are but symptoms of egoism; they are acts of sacrilege. The 'Gandha' must be extracted from this 'Grantha'; that is the test of scholarship; the fragrance (Gandha) is the essence of the book (Grantha). Do not, on the other hand, transform the Masthaka into a Pusthaka, the brain into a book.

See God in the stone; do not change God into stone. That is the vision, which is highly desirable. The stone must be visualised as divine, suffused with God; which it really is. This vision is the precious gift that God has given to the people of this land. Pearls do not float on the waves of the ocean; dive deep into the silent caverns at the bottom if you yearn for them. The people of this land have sought for God in this manner for ages.

The practice of Dharma is the body; the realisation of God is its heart; this is the truth that has urged the people here to march forward and save themselves. They are not slaves to outward polish, external embroidery, or material comfort. They search for the basic Atma with the inner eye and cultivate detachment. The people of Bharath, who have this grand nature, are however, attracted today by material progress and outward pomp! This is a tragedy much to be regretted.

Those who go about expounding the Gita with the object of earning money are thereby keeping God afar. They may give various justifications for their behaviour, no doubt; but none who has real faith in the Geetha or who is a real adherent of its teaching can accept their explanations.

The Gita is spoken in order to foster Dharma, not Dhanam; it serves to promote goodness, not "goodsness." Collecting money in the name of a temple for Krishna or for Rama, or a Mandir for the Gita, is another means of reducing faith in God; building a house for the Lord who is immanent and all pervading is absurd. The heart is the proper temple where Krishna or the Gita is to be installed. To put up an artificial structure that is certain to be

ravaged by time, for the eternal absolute, the indestructible Godhead is very improper. Of course, until a stage is reached, these may be necessary, but in that case, it is wiser to make the best use of the ancient temples that already exist. Building new ones and ruining the old ones is as foolish as killing the cow and donating footwear made out of its hide! The welfare of the world can be promoted by the renovation of old temples and not by the creation of new ones. The installation of God in ancient days was done according to strict Sastraic ritual and so the old temples are holier. The power radiating from them confers upon this land whatever little welfare it enjoys now.

The Rishis of the past suffered hardships, detached themselves from the world and even disintegrated their bodies in the search for the secrets of individual salvation and social uplift. They have handed down certain codes of conduct and rules of living, which are practicable and simple. Even these are now neglected or misunderstood; new codes and rules are imposed with the result that these precious ones have gone under.

When elders, Guru and Pundits accept and honour these newfangled modes of behaviour, how can Bharath continue to be Dharmakshetra, Yogakshetra and Thyagakshetra? This downfall in ideals explains why the land which verily was Annapurna, feeding all her children, has to wail today for food. The holy experience - Sivoham, I am Siva - was resounding from every mountain valley, every cave, every temple and each sacred riverbank; but now the cry is, Savoham, Savoham, I am dead!

The land has lost its ancient joy; it is infested with anxiety; it is the home of self-aggrandizement; it is pursuing empty pomp. To counteract these tendencies, the spread of spiritual knowledge by persons who have actually experienced the joy of Sadhana and success in and through it has become very necessary. Everyone from the simple unlettered man to the Paramahansa must recognise this need. All must cultivate faith in the Geetha and take it as the authentic word of the Lord.

The Lord has given the assurance: "Yogakshemam vahaamyaham," "I shall bear the burden of your welfare, here and hereafter." He has undertaken this task voluntarily. But for mortals and aspirants to benefit from this, they have to live as ordained; they have to adhere to the lines laid down. When they feel that they are not so helped, they have only to examine their own lives and discover how far they have kept up the commands of God regarding the regulation of life. They fail to examine this. They do not consider the past and future; they complain only about the grief of the moment, not knowing that it is caused by neglect in the past and ignorance of the future. This is the root of their suffering.

While considering this assurance, the condition precedent contained in the same sloka, "Ananyaaschinthayantho maam, ye janaah paryupaasathe" has to be remembered. "Yogakshemam vahaamyahm" is the crown of this condition, the final fruit. The assurance is the head; but no head can function independently of limbs. Holding fast to the head only, apart from neck and shoulders and the rest of the body, is like putting faith in the key in one's hand after the iron safe has been stolen! Of what use is the key, after the treasure is burgled?

The conditions for the fulfillment of that assurance are: Ananyachintha and Upaasana, Meditation on the Lord unhampered by any other thought and steady worship. If unbroken meditation is absent, when worship is not offered with unconditional surrender, what justification is there to complain that He is not bearing the burden?

You surrender to others: you praise and extol others; you are immersed in other thoughts. How then can He assume the burden? You serve others; and press the Lord for reward! How can this be Ananya chintha, undivided loyalty? If a man is the servant of the king he must serve him wholeheartedly; if he serves the king and loves his family, it cannot be termed unswerving loyalty. Serve whom you love, love whom you serve. That is the secret

of Sharanaagathi, surrender. Vyasa made a lovely garland, this sloka is the crest. It is this central jewel of that garland of gems.

The words "Yoga" and "Kshema" used by the Lord here mean: "Yoga" acquisition of something desirable; and "Kshema," the preservation of what is thus acquired. The discipline by which you can preserve it is: Ananya chintha, exclusive meditation on the Lord. That will cleanse the mind; it will make you a Bhakta. The Bhakta is recognised by these things; he talks of the Lord; he sings of the Lord; he sees only the Lord; he works and spends his leisure with the Lord.

Such persons have no need to perform Yajna or Yaga; they need not busy themselves with meritorious acts of charity; they need not go from one holy place to another. Why should they be sad if they miss these things or complain that the Lord did not give them the chance or the wherewithal for these? He does not insist on these or crave for these. Offer whatever arises in the mind, made pure by Sadhana; He gladly accepts all. You may engage yourselves in what are termed "good" deeds but if the mind is unclean, if the vessel is not 'tinned' with the thought of God, they are all polluted into poison. He is particular, the vessel should be clean.

Note how the handful of parched rice that Kuchela offered the Lord with a pure mind pleased Him. Read the experiences of Vidura and Droupadhi in the epics and the Puranas. What did they offer the Lord? Vidura gave a cup of gruel; Droupadhi had only a wee bit of leaf to offer. On the face of it, they are valueless, to fetch even half a Paisa as price. But, consider how much the Lord gave in return! He does not calculate the value of things, He calculates the feeling that prompted the act. So purify the feeling in order to win His grace.

Chapter XX

The Geetha clearly declares that only the Hrudaypushpa (heart-lotus), free from impurities, that grows in the Manasa-Sarovar, the pellucid waters of the mind, is worthy to be offered to God. That is the reason why Krishna told Arjuna, "My dear brother-in-law, whatever activity you are engaged in, whatever gift you give, whatever food you take, do it as a dedicated offering to Me; do everything in the dedicatory spirit as a tribute to God; for only such acts reach Me. I have no special preference for any one name; all names are Mine. I know neither friend nor foe. I am the unaffected witness. I reside with all who serve Me and derive joy from that service."

This raised some doubts in Arjuna's mind. He asked, "Krishna! You say that you do not make any distinction, that you have neither friend nor foe; how then does it happen that some are happy and others are unhappy, some are strong in body and mind, some are weak and sickly, some are poor and some rich? What is the reason behind all this? When you yourself are above any distinctions of such type, why can you not keep all in the same condition? Observing facts as they are, it is difficult to believe that you look upon all without any partiality."

Krishna laughed at this 'doubt' which worried Arjuna. "I give expression only to truth. I do not adjust My speech to merit your approval or disapproval; I am not elated when you approve, or depressed when you disapprove. I am the same in all. But all are not the same in Me. You have observed that during the cold months villagers sit around a fire at night; but only the warmth refreshes those who sit near the fire. Those squatting far away have also to put up with the darkness. If people stay afar and complain that they do not receive the warmth and that they have to suffer darkness, can you ascribe it to the partiality of fire? It is meaningless to argue from this that fire treats different people differently."

"The splendor of divine vision is akin to this - if you seek to earn it, you have to approach it and stay there. Everyone has equal right to do so and to feed the fire, so that it might

illumine and warm even more. Fire is impartial; in deriving its benefit and in making it grow into greater capacity, there are differences. I am splendor; I have no partiality at all. To experience Me and derive bliss from Me, all have equal chance, opportunity and authority. Distinctions and differences arise as a result of the faults of the Sadhakas. They are not blemishes in Me."

Did you notice the loving words of Krishna? The shower of His grace? How true are His words! Really, people do not understand the faults in themselves; they seek faults in others. If the Lord has faults, how can the world exist or survive? The Lord sees all as equal; His heart embraces all in love; that is the reason why the world has at least this much of peace and prosperity. The doctor may declare that the patient has no fever just to console the sick man; but the thermometer cannot lie. God knows and reacts to the inner feeling, not to the outer appearance; He can never go wrong, nor can He be deceived. The world considers only the outward appearance; it is guided by that alone. Wade in the river; then only can you know the depth of the water. Eat, if you must know the taste. When people pronounce judgments on the depth or the taste, without wading or tasting, how can their declarations be taken as true? If the Lord Himself was affected by partiality, how could He award the bliss of Sayujya to the cowherd maids of Brindavan? Would He have partaken of fruits partly eaten by Sabari? Could Janaka have become a Brahmajani? Could Nandanar have achieved the grand vision of the Lord? Could Prahlada and Vibhishana have approached the Lord? Would Hanuman have been accepted as the messenger of Rama? Could Valmiki have written the great epic, Ramayana? Do these indicate any partiality in the composition of the Lord? Or do they prove that He has no such trait? These are examples of the Lord's Prema. His uniform kindness to all.

"Manmanaa bhava madbhaktho, mad yaajee, maam namaskuru," this command of the Lord means just this; Keep your mind steadily on Me, be devoted sincerely to Me, prostrate before Me offering all your thoughts, words and deeds to Me, love Me steadfastly - He has commanded. He has thus indicated that what He most desires in you are a 'pure mind' and 'untarnished love.'

Immersed in Manavathwa (humanness), you cannot attain Madhavathwa (Madhava-ness). You have to attain Madhavathathwa to get Madhava-hood. To see darkness, you must have darkness only; to see light, you should have light. To understand intelligence you have to be intelligent. If you are constantly active about human things, how can you realise the glory of divinity? To become divine, you have to dwell in the memory of the divine, act divinely, behave divinely. The taste, the environment and the feeling - all must be coordinated for that one purpose. Then only can the principle be grasped.

It is on the basis of this truth that Krishna continued thus: "Arjuna! Jnanis are superior even to the Gods who are in their turn superior to men; but these Jnanis too are unable to grasp the full import of God. How then can ordinary men like you ever understand it?" At this sly dig, Arjuna bent his head in shame. He said, "Yes, I agree, Krishna, you are beyond the grasp of any one, however intelligent he may be. You are of endless manifoldness, I am convinced. You are the universal absolute, I know."

"I believe that you have created the entire universe and that you are fostering it and presiding over both the evolution and involution of the worlds, that you are the master of Srishti (creation), Sthithi (sustenance), and Laya (dissolution). You have told me this yourself. I am ever grateful for this and I am happy that I was considered worthy."

"But how, in what forms, are You immanent in the universe You have brought into being? I long to hear it from You and make myself worthier to be alive," said Arjuna. "And which among these various forms am I to meditate upon? Tell me, so that I can meditate likewise and save myself," he pleaded.

"A petty small question, that !" said Krishna, with a smile. "Perhaps, you felt that you can easily understand the answer, if given! Right. Since the question has been put, I shall melt a little and give the answer. Listen carefully. I am the inner Atma in the lotus heart of each and every being. So, if you believe and direct your life on the basis of the belief that the inner Atma in every being is My Paramatma, that is enough Dhyana for you. See that this belief is not shaken or overthrown. Stick to it steadily, practice that belief, and apply it in your deeds, words and thoughts. Then the experience of oneness, of your being Me and I being you, can be achieved."

"The five elements, earth, water, fire, wind and sky are also My forms. I am the activity in the sun, moon and stars. When the great destruction comes, I am the force of destruction and I am the force which constructs again. I am everything from the microscopic to the macroscopic; I am the past, the present and the future. I am the three regions and the three Gunas which have shaped man and nature. There is no object which is not I; no name which is not Mine. Blood taken from any part of the body is the same as from any other part; so too, the divine is everywhere the same."

Arjuna joined both his palms and with uplifted hands he asked, "Krishna? The whole of creation is your form, is it not? Knowledge, wealth, power, strength, energy, splendor - all these are expressions of Your glory, are they not? Well, will You not give me the sacred chance to fulfill my life's desire to experience You as all this creation, as Vishwaroopa, of the form of creation itself? I plead with you. I pray at Your feet."

Knowing the anguish of his heart, Krishna replied. "Arjuna! I shall certainly satisfy you. But your physical eyes cannot see that glory. The Viswarupa cannot be perceived by the limited vision which sees and grasps only this nature. Therefore, I shall confer on you the supernatural eye. Now, see!" He said and manifested Himself before him as creation and more. What great mercy! What superb experience!

While on this point, there is one subtle detail, which seekers have to note. The Vedas, Sastras and Puranas, besides many scholars and saints and others who have a right to speak about such matters, all describe God as Sarva-vyaapi and Sarva-bhoothaantharaatma, that is, as present everywhere and as the inner reality in every being. On the basis of this, some people argue, "If He is so present everywhere and in everything, why is He not seen by everyone? For all such, the reply is: how can the physical eye composed of the five elements see beyond the five?"

Nothing can illumine an object that does not reflect light; but a flame illumines itself and sheds light all around. God is self-luminous; He illumines all; He is beyond nature, which is but a manifestation of His glory. So He can be seen only by the eye of wisdom, an eye that can be won only by His grace. Hence, worship of God is an essential part of Sadhana; he who fails in seeing himself can never succeed in seeing others, in seeing anything outside him. Engage yourself in Sadhana that will secure the grace of God; through that grace, the Jnananethra, the eye of wisdom will be granted. He is easily reachable by the path of devotion. While experiencing the vision of God in the universe and God as the universe, Arjuna was shedding tears of joy. "Oh, almighty God! All the Gods, Brahma the creator, all the sages and saints, all the manifold beings and objects, moveable and immovable: Oh, I see every one of these. I see all... Oh, from Your terror-creating face, flames of splendor emerge and spread to farthest distances. How I wish I could know the meaning and purport of this formidable form," Arjuna exclaimed.

"Did you see, Arjuna? Have you known by this that I am the creator, sustainer and destroyer of all activity and of all beings and objects? Have you realised that you cannot save any one on this battlefield, nor can you kill any one? You have no power to kill nor have they the power to die by their own efforts. Living and dying are both directed by My

will. I bear the burden of the earth; I create the burden; I relieve it," said Krishna, fondly patting Arjuna on the back and speaking softly to assuage his ecstatic excitement.

This incident is a fine example to illustrate how God is bound by sincerity of devotion and how He bends to console and encourage His devotees. Just imagine! How could this Arjuna, who was so hesitating and nervous until he got ocular demonstration like an ordinary mortal, face and conquer mighty heroes and masters of all arts like Bhishma, Drona and Karna? They were conquered by His will.

Arjuna wiped the tears from his eyes; he folded his hands in prayer. "Oh Lord, I see the Viswarupa which I had never before seen or heard about, or even conceived. I realise that it is a factual truth. Those terrific flames of splendor are scorching me, my body is sizzling under the impact of that glory. Present Yourself before me, once again, with the sweet smiling form of Yours; I can no longer bear this vision, Father! Resume Your form, I cannot continue to look upon this," pleaded Arjuna.

His grace made Him agree. He said, "Arjuna! You have just seen this universal form of Mine, a vision which no height of Vedic scholarship or ritual asceticism or austerity can ever hope to win. This is achieved only by the Bhakta who is devoted to Me, with Ananya-bhakthi; devotion which does not admit of the least distraction. Such Bhaktas see only the Lord; whatever they do, they do as worship to the Lord. They have no other form before their eyes; no other thought in their minds; no other act for their hands. At all times and places, they see only My form, they utter only my name; they think only about Me; they feel only for Me or about Me; they are active only for My sake. It is such, oh Arjuna, that attain this vision. I too ask for only this: Ananya-bhakthi."

Arjuna asked with a smile and a little tremor of the lips, "Lord! I realise that You are pleased with undeviating single-pointed devotion. But are you pleased with the worship of You-with-form or You-without-form? Do you prefer Saakaara Upaasana or Niraakaara Upaasana? Which melts You more and contributes to success in getting Your blessings? Which is easier for the Sadhaka and more welcomed by You? Please tell me."

Krishna was happy that this question was asked. He said, "Arjuna! I do not make any distinction between the two. I am pleased in whatever way I am worshipped, provided the mind is saturated with Me and there is steady faith in every act, word and thought." Arjuna intercepted with the query, "Krishna! Are mere purity of heart and steady faith enough? Do not sex or status as fixed by caste or the stage of life form obstacles to success?" Krishna chided Arjuna and replied, "I am surprised that you should ask such questions after going through all this experience. Do you not realise that for those who have fixed their minds on God, who have reposed faith in Me, the personification of truth, eternal and pure, there will not be an iota of 'identification of the self with the body' (Dehabhranthi). If they have still the awareness of sex or caste or stage of life with all the attendant pride, humility, etc., it only reveals they have not surrendered their minds to God. For those who have rid themselves of attachment to the body, there will not be the distraction of caste, status, etc."

"But the Asrama dharma and the Varna dharma (the codes of moral conduct prescribed for the castes and for those in the four stages of life - student, householder, recluse and monk) do not hinder in any way the discipline of fixing the mind on God or of purifying the mind of evil or worshipping the Lord through all one's actions, words and thoughts. The distinctions of sex or caste or status or stage of life affect only those who live in the awareness of the body as reality and who act as if the world is absolute and eternal."

At this, Arjuna said, "Krishna! The contemplation of the formless characteristic-less Nirguna-niraakara is very difficult, is it not, for those with Deha-bhranthi or identification of the self with the body? The worship of the form-ful aspect of God which is within the

reach of the ordinary man, can thus yield purity of mind, purity of the inner instruments of consciousness? Please enlighten me."

Chapter XXI

The Lord replied: "Arjuna! People think that the worship of God with form and attributes is quite enough. This discipline will only be of some help; it will guide the person along the road only for a little while. For the Lord will not condescend to grant liberation for just this! For he who aims at liberation must first give up attachment to the body. Without that, the Atmic stage cannot be attained. The identification with the body is the expression of ignorance. The Atma must be recognised as distinct from the Prakriti."

"The craving for objective pleasure which is based on the unreal value attached to Prakriti has to be removed by Dhyanam and Thapas. When the craving is lost, the individual becomes like the dry nut, inside the coconut shell, which becomes loose and unattached both to the shell and the fibre outside it; it does not germinate or sprout again; it will remain for ever without being spoilt. The individual has no more birth and consequent death. That is to say, he will be liberated. Becoming like that dry nut inside the shell is the stage called Jivan-mukthi, of liberation while alive."

"The contemplation of the Godhead as 'above and beyond all attributes' is necessary for the attainment of Jivan-mukthi. If that is difficult and beyond your capacity, you can do another thing. Dedicate all worship, all adoration all Vedic rituals and other vows and vigils with all the fruits that may accrue, to Me. Take Me as the ultimate goal, as the final aim which transforms all acts into worship; fix your mind on Me, meditate on Me; I shall then shower My grace and take you across the ocean of change, of Samsara; I shall favour you with the goal you seek. Arjuna! It is not an easy task to fix your mind steadily on Me. Not every one can succeed in this. However long the practice, it is hard to keep the mind on Me, without deflecting it towards other things or ideas."

"You might therefore ask, 'Have we no other means?' My reply is, 'Yes; there is'. Even those who are eager to engage themselves in acts that please Me can get established in the Atmic consciousness and gain liberation. By means of prayer, recitation of the name, adoration of the glory, worship, etc., the sins of the past can be destroyed, the inner consciousness purified of impulses and urges; then the light of wisdom will dawn, leading to liberation from darkness."

There is great need for readers to ponder over this point, for it is through the weighing of pros and cons that valuable conclusions are reached. Consider, for example, the difference between Bhakthi as described in popular usage and Bhakthi as declared by the Lord. Popularly, Bhakthi is described as genuine devotion to the Lord. But it connotes much more than this.

Devotion to the Lord is only a form of discipline to reach the goal. The seeker should not stop with the acquisition of devotion; he should pay attention not so much to the devotion or love that he has towards the Lord, as to the love and grace that the Lord bestows on him! He must be always eager to find out which behaviour of his, what acts of his, will be most pleasing to the Lord, will fill the Lord with Aanandham. Inquire about that, yearn for that, carry out the things that will secure that objective that is real Bhakthi.

But people generally do not follow this ideal of Bhakthi, nor do they think about the implications of that ideal. They pay attention only to the love that the devotee has to the Lord; and in the process, they do not pay much attention to the Dharma and the Karma, which the Lord approves or appreciates! This is why Krishna says, "Karma which pleases the Lord is superior to the Karma which fulfils the yearning of the devotee." Whatever the devotee does or thinks or plans or observes, they should draw down the grace of God. They

should not be subject to his own will; they should be in accordance with His will. The devotee must test every thought and feeling on the touchstone of the Lord's declared preferences.

The Geetha declares that though a person may have deep devotion to the Lord, he cannot be called a Bhakta if he lives without regard to the commands of the Lord; that is, the Dharma laid down in the Sastras, which embody His orders, revealed to saints and seers. It is in this sense that Krishna uses the word Bhakthimaan, when He declares in the Geetha, "Bhakthimaan yah sa me priyah".

Again whatever act a Bhakta does, he should not feel that it is "mama Karma" or "My Karma"; Krishna says that it must be conceived as "Karma for the Lord, by the Lord", "Easwareeya Karma". Usually people feel that some acts are "theirs" and others are "the Lord's". This is not the mark of the true Bhakta. If all acts are felt as the Lord's, they will not be tarnished by egoism or the taint of "mine".

Bhakthi is to be identified as the discipline which removes egoism and the limitations of "I" and "mind". That is the reason why the Bhakta is defined by those who know as one who is A-vibhaktha with God, "non-separate" from God. At all times and under all conditions, one's acts and feelings must be God-centered. Instead, if you pray when overwhelmed by misery, worry and loss, "O God! Save me, rescue me from these", and when they pass, if once again you plunge into objective affairs enslaved by worldly aims, such conduct is reprehensible.

This is the teaching of the Geetha. You should not worship the Lord as an emergency measure. When the tongue is affected and does not relish food, people seek hot pickles; so too, when grief afflicts, people seek God! This kind of demonstrative devotion is rampant today, perhaps due to the influence of the fundamental hypocrisy of this age. Hollow devotion seeking to exhibit the strength of one's attachment to the Lord is unfortunately evident even among 'great' Sadhakas and persons who have renounced 'everything' for the sake of Him, whom they consider to be their 'All'! For many, Bhakthi is a 'Burkha', a veil, which is worn when on pilgrimage or when approaching elders or when visiting temples. Once they are back home, they discard the veil and with it, all ideas and feelings of reverence for the Lord.

These are but exhibitionist stunts. Bhakthi however has to be steady and full; it is the establishment of the mind in the Lord, under all situations, at all times. Many assert that all their acts are dedicated to Deva (God) but their attitude shows that they are dedicating them to Deha only. Instead of dedicating them to God, they dedicate them to themselves. They assert, "This I offer to Krishna", but really, it is an offering to their Puthra (son). "This is an offering to Rama", they declare; but their urge reveals that it is an offering to their "Raga", (sense of attachment, passion). How can these acts be dignified by the word dedication or offering?

Dedication inspires the body, mind and speech. If what you speak is not approved by the mind, if what is felt in the mind is not wholeheartedly put into action, then it becomes sheer hypocrisy. Be convinced that the doer, the deed and the doing are all He; be devoted to Him, rather than to riches, wife and children.

Where your mind attaches itself, there your Bhakthi also stays. Bhakthi is pure as the waters of the Ganga; Karma is as the water of the Yamuna. And, Jnana is like the Saraswathi, flowing secretly and mysteriously underground and sanctifying itself by merging with the other two. It is the commingling of these three that is called Triveni. It means the disappearance of the mind, the "becoming-one" of the three Gunas; it brings about the destruction of the ego.

However, there are many who are ignorant of these basic facts. They dip in water twice a day and go through the morning, noon and evening rituals, worship the household gods, draw lines of ash or sandal paste on their brows, arms and chest, put dots of saffron on their faces and wear strings of beads and rosaries round their necks and roam about from temple to temple or from one spiritual teacher to another. They circumambulate holy shrines. They attend many discourses, puranic recitals and readings of scriptures. The best we can say about such persons is that they are engaged in good activities; we cannot say they are Bhaktas.

Bhakthi has no relationship with dress and speech. On the basis of mere raiment and religiosity of expression, we cannot call a person "devotee of the Lord". Bhakthi is a matter of the inner consciousness, of feeling rather than external behaviour or conduct. Where there is smoke, you can infer there must be fire. But there are some types of fire, which do not emit smoke, though there is no smoke, which does not originate from fire. There is a possibility that acts will be done without feeling; but you cannot say that all feeling must be expressed through outer show. Even without pomp and outer show, it is possible to have sincere feeling. The pure feeling is positively harmful to progress if one aspires at all for progress!

The question that Arjuna asked drew this further answer: Of course, there are two different types of Bhaktas: the Saguna Bhakta and the Nirguna Bhakta, the votary of the formful one and the votary of the formless. Among the devotees, the Aartha (distressed), the Artha-arthi (the poor) and the Jijnaasu (the inquirer) are all eager about the nameful and the formful aspects of Godhead. Just as for every auspicious act the right foot is placed first, the right foot of Nirguna-Bhakthi must be used for the attainment of liberation. That is the "all-auspicious." That is to say, the Sadhana of the formless Godhead alone gives illumination. Both aspects have value and are indispensable. How long can any one have one foot inside and another outside? Even if that were possible, of what avail is it? So Saguna Bhakthi has to be adopted as Sadhana and Nirguna Bhakthi as the goal to be reached.

You can either see the whole universe as God, the whole Viswa as Visweswara, or you can see Viswa and Visweswara as separate and distinct. But both are the same. You may see the cloth as yarn or you may see yarn and cloth as separate entities. But, whether you realise it or not, yarn is cloth; cloth is yarn.

To see yarn and cloth as distinct is the Saguna Upasana, the worship of God with attributes. To see yarn as included in the cloth and the cloth as a collection of yarn and the two as identical is to worship the Nirguna aspect.

This Bhakthi is not something that can be imported from somewhere; it is not something that is supplied by someone. It does not grow from the ground or fall from the skies. It wells up from oneself, it is selfless attachment to the Lord. The attachment, the love that is inherent in man, should not flow wildly in diverse channels; it should flow uninterruptedly in the direction of God; then it becomes Bhakthi. This love is in every living being; birds and beasts, insects and worms - all have love, inspiring them, filling them, to the extent that is appropriate to each. In short, life is love; love is life.

Each member of all living species has many-sided love towards offspring, parents, comforts and guards, its food and drink, its joys and plays. Each of these types of love or attachment has a distinct name suited to the objects on which it is fixed. It is called affection when directed towards offspring; it is named infatuation when it is directed towards persons who are less fortunate; comradeship when flowing towards equals; attachment when extended to goods or places; it becomes fascination in some cases, friendship in others. When it is directed towards elders and teachers and parents, it becomes reverence, humility, etc.

But Bhakthi is a word that is used only with reference to love as directed to the Lord. When this love is broken up into many streams flowing in many directions and towards many points, it causes only grief, for it gets fixed on mortal things of the moment.

Instead, allow the love to flow single-pointedly to the ocean of the Lord's grace: this is the Sadhana called Bhakthi. Why waste life in the salty marsh of Samsara? Strive rather to reach the vast ocean of grace. There you realise yourself; you attain Sath-chith-anandam. Great is that consummation; how filled with bliss!

The Gopikas strove and succeeded in this Sadhana. Every moment, under every condition, every thought, word and deed of the Gopikas was dedicated to the lotus feet of Sri Krishna. That is why the Gopikas are called "Yogis". When Lord Krishna Himself addresses the Gopis as Yogis, you can gauge the height of spiritual Sadhana they had achieved.

Chapter XXII

Arjuna questioned further, on the basis of Krishna's answers. "You described the characteristics of the votary of the Saguna aspect of Godhead. You said that persons with such characteristics are Yogis. I am indeed happy that I came to know all this. But just as the Saguna votaries have characteristics, the votaries of the attribute-less Godhead, the Nirguna aspect, they too must have characteristics by which they can be recognised, is it not? Please tell me about them; I would like to know."

At this, Nandakumara of lovely form replied, "Arjuna! The votaries of the Nirguna aspect must acquire full control of their senses. Next, they must be unaffected by circumstances. Third, they must be of service to others in distress. Such will be the nature of the Upasakas of Akshara, the Imperishable."

Readers might therefore infer that the characteristics of the votaries of the Saguna and the Nirguna or Akshara aspects of Godhead are all identical. Arjuna was overjoyed at Krishna's reply. He exclaimed, "I have now clearly understood this point. But I want you to tell me how I ought to proceed, how I must act to win the Lord's grace", and fell at the feet of Krishna. Narayana lifted Nara (Arjuna) and said this to him, "Arjuna! You have no need now for acquiring the characteristics of either of these. They are not within easy reach. I shall tell you of a path that is easier than these two. That path will surely confer on you My grace.

"This is that path: Establish your mind and intelligence in Me. If you cannot accomplish this and find it difficult, give up your egoism and carry on activities that are moral and holy. If even this is too difficult, give up attachment to the consequences of all your acts; offer them to Me as Krishna-arpanam. Offering your acts to Me should not be a mere vocal exercise. Take care that you do so by word, by deed and by thoughts, Manovaak-karma, as they say."

"Do you feel that even this is beyond you? Then you will be made aware of the aftermath." After saying this much, Krishna sat silent for a while.

Take note of this. The aspirant for grace must have before his mind the act and not its consequence, beneficial or otherwise. That is the reason why Gopala said that Jnana is superior to Abhyasa, Dhyana is superior to Jnana, and the giving up of attachment to the consequences of your acts is superior to Dhyana. Such non-attachment, Krishna said, will confer Shanthi.

"Bhakthi and Dwesha are as fire and water; devotion and hate cannot dwell together. I love those who feel no difference between grief and joy, affection and dislike, good and bad. If hate, in whatever form, in howsoever slight a quantity, resides in the heart, that person cannot be a Bhakta. The Bhakta must be convinced that all this is Vaasudeva, 'Vaasudeva

sarvam-idam'. That is to say, one's own Atma is everywhere in everything; this truth must be realised, acted upon and experienced. Hating another is hating oneself; scorning is but scorning oneself; finding fault with another is finding fault with oneself", Krishna continued.

Readers might be troubled by a doubt on this point. Can the mere absence of hatred or contempt of another endow one with the full consciousness of the truth of "Vasudevasarvamidam"? No; the mere absence of hate etc. cannot secure the "dweller within", and the Ananda of recognising Him. That will not win the grace of the Lord.

The task of the ryot who cultivates the crop is a good example of this; if you pay attention to this, the truth will be known and doubts will vanish. Before sowing the seed on a plot of land, the ryot removes all the wild growth, the bush, the scrub, the other small growths. But that is not enough for bringing the harvest home. The plot has to be ploughed and partitioned, watered and made ready for the sowing; and then the sprouts have to be fostered and guarded into maturity until the crop ripens and can be collected and garnered in the granary.

Similarly, the thorny bushes of affection, hate, envy, pride etc. have to be uprooted from the region of the heart, and the field has to be ploughed by means of "good deeds". Then the saplings of Ananda have to be planted therein; the growing crop has to be fostered attentively by discipline and Shraddha; at last, as a result of all this effort, the harvest of Ananda will fill one's granary.

The mere removal of hate from the heart will not ensure Ananda. Love too should be cultivated. That is to say, uproot hate and plant love. If the absence of hate ensures Bhakthi, hill and anthill, tree and twig, mud and mountain - what do these hate? They have no dislikes. But for that reason, do we ascribe Bhakti to them all? We do not, for that would be absurd. The Bhakta must first be free from hate and full of love. Besides, his love must express itself as service of the distressed and the grieving, declared Gopala.

Arjuna was listening to all this with great attention. Then he asked, "Krishna! Are these three enough? Or are there any more to be followed and practiced? Please tell me." Krishna replied, "The mere planting of the saplings is not enough; the field has to be watered and manured. The removal of hate and the planting of love have achieved only the first stage. As soon as the sprouts have appeared, the two processes of Nirmamakara (absence of possessiveness) and Nirahamkara (absence of ego) have to be followed. They are like watering and manuring. These two are essential for the successful crop of Ananda.

"That is to say, you will have to rid yourself of the feelings of 'mine' and 'I'. They are not distinct; the first springs from the second and both arise from Ajnana, the ignorance of the fundamental truth. For, once rid of Ajnana, the sense of 'I' and 'mine' will not give trouble; they have no place in him. Hence, it is laid down that the aspirant for Bhakthi must possess Sathatham Samthushti, contentment always. What does this mean? It implies contentment under all conditions, good health or illness, loss or profit, grief or joy. Whether one's wish is fulfilled or not, the mind should not lose equanimity and poise."

"The mind loses balance if the slightest obstacle arises in the path it frames for itself. It is so fickle. Why, if the cup of coffee is not forthcoming in time, if you miss seeing two films in one week, if you could not squat before the radio both in the morning and in the evening for long hours; if many such trifles are denied or disturbed, you feel overshadowed by discontent. Samthushti is the state of mind which is unaffected by the achievement or non-achievement of any wish, the happening or non-happening of any event; the mind must be undisturbed, without excitement or disappointment."

Arjuna then asked, "O Lord, you often mention Prakriti and Purusha. I am eager to know what exactly is Prakriti, what are its characteristics, what exactly is its nature?" Krishna replied to this question in a simple easily-understandable manner. "Arjuna! Prakriti has another name too. It is called Kshetra also. Prakriti means this Prapancha, this composite of the five elements. There are two entities in this Prapancha or Prakriti or nature: one is inert and the other active (the Jada and the Chaitanya); that is to say, one is the seen, the other is the see-er; the knower is the Aham, the known is the Idam, the 'I' and the 'this'."

"Prakriti or nature is the sum of attributes or characteristics. The Gunas, Tamas (delusion), Rajas (grief) and Satwa (joy) are the attributes of Prakriti. Nature is but the permutation and combination of these Gunas. So also are the attributes of doer and enjoyer, Karthrthwa and Bhokthrthwa."

Arjuna wished to continue his questions. So Krishna said, "My dear brother-in-law! You are eager to question again?" Seizing the chance, Arjuna put in his query. "Krishna! You have explained the Prakriti-thathwa or nature principle. Now, I wish very much to know what is meant by Purusha, what are Its characteristics, what is Its nature."

"Arjuna!", Krishna said, "Whether you call it Purusha or Kshethrajna or Jneya, it is the same. Kshethrajna is the knower of the Kshethra or field. Jneya is that which is known. Purusha is the Jiva and Prakriti is the Deha or the body. The embodied is the Purusha, the person who knows the body. The Deha or body has also a number of names, each having a significant meaning. It is Sarira, because it wastes away; Deha, because it is liable to be burnt. The Jiva is that which activates the body and becomes aware of its limitations."

Arjuna was pestered by doubt at this answer and so he started another series of questions. "Krishna, how did this wasting and destructible body come to be called Kshethra or field?" Arjuna was indeed a clever listener. Krishna answered him with a great deal of patience.

Krishna replied: "It is through this body that merit can be acquired by engaging in various beneficent activities; the body is the vehicle for earning Jnana or the universal vision; it is the body that leads you on to liberation itself. It is the repository of such great achievements and so it is called Kshethra. Kshethra means an armour, for it protects and guards the Jivi from harm. Another meaning is 'field', a meaning that is full of significance. Whatever seeds are sown or saplings planted in the field, the harvest depends on their nature and quality. The body is the field, the Jivi is the Kshethrapalaka, the protector of the field and the crop. Sowing the seeds of meritorious deeds, one reaps joy and happiness. Sowing the seeds of sin, one reaps the harvest of grief and worry. Sowing the seeds of Jnana, one garners the harvest of Moksha or liberation from the bondage of birth and death.

"Just as the ryot knows the nature and characteristics of the field, the Kshethrajna or the Jivi must know the nature and qualities of his body. The only difference between Kshethra and Kshethra-jna is the syllable 'jna'. It means Jnana, he who knows, the knower. So he who knows the field or the body, its excellences and deficiencies, he is the Kshethrajna. That which has no such knowledge, the inert material thing that is the Kshethra.

"Krishna!", Arjuna asked, "of what benefit is it to know these two entities: Kshethra and Kshethrajna?" Krishna laughed. He said, "What a foolish question to ask? Inquiring and knowing about the nature of the Kshethrajna destroy one's grief. Knowing about the nature of the Kshethrajna, Ananda or bliss is acquired. This Ananda is also designated as Moksha."

Krishna then relapsed into silence. But Arjuna, who is the representative of all mankind on the battlefield between the higher and the lower impulses, prodded Him further. "Krishna!

Who are those who experience both these, the destruction of grief and the attainment of bliss? Is it the Jivi or the Deha? Please elucidate."

Krishna replied, "Arjuna! The Kshethra or body is associated with the Gunas or attributes, Tamas, Rajas and Satwa; so, the Jivi when in contact with it and when it identifies itself with the body, imagines that it is experiencing grief and joy which are the consequences of those Gunas. The Purusha or the Kshethrajna has no real relationship with the Gunas; he is just a witness. When iron is in contact with fire, then it has the power of scalding; but it is not iron that scalds, it is the fire. Through contact with Prakriti, Purusha appears as the doer and experiencer."

"Therefore, it is not proper to infer that the Jivi is having grief and joy by the very fact of its occupying the body which is the vehicle of the Gunas. The earth sustains and helps the seed to grow into a tree or to decline. It is the Guna of the earth that causes these two. So also, the seed of Jeevathathwam grows and blossoms into Brahmathathwam in the body, which is the earth-principle. Just as manure and water are essential for the tree to bloom and bear fruit, Sathyam, Saantham, Samam and Damam are essential for the blossoming of the spirit into Atmic wisdom. The attributes or Gunas of Prakriti make it assume multifarious forms."

"Think of this one point, then the whole problem will become clear. Man is happy at one time, miserable at another; he is afraid one moment and courageous at another. Why? Because he is shaped so by the Gunas. Do you say no? Then how can you explain these changes? They alone can transform man from one place to another like this."

"If the three Gunas, Satwa, Rajas and Tamas are equally balanced, then there will be no change in him. This never happens; it is always out of balance. When one is dominant and the others are dormant, then Prakriti makes him assume many roles. The three Gunas represent the three aspects of human nature. Rajo guna is the attachment that brings about desires and creates eagerness to enjoy the objective world that is 'seen'; it breeds desire for physical and heavenly pleasure. Thamo guna cannot grasp the reality; so it misunderstands easily and takes the false to be the true. It lands persons into negligence and error. It binds, instead of releasing. Sathwaguna controls the cause of grief and sorrow; encourages people to follow the path of real joy and happiness. Therefore, being single-pointed and unaffected by any of these three is the basis for purity and steadfastness."

Have the glass chimney of the lamp clean; its light will shine bright. Have a glass that is multi-coloured; its light will be dimmed. On the other hand, if the lamp is kept inside a mud pot, the darkness will continue as it was. The lamp is the same but the container affects its expression. Sathwaguna is the lamp that shines clear through the white glass chimney; Rajo guna is the many-coloured glass chimney that makes the light dim and poor; and Thamo guna is the mud pot inside which the lamp is totally ineffective.

Sathwaguna is Atma jnana; Rajo guna is sullied to some extent, as smoke sullies the chimney and dims the light, and it also agitates the flame of the lamp so that it is not straight and steady; Thamo guna is the suppression of the light or Jnana that is the very nature of man.

Chapter XXIII

The three Gunas, Satwa, Rajas and Tamas, undergo various permutations and combinations and modifications and become manifested as all this creation, this universe, this Prakriti. Therefore, this Prakriti is subject to changes; it is not fixed, true. But the Atma is Chaitanya, which is Thejorupam, sheer effulgence; and so it is not subject to blemishes or modifications. The body is Prakriti; Buddhi and Manas are also Prakriti; for

this reason, they too differ according to the degree of excess or deficiency of one or other of the Gunas.

Sathwaguna is steady, pure, unselfish, light; so those who have this characteristic will have no wish or want; they will be fit for the knowledge of Atma. Those with Rajo guna will be engaged in acts tarnished with a tinge of ego. They may have the urge to do service to others, but that urge will drive them on to win fame and take pride in their achievements. They will yearn for their own good, along with the good of others. Those who are endowed with Thamo guna are overcome by the darkness of ignorance and so they grope about, not knowing what is right and what is wrong.

Any one of these three Gunas makes the person unfit for the realisation of the highest reality, which liberates the individual and merges him in the universal. Since the person is embedded in Prakriti, he fondly believes himself to be experiencing the Gunas, which form Prakriti. But this is an illusion. To destroy this illusion, inquiry into the nature and characteristics of the Kshetra or Prakriti has become necessary. For the beginner, the Sadhaka, inquiry into knowledge and the known are essential; but the Jnani has to pay more attention to these Gunas. The known is the reality, the experience of the divine bliss of all.

Arjuna listened attentively to all this and at the end he asked, "O Lord! What are the qualities that a Jnani should possess?" Krishna replied, "Partha! He must have the twenty virtues in ample measure. You might ask what they are. I shall tell you about them; listen. But do not conclude that the goal can be reached when you have them all. The goal is immortality, Amrithathwam. That can be reached only by Brahmaakshathkaara, experiencing Brahmam, as Sarvam Khalvidam Brahmam. When knowledge is full, the knower becomes the known."

"For this consummation, one has to be purified by virtues. Then the known can be experienced and realisation reached. I shall, therefore, first tell you about this. Virtue first, then victory. What a splendid path. To seek Brahmam without first ensuring a moral and virtuous life is like desiring a flame without lamp or wick or oil! Acquire all these three, then you light it and get light. So it is with the light of Brahmajnana, or realisation of Brahmam."

There is one point here, which Sadhakas have to note carefully. The lamp, the wick and the oil must be proportionate. If the wick is too big for the lamp or too small, if the oil is too much or too little for the wick, if the lamp is too small or too huge for the oil or the wick, the flame will not burn brightly and give light. Clear steady light can be secured only when all three are in proper proportion. The three Gunas too must be in equilibrium to yield maximum result, the result of liberation. The three Gunas are bonds; man is bound by them, like a cow whose forelegs are tied together, whose hind legs too are bound and whose neck and horns are bound by a third bond. The threefold Gunas are such threefold bonds. How can the poor beast move freely when it is bound so? The Sathwaguna is a golden rope, the Rajo guna a copper rope and the Thamo guna, an iron rope; all three bind effectively in spite of the difference in the cost of material. As bonds, all three are obstacles to freedom of movement.

Arjuna asked, "O Lord! You said that twenty virtues are essential for becoming entitled to Jnana. Which are they? Please describe them to me in some detail." Krishna said, "Arjuna! I am delighted at your earnestness. Listen."

"The first virtue is A-maanithwam, pridelessness, humility. So long as you have Maanam or pride, you cannot earn Jnanam. Man's behaviour should be like the behaviour of water; whatever colour you pour into water, it absorbs it and it never asserts its own colour. It is humble without conceit. But the behaviour of man is quite contrary. When he does the

smallest service or donates the slightest amount, he is anxious that people should know about it. For this, he himself goes about prattling or arranges to get it published. The absence of such pride and ambition is what is recommended as A-maanithwam."

"Now for the second: A-dambhithwam, vanity-less-ness. This is a very great virtue in man. It means the absence of pretence, pompousness, boasting that one is great when one is not, claiming that one has power when one has nothing, that one has authority when one has no such title." Here readers will note one point. The world today is full of this false pretence, this hypocrisy. Whichever field of activity you watch, whomsoever you observe, you discover this dire defect. The governments of nations are in the hands of people who are pretenders to power, authority and capacity. Those who have no knowledge claim to know everything. Those who have no one even to help them at home, claim that they have a huge following.

In every activity, this hypocrisy is the very first step. This ruins man in every field, like a pest that destroys the crop. If this is wiped off, the world will be saved from disaster. Pretence will make you lose this world and the next. It is harmful at all times and places. It does not suit ordinary men; how can it then be beneficial to the Sadhaka?

"The third virtue is Ahimsa. This also is an important virtue. Himsa (violence) is not simply physical; it means even more: the mental pain that is inflicted, the anxiety and worry that are caused to others by your actions and words. If you desist from causing physical pain to others, you cannot claim to have A-himsa. Your activities must not cause pain, must be unselfish; your thoughts, words and deeds must all be free from any motive to cause such pain."

"Then we have Kshama as the fourth. This is called Kshanthi, as well as Sahana. It means that you should consider as unreal, the evil that others do unto you, the loss that you suffer through them, the hatred they evince towards you. Treat these as you treat a mirage. That is to say, you must develop that degree of patience or fortitude. It is not the helpless putting up with the evil that others do because you are powerless to retaliate. It is the expression of the peace that reigns in the heart, this outer behaviour or Kshanthi. True, many people put up with injury that others inflict because they lack physical, economic or popular support; their suffering cannot be honoured as real Kshama."

"Next, let us consider the fifth; Rjuthwam, straightforwardness, integrity, sincerity. It means the harmony of action, speech and thought; this applies to secular and spiritual activity. This is a facet of the fourth virtue, A-dambhithwam."

"The sixth is Acharyopasana: the reverential service rendered to the spiritual teacher. This will promote affection for the pupil and so he will benefit a great deal. But the Guru who has no goal will only mislead the disciple into perdition. The Guru must shower grace on the disciple as freely and as spontaneously as the mother cow feeds the young calf with milk. The teaching of the Guru is the source and sustenance for attaining God and acquiring liberation."

"The seventh virtue is Soucham, or cleanliness - not merely outer cleanliness but inner cleanliness. And what is inner cleanliness? The absence of affection and hatred, of desire and discontent, lust and anger; and the presence of Daivi (good i.e., godly) qualities. Water cleans the body, truth cleans the mind; knowledge cleans the reasoning faculty; the individual is cleaned by penance and discipline."

"The eighth virtue is called Sthairyam: steadfastness, fixity of faith, the absence of fickleness or waywardness. The Sadhaka must hold fast to what he has once fixed his faith upon as conducive to his spiritual progress. He should not flit from one ideal to another,

changing the goal from day to day. This is also referred to as Deeksha. Fickleness is the product of weakness, a weakness that has to be scrupulously avoided."

"The ninth in the list is Indriyanigraha: the control of the senses. Be convinced that the senses have to subserve your best interests, not that you should subserve the interests of the senses. Do not be the slave of the senses; rather make them your slaves."

"Next, the tenth virtue, Vairagya: detachment, renunciation, loss of appetite for sound, touch, form, taste, smell etc. The senses run after these, for they titillate them and give them temporary joy. But the senses are not interested in Dharma-aritha-kama-moksha of the sublime type. The Atma can be discovered only through the pursuit of the sublime."

"The eleventh virtue is Anahamkara, absence of egoism. Egoism is the breeding ground of all vices and faults. The egocentric individual pays no regard to right and wrong, good and bad, godly or wicked; he does not care for them, nor does he know about them. He is completely ignorant of Dharma and morals. He will not conform to justice. To be devoid of this poisonous quality is to be endowed with Anahamkaram. Egoism is a foe in the guise of a friend."

"The next virtue is called Janma-mrthyu-jaraa-vyaadhi-dukha-doshaanudarsanam, which means only this: the awareness of the inevitable cycle of birth and death, of senility and disease, of grief and evil and other signs of the temporariness of this created world, and life in it. Though people see these things happening to them as well as others, they do not investigate the reasons for these and the methods of escaping from them. That is the greatest mystery, the wonder."

"If only you go to the root of the problem, you will realise that whatever else you may escape, you cannot escape death. What man conceives as happiness now is, in reality, only misery in the guise of happiness. So understand the truth of these things, reflect upon the flaws in the reasoning which delude you. Then, as a result, detachment is strengthened and through that, you attain Jnana. Therefore, O Arjuna! Liberate yourself from Janma (birth), Mrthyu (death), Jaraa (senility), Vyadhi (illness) and Dukha (grief)." Thus spoke Krishna exhorting Arjuna, with a great deal of affection.

Then He spoke of Asakthi, or Anaasakthi: the withdrawal of desire from objects, the absence of yearning. The greed to possess things that you see is caused by egoism. "I must have this," "I must be the proud owner of this valuable thing," this is how egoism prompts one. It is a strong cord that binds you to objects. Withdraw the mind and treat all as manifestations of the Lord's glory. Love all things as expressions of His glory, but do not delude yourself into the belief that possessing them will make you happy. That is an illusion. Do not dedicate your life for their sake; use them for your needs, as and when necessary, that is all. That kind of impulse activating you will be a great handicap in your progress towards liberation. Whatever you may acquire as property will have to be given up some day. You cannot take with you on that last journey even a blade of grass or a pinch of dust. Keep this fact ever before the mind's eye and then you can realise the reality.

Before one's birth, one has no relationship with this world and its material objects. After death, they and all kith and kin disappear. This sojourn is just a game played in the interval. Getting fascinated with this three-day-fair is foolish indeed. Desire tarnishes the mind and makes man unfit for higher pursuits. The Sadhakas who seek liberation and realisation must rid themselves of desire, for, like grease, it sticks and is difficult to remove once it is contacted.

After this, attention has to be paid also to another virtue, Samathwasthithi: the state of equanimity, of undisturbed calm during joy and grief, prosperity and adversity, happiness and misery. This is the fifteenth virtue of a Jnani. Being elevated or depressed by success

and defeat, profit and loss, honour and dishonour, is an activity that is futile. Accept all equally as from the grace of God, His Prasada. As you wear shoes to tread over thorny places, or hold an umbrella to escape getting wet in rain, or sleep inside a mosquito curtain to escape the stings of insects; so too, arm yourself with an unshaken mind that is confident of the Lord's grace and bear with equanimity praise or blame, defeat or victory, pleasure or pain. To live bravely through life, this Sama-chiththathwam is declared essential.

Next is Bhakthi without any other thought or feeling, Ananya-bhakthi. When grief overtakes you, you run to God. When Sankata overpowers, you take refuge in the Lord of Venkata. When joy is restored, you throw Him overboard. When you are down with fever and your taste is ruined and your tongue is bitter, you crave for some hot pickle; but when the fever subsides, you are normal again, you do not relish the same pickle. Bhakthi is not a temporary slave. It is the unbroken contemplation of God without any other interposing thought or feeling.

Whatever the activity, or recreation or talk, it must be saturated with the love of God. That is Ananyabhakthi. Thereafter comes Ekanthavasam, dwelling in solitude. One must be fond of being alone. This does not mean keeping the body in some solitary place, far from the haunts of men. There must be solitude and silence in the mind; all its occupants must be forced or persuaded to quit. The mind should be Nir-vishaya, contentless, turned away from the objective world.

The eighteenth virtue which helps to promote Jnana is mentioned as absence of interest in the company of men; that is to say, absence of the desire to mix with people engrossed in affairs that concern the objective world. One can attain equanimity even in the midst of wild animals; but it is difficult to win it while among worldly-minded men. Sadhana will be affected by the company one keeps. Good men keep you good; bad men drag you away into badness.

Of course, it is hard to find out who are good and who are bad and then settle among the good. So, it is advisable to avoid people and concentrate on Sadhana. The human mind is like iron; if it falls in mud, it rusts and disintegrates; if it falls into fire, it loses dross and becomes pure. Therefore, if a man joins the company of Jnanis, it is better than being in solitude. Note how Narada, who was the son of a housemaid, became a Rishi because he fell in the company of good men; Rathnakara who was a cruel hunter got the company of the seven Rishis and so he was transformed into the first among poets, the Adikavi. Evil company is highly detrimental. A red hot iron ball is capable of causing more damage than a flame of fire; a sinful man is more to be avoided than sin itself. Sadhakas have to be vigilant about the company they keep.

The nineteenth virtue is the "awareness of the distinction between Atma and Anatma." Fix your consciousness always on the Atmic reality and discard the body and the senses as unreal and impermanent. Atma is the eternal; so establish yourself only in that and not in the transient non-Atmic illusions or objects. Life is a struggle to achieve victory over the illusion which haunts: "I am the eternal Atma in you and in all. So fix the mind on Me and engage yourself in the struggle, confident of victory."

The twentieth and the last qualification one has to earn is "Thathwajnanadarsanam", the vision of the true nature of "Thath" (that), the universal principle of which the particular is but a shadow. It means that the Sadhaka should have a keen desire to visualise the universal.

Of the above-mentioned twenty, if honest efforts are made to earn even two or three, the rest will come naturally to the seeker. No special effort is needed to earn them. As progress is made on the path, one acquires not only the twenty, but even a larger number of virtues.

The twenty are mentioned here because they are the outstanding ones, that is all. Sadhana, based on these virtues, takes one easily to the goal. That is why Krishna emphasised these.

Equipped with these, one can realise the self; there need be no doubt on that for they lead to the knowledge that the body, the senses, the intelligence, the inner consciousness - all are affiliated to the Prakriti aspect. And He who is distinct from all this is the Purusha. Purusha is He who is aware of the Kshethra and the Kshethrajna. When one is able to distinguish between Purusha and Prakriti or which is the same thing, between Kshethra and Kshethrajna, he becomes the witness and is free from all touch of want or wish.

Chapter XXIV

The awareness of one being only the witness of everything is the secret of self-realisation. Self-realisation is either the knowledge that "I am the truth of Me" or "I have known Myself" or "All are one Atma," or "I have experienced that the individual and the universal are not distinct". This is what every person has to discover for himself; mere asceticism without this is sheer waste of time and energy. Man is not a mere animal. He has in him the spark of the divine and he should not allow it to be extinguished.

Why, even when the senses operate, they are prompted by the presence of Atma. When the sun rises, birds take to wing, flowers bloom, the human community starts its varied activities. The sun does not directly engage in any of these; it is the prompter that is all. The sun is not the cause; He is just the activator, the witness, the onlooker. He is above and beyond all this. He is not bound or based on man or beast or bird or flower.

Birds fly in the sky but they do not leave any trace behind of their path of flight. So too, however many sensory impressions fly through the inner sky of the heart, no impression should be left thereon. The heart is not affected by their flying through.

But man sees only the superstructure, not the basis. In the garland, no one observes the string that keeps the flowers together, the existence of the string can be known only by investigation and inquiry. The basis is the string; the flowers depend upon it and hang together on account of it, as a garland.

To understand this better, take another instance. Pots, pans, plates and pails are all made of clay; but though there is clay in all these, clay is only clay. It is not pot, pan, plate or pail. So too in the Atma, which is the basis, there are no Gunas (or characteristics) like pot, pan, plate, or pail; but the Atma exists in the Gunas as Guna Swarupa. It is the Atma which is mistaken for the Gunas, because it is conceived as limited and as with name and form. The Atma is the only reality that persists through all names and forms, like the clay, which is the only substance in all the pots and pans. By this kind of inquiry, the conviction that the basis and the substance of everything is Atma or Kshethrajna or Parabrahmah gets strengthened.

Then Krishna was asked by Arjuna, thus: "It is indeed very difficult to know that basic Atma, that inner reality of all things. He is everywhere but is nowhere visible! He is the inner core of all but cannot be contacted at all! What is the cause of this mystery?"

Krishna replied: "Arjuna! You have not understood yet. The Atma is subtler than the subtlest and so it is difficult to cognise it. You know the five elements, do you not, earth, water, fire, wind and sky? Of these each subsequent element is subtler than the previous one. Earth has five qualities: Sound, touch, form, taste and smell; water has all these, except smell; fire has only three, sound, touch and form, wind has only two qualities, sound and touch; and the last one, sky has only sound. That is why each of these is subtler than the previous one and also more widely spread. The sky is everywhere, penetrating in and through all, because it has only one characteristic. How much more subtle must be the Atma which has no qualities or characteristics! Imagine how much more immanent and

universal it must be! Those who are objectively minded cannot grasp this phenomenon; only the subjective minded can have the solution."

"This faith can come only to those who can reason things out. It is a fatal thrust on those who shout, in season and out of season that God cannot be immanent in everything because He is not to be perceived at all. They do not believe that God is above and beyond the trivial qualities with which they seek to measure Him. It is a pity, indeed. God is as near to you, as you are to Him; if you keep afar, He too remains afar."

There are some fine examples of this truth in the Puranas. Hiranyakasipu sought God in all things and came to the conclusion that He is nowhere. Prahlada, on the other hand, believed that He can be found wherever He is sought and so He appeared from out of the impenetrably hard iron pillar itself! Prahlada was close to God and so God also was close to him.

The cow carries sacred sustaining milk in its own udder; but, unaware of this, it runs after the water in which rice has been washed! So too man is unaware of Madhava who is in him as his own Atma nor does he make an effort to discover Him, who is his own reality. He runs after the much inferior joy obtainable from the fleeting objects, with his defective and deceptive senses. What colossal ignorance!

To revel in multiplicity is ignorance; to visualise the unity is the sign of wisdom, Jnanam. Savam or "those who are dead to reality" alone see this as "many". Only "Sivam" or the divine see the seeming many as "one". What is called Jneyam, Atma, Kshetrajna, and Parabrahmam is that "one" only. This was taught to Arjuna so that he might experience the bliss thereof.

Readers! As the rivers have the sea as their goal, Jivas have Brahman as their goal. Permanent joy can never be received by the "conscious" Jiva from "material" objects. Moksha is the acquisition of permanent joy; it is also called the attainment of Brahman. Fixed exclusive devotion to Godhead can come to those who have no attachment to the wild phantasmagoria of name and form, which is called the "world". That alone can win Atmajnana. The world is the instrument for the attainment of renunciation; that is the reason why it is so tempting and so treacherous. He is the real Vedanthin who sees the world as an instrument, for escape from its coils.

Usually, the word "Oordhwa" is taken to mean "above" "high", etc. But if you consider the world to be a tree, then it has its roots in Brahman; that is, the roots are above and the branches are below! This was taught to Arjuna by Krishna thus: "The tree of Samsara or life is a very peculiar one. It is quite distinct from the trees of the world. The trees that you see in the world have their branches above and roots below. The Asvattha tree of Samsara, however, has roots above and branches below. It is a topsy-turvy tree."

Arjuna intercepted with a question. "How did it get the name, Aswattha? It means a banyan tree, is it not? Why was the tree of life called so? Why was it not called by some other name?" A strange name for a strange tree! "Listen. Aswattha means Anithya, impermanent, transient; it also means the 'banyan tree'. Its flowers and fruits are neither good for smelling nor for eating. However, its leaves will be ceaselessly quivering in the wind. So it is also called Chaladala, meaning 'quivering leaves.' Worldly objects too are ever wavering, unsteady, ever changing positions. In order to make people understand this truth and strive to overcome it, it is called Aswattha."

"This disquisition is to make men develop the higher vision and yearn for steady faith in Brahman. The objective world can be truly understood only by two types of examination: the outer and the inner. There is a reasoning that binds and a reasoning that liberates. He who sees the world as world sees wrong; he who sees it as Paramatma sees right. The world

is the effect; it has a cause; it cannot be different from the cause. It is just a mutation of Brahmam, which constitutes it. The millions of beings are the branches, twigs and leaves; the seed is Brahmam, in which all the tree is subsumed and summarised. He who knows this, knows the Vedas."

Chapter XXV

"Krishna! You say that those who recognise the world as mere world cannot claim to know the Vedas; they must recognise it as God, Paramatma. The world is an effect; so it cannot be different from the cause. How is this possible? The world that is seen by us is subject to growth and decay. God or Paramatma is, on the other hand, eternal, true, unaffected by change. There can be no affinity between water and fire, is it not? How can these two be one? Please tell me; I shall be most happy to hear you," said Arjuna.

"Well, Arjuna! In the cognisable world, every single thing displays its characteristic, Guna. The Guna depends upon the owner, the possessor. There is a basis, an Aadhara, for the characteristics possessed by every object and being in the world. That Aadhara is the Atma. Fix your attention on the unchanging basis - not on the fluctuating manifestations. Or else, you flounder in the flux. Just as the seed is the basis for the trunk, boughs, branches, twigs, leaves and flowers of a tree, the Prakriti or Prapancha or world is the tree that emanates from the seed, Atma; Prapancha is the permutation and combination of the five elements which are latent in the basis, the Atma. Consider the Atma, which is the base, as essential; for it is as its manifestation that the world is expressed. He who has grasped this truth through steady discipline deserves the name Vedavid, one who has mastered the Vedas."

"But without deep inquiry, without discriminating between the real and the unreal, if one mistakes the seen alone to be the lasting, and argues so, he is losing his way. How can he reach the goal? How can he attain the reality? The yearning to know this reality comes of Daivisampathi, God-ward attributes. The Aasuri-sampathi (demoniac tendency) is the opposite tendency, which makes a man argue that he has known when he has not, which keeps him away from all attempts to know, which induces him to establish untruth as truth."

As soon as the Lord finished saying this, Arjuna raised his head in astonishment and said, "Gopala! You were declaring so far that the Atma is the basis for all characteristics and for all beings; that is to say, You were declaring that You were that basis. Meanwhile, you have started talking about two distinct natures, Daivisampathi and Aasurisampathi! I am getting confused. I am at a loss to decide which to accept and which to reject."

"Arjuna! Your question is even stranger. You say that I never speak a word that has no meaning or do a deed that has no significance; yet you worry over the problem which among my statements you have to accept and which you have to reject! This is senseless anxiety and hesitation. My dear brother-in-law, the Devas and the Asuras are not two separate distinct groups; they are so divided on the basis of the distinction in characteristics. Well, the characteristics of Gunas are artificial; they are not of the essence of consciousness of which I have already told you. The potter makes pots, pans and plates. These latter are not essentially 'parts' of the clay out of which they were shaped. The pot, pan and plate are artificial forms of the clay. The names too are artificial; these names and forms are the Gunas or characteristics. The substance or Adhara or basis is clay; the shapes-names-forms, the manifestation, the expressions are pots, pans and plates. Clay is natural; pots, pans and plates are artificial. Take it that the clay, the basis, the Sahaja, is My Swarupa, reality. In the names-forms, the expressions, the pots etc. are not in Me; but I am in them. I have no Gunas but I am in the Gunas, note this. Therefore, do not try to keep

clay and pots apart, as two distinct entities. That cannot be correct. It is not possible either."

"Krishna! What is the relationship between your Swabhava (reality, truth) and the Swarupa, Prakriti, the objective world?"

"I have told you already that the five elements, earth, water, fire, air and sky are My Swabhava, My attributes. What is this objective world except the combination of the five elements? What else can you call it?"

"Krishna! Without the five, nothing can exist in this world, is it not? Then, how can I deny them? Existence is bound up with them."

"When you accept the five elements, you have to agree to the fivefold proliferation of each element, making in all 25 Thathwas or principles. Only four elements, earth, water, fire and air are evident and perceptible; but ether or sky is the basis for all. So too, Manas, Buddhi, Chittam, Ahamkaram are all four cognised by experience; but the Anthahkarana which is their base can only be inferred. All things of which we are aware are but manifestations of a thing of which we are unaware. They derive their strength and support from the unseen. That unseen basis of which you are unaware is I, Myself, the Atma. All are based on Me.

"That which is based is subject to change; growth, decline and modification. But the base or Aadhara should not therefore be taken as subject to change. For example, consider the moon and its reflection in water. The image of the moon in the water is not steady; it shakes and quivers. It is the water that shakes and quivers, not the moon above. Ignorant people, who are like children, infer that the moon is itself shaking. The transference of the characteristics of the Aadheya to the Aadhara is the fundamental Aasuric quality. The recognition of the eternality and truth of the Aadhara even in the Aadheya - that is the real Daivisampath, God directed nature."

Arjuna listened intently and with steady attention to all this. Then he queried: "Madhava! You said that it is the inherent quality of nature that distinguishes these two. Which qualities make for Asuric and which for Daivi natures? Please clarify."

Krishna replied: "Arjuna! I am ever willing to clarify; I only need listeners who are steady and intent. Hear this with unwavering attention:

1. Fearlessness,
2. Purity of emotions,
3. Awareness of the unity of all creation,
4. Charity,
5. Control of the senses,
6. Sacrifice,
7. Study,
8. Asceticism,
9. Straightforwardness,
10. Nonviolence,
11. Integrity,
12. Equanimity, absence of anger or resentment,
13. Detachment,

14. Inner peace,
15. Refraining from scandalmongering and talking ill of others,
16. Sympathy,
17. Absence of greed,
18. Sweetness and softness of speech,
19. Fear of Adharmic acts,
20. Absence of fluctuations in the mind,
21. Courage during disaster, patience and fortitude,
22. Steadiness,
23. Cleanliness,
24. Harmlessness,
25. Humility;

These twenty-five holy qualities are the traits of Daivisampath, the divine endowment.

"Pride, pomp, vanity, anger, harshness and absence of discrimination are the components of the Aasuric endowment of man. Persons having these qualities are infused with the Aasuric character. Though for all outward appearances they may be humans, they do not deserve that name. Those who have the first-mentioned twenty-five qualities are known as men with divine parts; those who have the Aasuric attributes are known as Daanava-maanavas, demonic humans."

"Some men esteem themselves as part-divine but have they all the attributes that should characterise them; or have they at least Daya (sympathy), Dharma (morality), Paropakaara (service of others) and Santham (equanimity)? If they have these at least in a small measure, they can be regarded as divine. Instead, if the full battery of Aasuric equipment is evident in them, how can their declaration be taken at its face value? It is sheer vanity to pretend so or to claim as such. Vanity and pomp can never be classed as divine; they are unquestionably demonic."

"Each one can easily analyse himself and decide to which class he belongs. Physical appearance, possessions, status or authority does not decide the class. For example, consider Ravana. He had the human form, he was an emperor, he was greater than Kubera, the Lord of wealth; but can he be considered part-divine for these reasons? No, He is declared a demon, on the basis of the Gunas he had."

"Three qualities form the fundamental basis of all Aasuric or demonic natures. They are Kama, Krodha and Lobha (lust, anger and greed). They destroy the self and foster the demon in man. They have to be overwhelmed and overcome by the divine qualities of Vairagyam, Santham and Thyagam (detachment, equanimity and renunciation). They are the warriors to rely on in this fight. Foster these warriors and they will, in a trice, wipe out the forces of demonic influence. Any trace of the foes, Kama, Krodha and Lobha, left unsuppressed anywhere is a potential danger; so they must be reduced to ashes. That leads to real success in the struggle for the goal."

Desires and attachments are as roots to the tree of life. When the roots are cut asunder, the tree dies; the rate of decline depends upon the speed and effectiveness of the cutting asunder. It will keep sprouting even if a single root is intact. It will not go dry or die. Remove every single root; then the tree perishes and becomes deadwood. The boast of men that they have destroyed all roots is vain, if the tree is green and growing! So too, the Maya

that has possessed the Jivi will perish in proportion to the uprooting of desire, the desire that binds.

Some engage themselves in Dhyana after reducing, to some extent only, a few urges and desires. They do not achieve full concentration. Nor are they tossed by uncontrolled agitations. They are caught in the intermediate level. What is the reason for this state of things? Full concentration can come only from full control of desire. Hence, it is declared that Kama, Krodha and Lobha are demons that harass man, demons assuming fearful and ugly forms.

But it is not a calamity to have ugly faces or frightful forms. At the worst, he may be called 'repulsive' that is all. It is the repulsive character, the ugly nature that marks the calamity. A person may be beautiful in appearance; he may have a parrot-like chatter - that is sweet to the ear; but for these reasons, he cannot be regarded as divinely endowed, born with divine parts, Daivaamsa. If demonic nature simmers in them, physical beauty and sweetness of voice cannot entitle them to divinity. The words that emanate from them are vulgarised into hammer-strokes and dagger-thrusts! Thus, Aasurisampath and Daivisampath are related to the qualities that compose the nature and behaviour of the individual, and not to the physical form and appearance.

Chapter XXVI

"Krishna! You say that the Daivic and Aasuric natures of man are the consequences of acts and feelings that had impact on the individual in previous births. Since it is impossible to escape from such impacts, what is the fate of those who are condemned to carry this burden with them? Are there any means by which this can be avoided? Or can their consequences be mitigated? If such exist, please tell me about them so that I could save myself thereby". Arjuna asked thus in order to draw out from the Lord the remedy for all mankind.

Krishna gave an immediate answer. "There is no paucity of means. Listen. There are three types of Gunas, Satwic, Rajasic and Tamasic. They are based on the Anthahkarana, the inner consciousness. That too is dependent on the intake of food. You are what you feed on: your activities shape your nature. So at least in this birth, by regulating food and activity (Aahaara and Vihara) man can overcome the Aasuric tendencies that tend to prevail upon him. He can promote Satwic tendencies through planned self-effort." This advice was tendered lovingly by the Lord to the eager inquirer, Arjuna.

Arjuna was thrilled with joy when he heard that man has the means of saving himself; he longed to inform himself further. Krishna showered grace through His enchanting smile and condescended to reply. "Arjuna! Food is the chief formative force. The soiled mind dulls the brilliance of moral excellence; how can a muddy lake reflect clearly? The divine cannot be reflected in the wicked or vicious mind. Food makes man strong in body; the body is intimately connected with the mind. Strength of mind depends upon strength of body too. Moral conduct, good habits, spiritual effort - all depend upon the quality of the food; diseases, mental weakness, spiritual slackness - all are produced by faulty food." "Krishna!" asked Arjuna, "Please tell me the constituents of Satwic, Rajasic and Tamasic food."

"Arjuna! Food to be Satwic should be capable of strengthening the mind as well as the body. It should not be too salty, too hot, too bitter, too sweet or too sour. It should not be taken while steaming hot. Food, which fans the flames of thirst, should be avoided. The general principle is that there should be a limit, a restraint. Food cooked in water should not be used the next day; it becomes harmful. Even fried articles should be consumed before they develop unpleasant odors.

"Rajasic food is the opposite of the Satwic. It is too salty, too sweet, too hot, sour, too odorous. Such food excites and intoxicates."

"Lord, excuse me if I appear impertinent; I ask with a desire to know, that is all. By mere change in food habits, can character be changed from one Guna to another? Or, has something more to be done to supplement the purification process? Tell me, if there is anything more."

"My dear brother-in-law! If transformation of character were so easy, wickedness and vice, so characteristic of the Danava nature, could have been wiped off the surface of the earth in a trice. Of course, there are some more things to be done. Listen. There are three 'purities' to be observed; purity of the provisions; purity of the vessels in which food is prepared; and purity of the persons who serve the prepared food."

"It is not enough if the provisions are pure and of good quality. They should have been procured by fair means; no unfair, unjust untrue earnings should be used for one's maintenance. These are fouled at the very source. The source as well as the course and the goal must all be equally pure. The vessel must be clean, free from tarnish. The person who serves must not only be clean in dress, but clean in habits, character and conduct. He should be free from hate, anger, worry and indifference while serving the dishes; he should be cheerful and fresh. And he must be humble and full of love. While attending on those who are dining, he should not allow his mind to dwell on wicked or vicious ideas. Mere physical cleanliness or charm is no compensation for evil thoughts and habits. The Sadhaka who has to secure concentration has to be careful about these restrictions. Otherwise, during Dhyanam, the subtle influences of the wicked thoughts of the cook and the servers will haunt the Sadhaka. Care should be taken to have only virtuous individuals around. Outer charm, professional excellence, reduced wages - these should not be allowed to prejudice you in favour of dangerous cooks and attendants. Examine carefully their habits and their character. The food you eat is such an important constituent of the physical and mental stuff with which you have to struggle in the spiritual field. The purity of the mind can be and has to be supplemented by the purity of the body as well as purity in its important function, speech. That is the real Thapas; physical, mental and vocal."

"The mind should be free from anxiety and worry, hate and fear, greed and pride. It should be saturated with love for all beings. It has to dwell in God. It has to be restrained from pursuing objective pleasures. No lower thought should be allowed to creep in; all thoughts must be directed towards the elevation of the individual to higher planes. This is the proper Thapas of the mind or Manas."

"Now for the physical Thapas. Use the body and its strength and capabilities for the service of others, for the worship of the Lord, for the singing of His glory, for visiting places hallowed by His name, for regulated exercises in breath control, for holding the senses away from deleterious paths and for treading the path of God. The service of the sick and the distressed, the observance of moral codes and such beneficial acts must make it sacrosanct."

"Vocal Thapas too has to be engaged in. Avoid talking too much; desist from false statements; do not take delight in backbiting and in scandalmongering; never speak harshly; speak soft and sweet; speak with the memory of Madhava ever in the background of the mind."

"Of these three, physical Thapas, mental Thapas and vocal Thapas, even if one is absent, the Atmic effulgence (Atmajyothi) cannot radiate light. The lamp, the wick and the oil are all essential for a light; the body is the lamp; the mind is the oil and the tongue is the wick. All three must be in good trim."

"Some pious people consider that acts of charity are also physical Thapas. It is good that they think so. But when doing charity, one has to do so after pondering over the place, the time and the nature of the recipient. For example, charities for schools should be given at places where there are no schools until then; hospitals have to be established in areas where diseases are rampant; the hunger of people has to be appeased where famine conditions have been caused by floods or droughts. The nature and condition of the recipient have to be considered while imparting teaching of Dharma and Brahmavidya, and while doing service of various kinds. The charitable act that removes from a person the deficiency that is most harmful to his progress is called Satwic."

"Krishna", interrupted Arjuna, "May I ask a question here? Charity, however done, is charity, is it not? Why do you distinguish between Satwic, Rajasic and Tamasic? Are there any such?"

Krishna answered, "Of course, there are. Among those who donate for charities, most are anxious to get name and fame; that is the motive for the act. They are after something in return for what they offer. Very few desire the grace of the Lord and nothing else. Gifts made with that one end in view, to receive the grace of the Lord are Satwic. Gifts made expecting something in return like fame and publicity, esteem and power, or made in a huff or made reluctantly under pressure - these are to be classed as Rajasic."

"Charity should be given with reverence and faith. It should not be just thrown at the face of the recipient. Nor should it be given to an undeserving person or at an inopportune moment. Food for the overfed is a burden, not a boon. Hospitals in places that are inaccessible are as good as charity thrown away. Such benefitless and wasteful charity is called Tamasic."

"While engaged in Daana or charity, one has to be very vigilant. You should not scatter it to whomsoever pleads for it; nor can you shower it on all kinds of places. Be careful that you remember the three types mentioned by Me and then, do as seems most proper. The gift you make must not be for name or fame; it should have no motive of pomp or publicity; it should be purposeful and useful. In all acts, the Satwic attitude is best. This attitude must permeate all actions seeing, hearing or speaking."

Arjuna, who was listening with head bent and with great concentration to all this, drinking in the sweetness of the Lord's countenance, asked Him thus, "What exactly is true listening and true seeing - please tell me this in some detail. I can then follow the instructions." He prayed to Krishna in such a pleading tone that the Lord smiled kindly at him.

Krishna patted Arjuna on the back. He said, "Satwic listening is listening to the stories, experiences and messages of sages and saints who aspired after God and realised Him. Satwic seeing is seeing the worshippers of the Lord, seeing portraits of saints and sages, attending festivals in temples etc. Rajasic seeing is seeing scenes of luxury, pictures of sensuous joy, of pompous pageantry, of the exhibition of power and status and display of egoistic authority. Taking delight in the description of sensuous scenes and incidents, in the demonstration of power and authority, in the assertion of might and prowess - these are to be classified as Rajasic listening. Others take delight in listening to gruesome adventures, stories of wicked ogres and vicious deeds. Such are Tamasic individuals. They admire cruelty and horrifying scenes and they take pleasure in keeping such pictures before them. They worship demonic bloodthirsty Gods and they revel in the lore of ghosts and evil forces."

Dear Readers! This is the heart of the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita. The body and life in it are based on food and are sustained by food, Anna. So, food decides the level of attainment, high or low. Nowadays, emphasis is being laid on discipline and regulated behaviour (Nishta), without reference to the Naashta (food). However great and learned a

person may be, however much he pays attention to the teachings of the Vedantha and takes care to spread them, if he neglects the strict code laid down for the food that is the very basis of the body and its functions he cannot succeed. The purity of the provisions, of the cook, and of those who serve what has been prepared these are not attended to. They feel content when their stomachs are filled and hunger is appeased. The first temple they visit when dawn breaks is the restaurant, where 'Idli' and 'Sambar' are offered to the Atmarama! How can such gourmands get concentration? Purity in cooking, purity of provisions, and purity of service - how can these be guaranteed in restaurants? Who pays attention to these? Without doing this, people complain aloud that they do not get success in concentration, and suffer greater confusion! The effect will be secured only when the proper causes function well. When bitter things are cooked, how can the final dish be sweet?

Aahaara and Vihaara (food and recreation) should both be very carefully regulated according to the Geetha, but little heed is paid to its teaching. Nor is it considered so essential. There are people everywhere who swear by the Geetha, who expound it for hours together and who preach about it, but very few put its teachings into practice. The verses fill their heads but they are powerless to meet the reverses, with philosophical cheer. Ananda and Shanthi can be secured only when food and recreation are cleansed and purified.

Darkness and light cannot coexist; Kama and Rama cannot be in the same place together; they are like fire and water. How can one escape an evil reaction of the Geetha is held in one hand and hot tea or coffee or a lighted cigarette or beedi or a pinch of snuff is held in the other? Some even justify their unregulated lives by declaring that whatever is eaten, however eaten, wherever eaten, the stuff is rendered pure and acceptable on account of the raging fire of Jnana, which they have in them!

How can a bitter fruit be transformed into a sweet one even when it is dipped in a series of holy rivers? How can persons who simply speak on the Geetha get saturated with the sweetness of its message? What really happens is that those who listen to such hypocrisies lose even the little faith they have in our scriptures and become hardened disbelievers.

How can a person who feels helpless to restrict and regulate his food habits be trusted to restrict and regulate his senses? If he cannot limit and control his feelings, how can he limit and control the senses? Can the nose, which falls down during a cough, survive a sneeze? How can one who is too weak to climb stairs, climb to heaven's heights? When a man is a helpless victim of coffee or cigarettes or snuff, how can he muster strength and courage to overcome the more powerful foes: anger, lust and greed? When he cannot renounce dirt, how can he renounce desire? Become master of the tongue and then you can master sex. They are firmly interconnected, as close as the eyes and the feet.

Chapter XXVII

As the healthy glow of the body is hidden from sight by the clothes that cover it, the individual soul obscured by Ahamkara or egoism is not able to reveal the splendor of the Brahmawitham, which is its treasured possession. For egoism is at the root of all evil, all defects, all deficiencies. It is born in desire, or Kama. Be free from egoism too.

The state of desirelessness is really the state of egolessness. And what is Moksha or liberation except liberation from bondage to the ego? You deserve liberation when you break away from the bond of desire.

Men engage themselves, by and large, in activities prompted only by the desire to benefit from the results. They withdraw from acts that bring no benefit. But the Geetha condemns both attitudes. For whether consequences follow or not, one cannot escape the obligation to

be active. Man cannot completely give up activity. How then can man avoid being caught up in the mesh of consequences? The Geetha teaches that Karma-phala thyaga (giving up all attachment to the fruit of Karma) is the greatest Sadhana designed for this purpose.

Whether desired or discarded, hoped for or not hoped for, every act ends in some consequence, if not immediately, at least after some time. It is inevitable. The consequence may be good or evil; but if the act is dedicated to the Lord, neither will affect the doer. By that sacrament of dedication, the deed is transmuted into a higher order and made divine, holy, sacred. On the other hand, acts performed under the inspiration of the ego will be fraught with bondage.

Those who are sincerely seeking to realise God, to achieve Him, have to become free from the taint of desire, Mamakaara-sunya, elimination of the feelings of "I" and "mine", you attain Moksha, salvation. That is the achievement of the goal of life. The stage knows no joy or grief; it is above and beyond them both. Krishna willed that His friend and devotee Arjuna should reach that state and so He endeavored to save him, by teaching him the ways and means through a variety of methods. Moreover, He used him as an instrument to receive this precious gift for the good of all humanity.

Before concluding the sacred counsel, Krishna addressed Arjuna and said, "Give up all Dharmas and surrender to Me. I shall liberate you from all sin." That is to say, give up Ahamkara and Mamakara, pride in the ego and in possessions and feelings of I and mine. Destroy the identification of the self with the body, which is only its cage or prison; get firm in the belief that all this is Paramatma and naught else. So, there is nothing else to be done except bowing to His will and surrendering to His plan. Man has to give up the twin activities of commission and omission, Sankalpa and Vikalpa, resolving and refusing. He has to follow the Lord's commands; He has to accept His will, be happy wherever He has placed him, however He has shaped him. He should keep himself far from the inquiry into the appropriateness or inappropriateness of his acts, but do them as acts of worship to the Lord, acts for which no reward is expected. That is the sum of his duty.

Some dry Vedanthins decked with strings of beads take advantage of this teaching of Krishna to give up all Dharmas and, with this assurance that He will liberate them from all sin, idly stretch their legs and loll with closed eyes. They shirk their legitimate duties and eat, sleep and roam about as much as they like or can. They do not discriminate between what is good and what is bad; their excuse is that the Lord has commanded them to transcend Dharma. When elders at home or experienced seekers question their conduct, they answer, "Alas, that you too should blunder thus! Do you not know what the Lord has said in the Geetha? I have accepted as the basis of my conduct, His command, 'Sarva Dharmaan Parithyajya.' I have no need for advice from persons with lesser authority." They feel very proud of their devotion and orthodoxy. Such people select from the words of the Lord only those portions which favour their inclinations. The word before and after are conveniently ignored because they are unpleasant, though they are inseparable portions of the same injunction. They ignore the vital part of the command, in spite of the claim to be staunch votaries of the Geetha.

Giving up all Dharmas, "Maam ekam saranam vraja" says the Lord. That is "surrender to Me alone." Have they surrendered thus? No. Have they at least the deep yearning for liberation? No, for if they had it, they would not have neglected their legitimate duties. They would not have fallen a prey to the demands of food and sleep. Such men are glorious only in gossip; they are great only in glittering. They do not put the Lord's command into actual practice. They are too idle to do so. Not even an atom of spiritual endeavour can be seen in them.

True aspirants can discern valuable truths in the divine words spoken by the Lord:

Sarva dharmaan parithyajya
Maamekam saranam vraja;
Aham thwaa sarva paapebhyo
Mokshayishyami, maa suchah,

Note that the Lord has said, "Sarva Dharmaan Parithyajya," not, "Sarva Karmaan Parithyajya." What then is the meaning of this statement? It means, perform all acts enjoyed by the Lord, or His glorification, without getting involved and lost in discussions of Dharma and Adharma.

Though you know that there is nothing for you to acquire, for you have placed complete trust in the Lord and live only as an offering to the Lord, still like Janaka and others, you have to engage yourselves in activity for the well-being of the world, Lokasangraha. The Sarvabhoothaantharaathma, the soul immanent in every being is not distinct from the Atma or soul that is in you. So, be Sarvabhootha-hithe-rathaha, that is to say, eager to promote the well-being of all beings. Perform all acts enjoined by the Sastras and scriptures for this sake, in the spirit of dedication, with no eye on the fruits thereof. This is the true Nishkama-karma.

Understand the Geetha well and, observing its injunctions establish yourselves in the attitude of Nishkamakarma. Do all duties as acts of worship, Hari-prasadam. That is the sole task. Leave the rest to Him: the fruit, the consequence, the result. Then, you receive the grace of Hari and your life on earth is sanctified and becomes worthwhile.

For those who follow the path of Dharma ultimate victory is certain, in spite of diverse difficulties that might hamper them. Those who stray away from the path of Dharma might have wealth and comfort for long, but they will be overpowered ultimately by disaster. The Kauravas and the Pandavas are the brightest witnesses for this truth.

The Kauravas steeped in Adharma were so blinded by conceit that they subjected the good Pandavas to various tortures; but they met with total destruction. They had the support of all types of parties but since they did not earn the strength of the grace of the Lord, they were deserted by fate and ruined beyond repair. The Mahabharatha teaches all people of Bharath this one lesson: Nothing can equal the grace of God, not even the mightiest array of arms. This is the most valuable message that it embodies.

The Geethabhavanam (mansion of Geetha) is the mansion of Sathya and Dharma, erected on the soil of India, for the benefit of the world. Study it with faith and devotion. Experience the curative and restorative effects of its teaching by actual practice. For the Atmarama, (the Atma so full of the spring of sweetness and bliss) will be ever present as a reality. The Lord will shower on him His favours in a trice. Pray to the Lord who has all the fourteen worlds in Him and you can certainly become master of the eight treasures which give happiness here below; and what is even more desirable, Kaivalya (which is the fountain of Nithyananda, of Nithya-Sathya and Mithya-jnana).

Why wander about for Ghee, when you have butter with you? Acquire butter, that is to say, the grace of the Lord, by implicit obedience to the rules of life laid down by Him. When that grace is won, one need not pray separately for Moksha or liberation. He knows best what you should get and when. He will confer what you deserve and what is beneficial. Yearn for Him, suffer anguish for Him; there is no need to yearn for Moksha then. If that is done with no second thought, He will destroy all sin. Hold fast to Him; He can make you immortal, like Arjuna. Those who seek to escape from this cycle of birth and death must obey the command of the Lord as laid down in the Geetha and surrender to Him. Then, they will be crowned with success in every undertaking.


