

**RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY**  
OF  
**THE GITA**



**SWAMI SHARVANANDA**



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SWAMI SHARVANANDA





## **His Holiness Swami Sharvanandaji Maharaj**

His Holiness Swami Sharvanandaji Maharaj was initiated into Sannyasa by His Holiness Swami Brahmanandaji Maharaj who was a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and who was considered his spiritual son.

His Holiness Swami Sharvanandaji Maharaj had the unique distinction of succeeding His Holiness Swami Ramakrishnanandaji Maharaj, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, as the President of the Madras Math. Madras was noted not only for its intellectual eminence but also for its orthodoxy. In sending His Holiness Swami Ramakrishnanandaji as the first President of the Madras Math, Swami Vivekananda wrote to his Madras disciples that he was sending an erudite monk, who was more orthodox than the most orthodox South Indian brahmin.

Sharvanandaji Maharaj did yeoman service as the President of the Madras Math, and was responsible for opening centres of the Ramakrishna Mission in Ceylon, Malaysia and Mysore. He was a dynamic personality and wherever he went he drew large crowds. He was a fluent speaker in English and quoted Sanskrit texts to illustrate his points with great effect. One of the pioneers in translating the Upanishads into English, he translated the Major Upanishads into English when he was President of the Madras Math. His translations give first a word for word meaning of each verse and then an English rendering. His translation is a very good guide to students of the Upanishads.

Some of the monks who distinguished themselves in later life had their training in the Madras Math under Sharvanandaji Maharaj. Swami Pavitranandaji of the New York Centre, Swami Asokanandaji of the San Francisco Centre, Swami Prabhavanandaji of the Hollywood Centre, the late Swami Kedareeswaranandaji of the Natrampalli Centre and the late Swami Vipulanandaji were some of the monks who had their training under him.



Sharavanandaji Maharaj's connection with Ceylon has been intimate and abiding. From 1917 he visited Ceylon regularly at the invitation of his devotees and delivered lectures and held classes. In 1918 he laid the foundation for the Ramakrishna Mission work in Ceylon by taking over the Jaffna Vaidyeshwara Vidyalaya under the Mission.

He evinced great interest in the activities of the Colombo Vivekananda Society. Before the Colombo Centre of the Mission was started, he made the Colombo Vivekananda Society his headquarters whenever he visited Ceylon. In the twenties he settled a dispute that arose among the members of the Society by acting as mediator. It is said that his intervention saved the society from a crisis.

As Sharvanandaji Maharaj was given the right to give initiation he gave initiation to a number of devotees during his visits to Ceylon. One of the foremost to receive initiation from him was Mr. D. A. Cumaraswamy, who is happily with us and is responsible for getting these lectures reprinted.

In October 1930 Sharvanandaji Maharaj came to Ceylon with the blessings of His Holiness Shivanandaji Maharaj, another direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and the then President of the Ramakrishna Mission, to open a centre in Colombo. His Holiness Shivanandaji Maharaj known to his disciples and devotees as "Maha Purusha Maharaj" was no stranger to Ceylon, as he was sent to Ceylon by Swami Vivekananda to conduct classes and deliver lectures on his triumphal return to Calcutta in 1897. The centre was opened in a rented house at Hamer's Avenue, Wellawatte, on the 30th October 1930. In December of the same year Sharvanandaji Maharaj visited Jaffna and delivered lectures.

By 1933 Sharvanandaji Maharaj had become the head of the Delhi Centre and from there he started Mission centres in Karachi, Punjab and other places. A Mission centre arose at every place he visited, as he was able to create a keen interest in the activities of the Mission wherever he went.

It was when he was President of the Delhi Centre that he visited Simla and deli-

vered the lectures on the Religion and Philosophy of the Gita which are being reprinted now. These lectures are an epitome of the teachings of the Gita and provide a key to the understanding of the most sacred of the Hindu Scriptures. The Gita is said to contain the essence of the Upanishads and Sharvanandaji Maharaj has used his deep knowledge of the Upanishads to interpret the Gita.

Sharavanandaji Maharaj was keenly interested in starting a Women's Training Centre under the auspices of the Mission, and as the Mission authorities were unwilling to do so, he started one on his own at Jahagram, Midnapore District, West Bengal. He is now advanced in age and in feeble health. He lives in retirement at this centre supervising its activities.

Sri Ramakrishna's Thithi  
Puja Day  
18-2-69.

**S. Ambikaipakan**  
Retired Principal,  
Ramakrishna Mission  
Vaidyeshwara Vidyalaya,  
Jaffna.

## FOREWORD

These discourses were delivered under the auspices of the Sanatana Dharma Sabha, Simla, in the summer of 1931 during my stay in that imperial hill station. Originally they were given extempore and without any regular scheme of presentation. But a fairly faithful stenographic report was made on the spot and hence it has become possible to publish them in present form. I was asked to give the series with a definite request to bring out only the most salient features of the religion and philosophy which is embodied in the teachings of the Gita and put them in a nutshell, as it were, for the easy comprehension of an average educated Indian. Now a days, the demands upon one's time have become so oppressive, that an average man of the world finds little time to make anything like a thorough study of his sacred books. Hence my attempt was to bring out pithily only the inner significance of the teachings contained in each chapter of the Gita and show their practical value in modern life. But incidentally I had to explain some of the fundamental doctrines of the Vedanta Philosophy without whose comprehension many parts of the Gita would appear as enigma, or self-contradictory. The series were spread over a week, covering an hour or so each day, therefore each discourse con-

sisted as much as could be spoken within the period of an hour, and no other definite scheme was in view while making the divisions. This perhaps accounts for the unscientific groupings of chapters in the discourses. Further, as these lectures were delivered almost off-hand and in my own informal manner, the conversational style is maintained in print also, according to the wish of some of my friends.

I cannot conclude without expressing my deep indebtedness to my friend Thakur Mahendrapal Singh of the Government of India Commerce Department, for his strenuous labour in taking the stenographic notes at the spot without which the book could never have seen the light of day.

SHARVANANDA

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## FIRST DISCOURSE

### GITA AS THE COMMENTARY OF THE VEDAS

The teachings of the Bhagavat Gita are being presented to the Hindu public in India by thousands of scholars and from myriads of platforms, so much so that it has become almost hackneyed, and every Hindu thinks that he knows enough of the contents of the book. Yet the charm and fascination of this book is so unabating for a Hindu that he feels himself incessantly drawn to it instinctively as it were, and gathers round the place where its name is uttered and its teachings are delivered. The reason of this wide popularity of the Gita in this land is twofold: first, because it is the completest presentation of the philosophy of life; and secondly, because it is the teaching of the Divine Incarnation, Sri Krishna. With the scholars who can understand the intrinsic merit of the teachings of the Gita, no doubt the Gita is the most valuable scripture — because it contains the completest philosophy of life and presents in the most wonderfully synthetic way the religious doctrines of the entire Vedas. So the Hindu scholars look upon it as the “Divine commentary of the Vedas”. But with the average man, who cannot plumb the depth of the significance of the book, the Gita is adorable because it is the teachings of the Divine Sri Krishna. With the

scholars Krishna is an incarnation because he is the Teacher of the Gita: Krishna is Krishna because he teaches the Gita. With the popular mind Krishna is undoubtedly the Divine Incarnation, and the Gita gets its value owing to its connection and reference to that Divine Personage. And it has been found that even outside India its teachings are so much appreciated by the unbiassed mind that it has been translated almost in all the principal languages of the world. In India the Gita commands the widest respect and does actually control to a very great extent even the daily life of the Hindus. And though it has been explained by many scholars in different ways in this country, still I shall try within these few days I have at my disposal, to put before you those salient features of these sacred teachings that relate particularly to our practical life and according to which we can most effectively mould our work-a-day life for our spiritual salvation even in these dark days of rank materialism and blind mammon worship.

You know how the Gita opens in a dramatic setting: when Arjuna was placed in the midst of the two belligerent armies ready to fight each other, the occasion arose for Bhagavan Sri Krishna, the Teacher of Teachers, to preach his Divine gospel to his disciple, the greatest of the heroes of the battlefield of Kurukshetra. It is sometimes questioned how a battlefield could be the proper place for the teaching of religion and philosophy and how the mind of the disciple could be properly receptive of

such wonderful doctrine at that dire moment, when the security of life itself was trembling in the balance. But here lies the key to understand the true spirit of the Gita, and I consider, nay I calm, that as the special feature of the *Sanatana Dharma*. For some of the above reasons perhaps it is held by the Western orientalists that the Gita is an interpolation in the Mahabharata, as there have been so many interpolations in that great epic, and hence, they maintain, it could not have occurred historically. But when we study closely the Mahabharata itself, and understand the trend of the teachings of the *Sanatana Dharma*, we cannot fail to discern that the Gita does really form an integral part of the Mahabharata. If you go through the entire bulk of that voluminous epic, you will find that even the very *slokas* of the Gita are quoted here and there. In many places, *e. g.*, in the *Shanti Parva*, sometimes the very language of the Gita has been used. And it can be shown irrefutably that the main ideas imbedded in the teachings of the Gita loom large in the doctrines and philosophy of life that the Mahabharata presents. Moreover, the teachings of the Gita are essentially the same as those of the Vedanta, it is the teachings of the *Upanishads* in a nutshell, as the *Dhyana Mantra* tells us:

The Vedanta, the crest jewel of the Vedas, should be considered a cow, Sri Krishna himself the milkman, Arjuna the calf, an instrument to draw out the milk and the milk, the essence of the

Upanishadic teachings, is the Gita. So the teachings of the Gita being the most complete philosophy of life and hence necessarily a great corrective of all faltering steps in life, cannot but be most appropriate in all dark moments of doubt and struggle, be it in the deadly battlefield, or in the cosy corner of one's home. And especially to a Hindu who has been nurtured on the doctrine of *Dharma* and taught to draw his inspiration of life at every turn from his religious philosophy, even a battlefield is the fit place for religious teachings. So it is perfectly in keeping with the true spirit of the spiritual culture of the Aryan Race.

#### ARJUNA'S DESPONDENCY AND ITS MEANING

The first chapter is designated as Arjuna's *Vishad Yoga*. I would take up only some of the important *slokas* of the chapter to convey to you the most salient points of the teachings of that particular chapter with reference to our practical life. The chapter opens with the description of the battlefield: how Kauravas and Pandavas are standing drawn up in battle array, ready to strike each other. At that moment Arjuna comes up with all his heroic valour, ready to face the challenge of the Kauravas and with a grim determination to punish the wicked Duryodhana and his party. With great self-confidence, with full consciousness of his power and valour, he comes and asks his Divine Charioteer, Sri Krishna, to place his chariot in the

midst of the two armies so that he may have a full survey of the troops and may pick up the proper persons — the persons who can be called his equals, to be engaged with. The dramatic setting of the Gita gives us a clue to the wonderful meaning of the Gita and it is significant also that Bhagavan Sri Krishna Himself becomes the charioteer of Arjuna. The name "Krishna" indicates one who destroys all sins and ignorance of human mind. So Sri Krishna, who is the destroyer and dispeller of all ignorance and sins of human mind, is the guide, the charioteer. The meaning of "Arjuna" is white, *i. e.*, one of pure soul, of pure heart, and of keen intellect — a superior type of humanity. As our Upanishad says:

The best type of humanity is one who is buoyant with hope, firm in resolve, possessed of physical and mental strength, and of keen intellect. Such a man was Arjuna. And such a man becomes the recipient of the teachings of the Gita.

Next Bhagavan places the chariot in the midst of the two belligerent armies, and when Arjuna finds himself placed in the midst of these two forces, he sees none there except his own relations, kith and kin and friends, assembled to kill one another. As of pure heart he was, of lofty sentiment, a kind of commiseration creeps into his soul. He feels that he is there to kill his own relations for the sake of a paltry kingdom. To win the throne of

Hastinapur at the cost of the blood of his own relations and friends, after causing destruction of the whole race — oh, nothing can be more heinous, nothing can be more degrading and more unethical for a man than that — thus he muses and, having cogitated over the situation and discerned the motive that goaded him into action, he finds his own defect and naturally that unnerves him, as it always happens when we are smitten by our own conscience — we feel unnerved, all our powers of mind fail us, all our vigour completely escapes our hold. That is the position of Arjuna. He is very much dejected and mutters out at the last moment. "My heart is failing me, my courage is gone. I cannot hold my bow and cannot make my mind to inflict wounds upon my own relations. Rather I should go and live on beggary than lead this sinful life of a soldier. I will not fight." So saying he sits down in his chariot.

Though Arjuna was made an instrument to draw out these teachings from the Bhagavan, the real enjoyers of this 'milk' are all those who are of purified intellect, the *sudhi*. Those who understand the meaning of life and its destiny can alone be really profited by the teachings of the Gita. The situation in which Arjuna found himself at the beginning of the great battle is the situation commonly experienced by almost all honest strugglers in life. It is not unoften that we feel sincerely almost an insurmountable difficulty when we are asked to per-

form our duties in life even at the sacrifice of all that we cherish as most precious in our heart. Sometimes the call of duty is so imperative and stern that we do not know how to decide whether we should perform our duty or run away from its function as it means the sacrifice of our nearest and dearest. Ordinarily a worldly mind, which counts the worldly values the most, naturally thinks that this world is the only reality, the preservation of the worldly values is the only thing needful in life. What constantly urges us into action is our own selfish motive and earthly concerns in life. These ordinary concerns and selfish motives are of two kinds: One is of the vulgar nature which we find in persons of very low development such as those who consider this physical body and their own little physical self as the be-all and end-all of life. Such men have not parted company with brutes as yet and I am not concerned with them here. Another kind of motive we find in cultured people, men of highly ethical nature and refined intellect. They also think that after all this life is the only reality, and so all concerns of life and all its activities have to be controlled and directed with reference to this reality. Even the best moral men are engaged in this world without troubling themselves much with the great questions of hereafter or such philosophical fundamental verities of life. Do we not see thousands upon thousands of men around us feel quite satisfied with their ordinary course of life and seek no higher impulse than what

is commonly termed ethical or moral? Common ethics are nothing but codes that regulate the interrelation of individuals in a society. But all higher rules of ethics have undoubtedly permanent reference to fundamental verities of life. Yet the ordinary mind does not know it. That was exactly the position of Arjuna also. He did not think much of the fundamentals of life or its transcendental source. He was concerned with ordinary *niti* (morals) and selfish ideals, and gradually that angle of vision produced in him the feeling that he was in the battlefield to play a selfish game. He forgot all about the other higher aspects of life, and therefore we find that in the name of piety and ethics and morality, a kind of weakness or faint-heartedness was taking possession of his soul. Bhagavan Sri Krishna, who was the Seer of every soul, understood at once the weakness of Arjuna's mind and proceeded to dispel the ignorance which caused in him such false understanding of life. Bhagavan tried to show the other side of the shield as it were. He wanted to point out to Arjuna that this weakness of his mind was due to his ignorance about the fundamental truth of life. So he said: "How has this kind of weak-hearted and unbecomingly degraded attitude come to thee at this dire moment in life. Such attitude will neither take you to Heaven nor win you the other glories of this life." This kind of ignorance overcomes us all when the call of duty comes, especially when we are called to sacrifice our best, our nearest and dearest, for a larger



issue — for a greater reality in life than our own little self — be it national, social, economical, or spiritual. Hence in the whole of the second chapter Bhagavan had to explain to Arjuna the nature of the fundamental verity of life. The second chapter is the most difficult of the chapters of the Gita, because it speaks of the most abstruse truth of *Atman* or *Brahman*, the great transcendental reality of life. It has to be told first because if life has to be regulated and improved, it must be done so with reference to its fundamental reality. The moment we are cut away from the moorings of the Reality we are made to drift in the chaos of the unreal. All philosophies of life and of human society, which are not faithful to that fundamental verity, must be like shifting sand, and cannot help any one to raise a permanent edifice of life on them, nor can they help one to reach one's real goal of earthly existence. If the goal is the attainment of the *summum bonum* in life in this very world and if that means realisation of the supreme peace and bliss of the soul, then life must be connected with the supreme verity. The object of the Gita—in fact of all religions—is to take their respective votaries by the hand and lead them on, step by step, to that ultimate goal. They call it Heaven, they call it *Nirvan*, they call it Self-realisation. These are different names of the one and the same experience — the experience of the *summum bonum* in life where all fetters and conditions are broken — where man feels as if merged in the Ocean of Bliss. The

evolutionary process reaches then its culmination and is transcended, the individual life gets merged in the infinity of the Absolute Being.

#### SANKHYA YOGA OR THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE HUMAN SOUL

In the second chapter Bhagavan tries to lift the veil of ignorance that shrouds the human soul and prevents it from understanding its own real nature. Bhagavan tells Arjuna, first of all: "Do not consider that your relations, your friends and kinsmen are going to be killed in this battlefield and you are going to be killer, and that you are really responsible for this dire action; nor should you think that its reaction will recoil on you and bring you down in the scale of spiritual life. That is not true. First you must understand the real truth of life and its practical bearing. You should always bear it in mind that the fundamental truth of life is not material — it is not physical. Do not confuse your real self with this lump of flesh called the body." Then He proceeds to prove that the inner reality of man, which we call *Atman*, the spirit or the soul, is really birthless and deathless. There is no beginning of this *Atman* because it is an eternal and transcendental principle. As an Incarnation, a Divine Teacher, he gives out the superb truths, *siddhanta vakyas*, which later on the great philosophers of India tried to substantiate by reasoning. He says to Arujuna: "Take it

from Me that the inner reality of man is neither of this flesh nor of the mind, but something more. It is of the nature of the pure Principle of Intelligence, and it is eternal. And as such it can neither be a doer nor an enjoyer. The 'doer' and 'enjoyer' are this body and the mind." If you can really ponder over this fact, you will feel that your being lies apart and beyond this body and mind, and that you are part of the Universal Life, nay, you are the Universal Life, as it were, in one sense. As a wave is not essentially separate from the ocean, so an individual soul is not absolutely separate from God—the Universal Life. Is it not true that the breath of the Universal Life is pulsating through every heart and every being is surcharged with the reality of the Supreme? It is the Supreme Being Itself which is appearing as an individualised soul. Nothing less than that. A ray of the sun may be a ray, but after all it is part and parcel of the sun, so it is of the nature of the sun itself in one way. If we can always maintain this consciousness in our work-a-day life, then will surely disappear much of those aberrations that cloud our vision and clog our path of right action. If we analyse our mind, we cannot fail to notice that all our selfishness and sinful attitude arise from the consciousness that this physical body is the only reality and constitutes our true self. So Bhagavan says that this physical body is nothing but a vesture on the soul, exactly like the garments that man puts on from time to time on this body. So

it is as much different from our own inner reality as this physical body is different from the garment that we wear. That is the fundamental psychological point that Bhagavan tried to put to Arjuna's mind with the object of dispelling his weak-heartedness and false interpretation of life.

#### BRAHMAN AND ITS REALISATION

In this chapter Bhagavan Sri Krishna speaks further about the truth of the First Principle, *Brahman*, and also about the nature of the man who is established in that Brahma-consciousness. When man develops a kind of permanent consciousness which always has the eternal, immutable Reality as its content, then he behaves in a quite different way from those who are steeped in ignorance about the fundamental reality and consider the material values as of supreme importance. But to man, as he is placed in the social environment, mere psychological view cannot be sufficient for the right conduct in life. So Bhagavan tries to teach here something of the metaphysical verity also. *Brahman* is after all the same as *Atman*, the lingual difference occurring as the principle is viewed either from psychological or metaphysical angle of vision. And when our social conduct or ethical life is regulated with reference to this supreme metaphysical verity, then life itself stands transfigured and all sombre clouds of miseries and bondages fade away like fleeting shadows, and the Kingdom

of Heaven emerges within. The Highest Bliss in life is enjoyed there. Bhagavan says that such a man sees all beings in the *Atman*, and the *Atman* in all beings and in "Me". Truly then is revealed the vision of the Life Universal. Bhagavan calls Himself that Supreme *Atman*, and implies thereby that when that state of consciousness is attained, our views get changed and we are able to see, behind the display of this 'name' and 'form', behind the expressions of all external differences, the same fundamental unity of *Atman* or *Brahman*. This *Brahman* is in everything, it is of the nature of *Sat*, *Chit* and *Ananda*. Our Upanishads say:

That from which the universe comes into being, in which the universe exists and to which the universe goes back again after dissolution, that is *Brahman*, that is the Supreme Reality. And this *Brahman*, which is the same as *Atman*, is of the nature of *Sat*, *Chit* and *Ananda*. [*Taitti. up. II. i.*] It is of the nature of *Sat* because in everything that you feel to be real there is the substratum of *Brahman* giving it the colour of reality. It is the 'be-ing' of all beings. And what is real must have an expression, must be cognizable by consciousness, and this expression or its cognizance in consciousness is its *Prakash* or *Chit* aspect. It has also the *Ananda* aspect as it fulfils certain wants and produces joy in us. Hence the *Atman* or *Brahman* is felt or realised as of the nature of *Sat*, *Chit* and *Ananda*. It is imma-

ment in all *real* entities and that is why it is called *Brahman*. When life is wholly lived in that *Brahma*-consciousness, then all our actions get naturally subjugated to and co-ordinated with that Universal life. All differentiations in life arise from individualistic outlook, and when vision of man rests on that Fundamental Unity of *Atman* that reposes at the background of all fragmentary lives, no action can proceed from him in that individualistic colour. The individualisation itself then appears to have been based on a false view of life—the grand Ignorance. The more of it we shall hear anon. But what would be the natural outcome of such an attitude? If you can really feel within the heart of hearts, that this body is not really real, this mind is not the absolute reality, your *real* self is that principle—which is behind them all, it is one in all and is undying and undecaying, then your entire attitude of life cannot but change: you would feel that the same *Atman* is pervading equally your neighbour, your wife, your children and your relations and even your worst enemies. Then really there is neither friend nor foe. You would actually perceive that there is but one ocean of life, all-pervasive,—and you are a mere bubble in that ocean intrinsically connected with such other bubbles, and hence none is more dear or more helpful than others. Ordinary all our actions spring from selfish motives directly or indirectly. If you examine every bit of your action in your every-day life, you would find that hardly

there is any action which is actuated by this consciousness of the Universal life. Even when an ordinary man does a piece of charity, his piety connotes a sense of conceit. For instance, when a beggar comes to his door and he is moved to give alms to him, what is the exact feeling of his then? He feels that he is superior and better off and that the poor fellow is in a helpless condition. With that subtle arrogance of mind he takes a superfluous coin perhaps from his pocket and flings it at the face of the beggar. So you see, even in the so-called social service or charity of ours there is a seed of conceit or selfishness. Even when you love your children or wife in a most disinterested manner, to the best of your conscience, you will find that even there is selfishness lurking. You feel that she is *your* wife. If you keep her in health and happiness, you will be happy. He is *your* child. If he is happy, you will be happy. So really seeking your own happiness you are seeking although indirectly, that is through the happiness of the wife and the child. Hence at the back of all your actions there is the selfish motive. That core of selfishness, Sri Bhagavan says, is the real cause of all our fetters of life. However ethical and moral might be the adumbration, the truth is that after all there is selfishness at the back of all our activities. Such an ideal cannot lift you up to the highest goal of spiritual realisation. So it was absolutely necessary that Bhagavan Sri Krishna must clear the mist in Arjuna's mind to make him

understand the grand spiritual significance of duty or *Dharma* to steady his faltering steps. In this connection He proceeds further to say that we must perform our duties, our *swadharma*, which have become incumbent on us owing to our birth and the particular place we hold in society. He says:— 'You must not swerve from this action (fighting) also considering it to be your *swadharma*.' And he advises us not to set a premium on the result of the action or look for it with a covetous eye, because that will entail bondage and sufferings. The right method is to perform our duty without the least concern with its result, having kept the mind perfectly equanimous in success or failure that accrues from it.

#### PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT ACTION

In the third chapter Sri Bhagavan further expatiates upon *Karma Yoga* or the principle of Right Conduct. Man as enveloped in matter he is, cannot remain still but must do some kind of action. His nature itself goads him to action. This material universe is the universe of motion as the modern science tells us. There is hardly an atom, hardly an electron without motion. Even in ether—the so-called homogeneous mass of matter—there is motion. Creation means breaking down of the primal equilibrium of the cosmic energy through vibration. So action is life and life means work. Bhagavan says: "You have to work. You



cannot stop for a single moment without doing action." But the right method of doing work is to do it without any attachment to its result, even as the great Spirit of Nature manifests no purposiveness in the natural activities. He says, "Give up your idea of enjoyment behind the action. You do action, but never seek its fruit. Do action with the idea of duty, feel as if the Divine Will is working through the whole universe and you are only subserving the Divine Will." It is something like the rays of the sun that are coming and illumining your room. We can shut out the rays of the sun by closing the doors and windows of the room, or open them and let the light of heaven come in and flood our room. When the room is thus illumined with the sun's light, we all know that the light of the room does not belong to it, but it comes from the sun. So when we open up our hearts to God, the Divine rays flood our hearts. We feel, as if we are completely inundated with that Divine light, and in that consciousness when we do our action, it will never be *our* action, but virtually the inspired action of the Divine Will. That is the whole truth of *Karma Yoga* that Bhagavan speaks of in the third chapter.

At the end of the second chapter Sri Bhagavan draws an enthralling picture of the man who is established in *Brahma*-consciousness and tells Arjuna that it is the acme of human progress and the final haven of peace and beatitude in life. But the per-

fect serenity of the picture naturally evokes fear and doubt in Arjuna's mind. So at the beginning of this chapter Arjuna complains, "In one breath you are speaking of this supreme *Atman*, absolute *Brahman*, which is a transcendental entity and as such beyond all action, and in the next you are asking me to fight! How is it? Action means motion and change and that is possible only for matter which is in time, space and causation, hence no motion nor change can be conceived in a transcendental or absolute entity. Therefore *Parabrahman* or *Paramatman* must necessarily be actionless or *niskriya*. And when a man tries to realise that principle in life, how can he engage himself in action. You tell me that Supreme *Brahman* is the basis of all, and again you say that I must do my duty. It is confusing. If the actionlessness of *Brahman* is the highest state, then why art thou driving me to action, commanding me to do even such dire and sinful act as war, which means so much of death and ruination." Sri Bhagavan replies, perhaps smilingly, "You have misunderstood me, O Arjuna, on this point. There is no doubt that the supreme truth of life is the transcendental reality of *Atman*, and its realisation in consciousness is the highest goal, but no one can attain that state without action. Through action only man can go beyond action. Unless the nescience of the heart is removed by the right method of action, he cannot realise or even understand intellectually the full significance of the transcendental *Atman*. Man, as he is placed in

the society encumbered with a complex of individual relationship and call of duties, has to do work, and his own mind, as it is steeped in nescience or *Avidya*, will goad him to work. Even for the maintenance of the body man has to do some kind of action, — has to put forth some kind of energy. Complete actionlessness is possible only in *Samadhi* or in death. So any false and premature imitation of the former will only result in the latter condition. Therefore the right path of ascent to that giddy height of the transcendental Inaction, *Naishkarma-siddhi*, is not relinquishment of duty — *karma-sannyasa*, but the faithful performance of duty with a decentred consciousness. Ordinarily man works with his consciousness centred upon his own little ego, but the truly spiritual man should work with his consciousness fixed upon that Universal Life which we commonly term God. A devotee has to start in this line of *Karma Yoga* with the idea that he is working or doing his duty, not for any selfish end but in obedience to Divine command. That was the point which Bhagavan tried to impress upon Arjuna when he was fleeing away from the battlefield.

#### HUMAN SOCIETY AS A REPLICA OF THE VIRAT PURUSHA

The entire human society has been conceived by the ancient sages of India as one Being, the Divine *Purusha*, and the different parts of the

society as the different limbs of that Supreme Being, and as each limb has its own allotted function to perform for the general upkeep of the body, so each caste, each *varna*, each *ashram*, each individual belonging to a particular place in society, has to perform his own duty, his own office, for the general upkeep of the collective life. Therefore the maintenance of the collective life has to be aimed at and not individual self-gratification. That is the import of the grand *varna-ashrama dharma* scheme of ancient India. Sri Bhagavan says,

“Work other than those performed for the Cosmic Life, *yajna*, becomes the source of bondage. So do the work, O Son of Kunti, for the same, being free from attachment.”

It is better to die while performing one's own *dharma*; still another's *dharma* should not be adopted, (as) another's *dharma* is fraught with danger for one. For instance, if hand wants to do the function of brain and brain tries to do the office of the leg, then there will be a complete dislocation of the body politic. In a society, according to one's own actions, one is born with certain limitations and obligations, and these obligations must be discharged for the evolution of life, taking this to be a natural call of duty, or a Divine command. Thus, by performing duty man can rise in the scale of life, because thus the impurities of selfishness of his heart will be washed away, and it will gradually

dawn on him that individual life is best lived only in the Universal; life is glorified, when lived in touch with God. So every action must be transmuted into worship. That is what Bhagavan means, when he says:

“Act being in *yoga*, O Conqueror of Wealth, and having abandoned all attachment.” That is a wonderful teaching. Perhaps no other teacher in the world has given this kind of teaching to his disciples. “Go and fight being established in *yoga*.” Even fighting can be done being in *yoga*! “Remember me and fight.” Bhagavan asks Arjuna to be a *yogi*. Every one of us has to be a *yogi* even in our work-a-day life. That is exactly what Bhagavan exhorts us to be. Every one of us must be a *yogi* in this sense that we should always maintain the spiritual consciousness that there is the Infinite Divine Life behind us all, nay, it is flowing in and through us. Even the tiniest bubble should know that there is the infinity of the ocean at its back and it is filled with the being of that infinite ocean. Even for a few days, if you can sincerely think like that and try to mould your daily action from morning till evening in that light, then assuredly there will come a new awakening in your soul, you will get a new strength, and a new light will begin to dawn on you which will bring in its train the peace, the solace “that passeth all understanding”. Moreover, if one performs action in that way, one will not be affected by the concomitant reaction.

## LAW OF KARMA AS LAW OF CAUSATION

It is a well-known law of Nature that every action produces a reaction. If I throw a stone against the wall, the wall turns it in rebound. If I put my hand into fire my hand burns. This is the law and it is inexorable. It is only another aspect of the Law of Causation. Life is guided intrinsically by this law. Therefore a Hindu believes that all his sufferings and enjoyments are wholly due to his own action. We cannot hold Angels and Satans responsible for our enjoyments and sufferings, because that means acceptance of a kind of immoral and irrational basis of life. If we suffer on no account of ours, then suffering must be caused by some other agent. If God is held responsible for our sufferings, certainly He will no longer be God. If Satan is allowed to cause our sufferings, as sometimes it is alleged, then God is helpless to control Satan, and powerless to protect His own creatures against the allurements of the evil one! Such a God is an impotent God! Moreover, if there be an extra-cosmic God who creates and rules the universe, then no logic can solve how evil is created and allowed to thrive under such a benign God. Hence the Hindu philosophy takes a more logical view and asserts that this world is wholly governed by only one law, the law of causation, nothing can happen in life without a previous cause. If the effect be one's suffering its cause must be sought also in one's own self. We

cannot suffer on other's account. Suppose we suffer for other's action, the law that allows such a thing is an immoral law. Even in the human society the son is never punished for the crime of the father. And if human justice cannot allow the punishment of one for the crime of another, how can Divine Justice allow such a thing. It is perfectly true then, if there is any moral basis in life, all sufferings and enjoyments of one are caused by one's own actions. Without entering into further detail of it, I may tell you that this law of *karma* is accepted as an axiomatic truth by the Hindus. We maintain that our births and re-births are due to our own *karma* and so also our sufferings and enjoyments in life. These births and re-births, which really mean limitations and sufferings, have to be avoided. We all seek avoidance of re-birth and the concomitant miseries of life. So to a Hindu salvation in life, *mukti*, means an absolute cessation of this cycle of births and deaths, the *samsar gati*. That is after all the ideal in life. But how to attain that ideal? If life means activity and if action brings a sure reaction, it forms a vicious circle; how can the soul get out of it? Sri Bhagavan says that there is a way out. Some action may not bring a reaction, for instance, if you take a stone and throw it to the infinite sky beyond then the stone never returns to you. Only when you throw it against the wall, the wall reacts. When you do an action out of selfish motive against the world, the whole world reacts upon you. Never

consider that this world is an empty space. According to Vedanta philosophy the entire universe is as concrete an entity as the wall before you, and that is called the *Virata Purusha*. Suppose you commit a murder in secret, and escape the hand of police or any human detection, yet that does not mean that it will be all well with you here and hereafter; nay, that very act of yours will bring the proper retribution as reaction from that solid wall of Life, *Virata Purusha*. That reaction is called *karma-phal*. Therefore, if you want to escape this *karma-phal*, try to throw your stone by all means towards the infinite sky, direct all your actions towards God. So Bhagavan teaches here how man can direct his action in such a way as not to be affected by its reaction. And that process is the dedication of the fruits of action to God, the great *Karma Yogi*. He says,

“To work you have the right, but never to its result.” So we have to create a habit in us to do our *karma* without any selfish motive; the only motive that should be allowed to sway our mind is the service of God or the Universal Life, — *Bhagavat-prityartham*. Thus only can all work get the sanctity of worship and duty. And the performance of duty is called *Dharma* in our scriptures. Its disinterested performance means also the worship of God. As Bhagavan has said in the last chapter,



“From which have come out all beings and by which all are pervaded, by worshipping That by the performance of one’s own duty, man can attain perfection.”

#### SELF-REALISATION THROUGH SELF-DEDICATION

Lastly, in connection with the present theme I would like to tell you that the realisation of the the highest goal in life can never be attained through self-aggrandisement or self-laudation as the Vedic Mantra asserts :

“Not by work, nor by progeny, nor by wealth, but by renunciation alone man can attain immortality.” The spirit of renunciation and service has ever been the cardinal principle of the practical religious life of the Hindus. A Hindu is asked to look upon the whole life as a sacrifice on the altar of God. It is exactly what Bhagavan means when He speaks of *yajna* in the third and fourth chapters. More of this *yajna* we shall hear later on. But we must never forget it in our life that the path of salvation lies only through sacrifice and renunciation, that is the first truth of religion and spirituality. Unless you renounce your little self and little concerns of life, you cannot attain the larger life, your higher self. Truly speaking, there is no such thing as renunciation. Renunciation empty of purpose or higher values of life means death and naturally it cannot have any spiritual meaning. But by re-

nunciation, sacrifice or *yajna*, we mean really the renunciation of this small egoistic life for the realisation of the Higher Self or the Universal Life which is God. So Bhagavan always insists upon renunciation in life as the guiding principle of this *Karma Yoga*. If sacrifice or *yajna* be our watchword and our life be controlled under its stern discipline, then life itself will get a new orientation and a new meaning, it will assume the halo of sanctity of worship, and there will be no place in it for scrambling or competition for material values, nor for fighting for rights, both of which have become the veritable curse of modern life. Only the ideal of duty and sacrifice will fill the life with its sacred perfume, sublimating it into a continued process of self-dedication and spiritual communion with God.

But it does not mean that one should give up the ordinary affairs of life. Nay, even fighting has to be done with all the zest and ardour of a real soldier. You may even fight, but fight for self-defence only and for the defence of the truth. Bhagavan is urging Arjuna to fight to punish the evil-minded Duryodhana and his party. So you must not compromise with evil; you must resist evil either actively or passively — whether by giving it a real battle or by other means. But never submit to, or compromise with, evil or untruth. Arjuna's attitude of running away from the battlefield instead of punishing the wicked as a *Kshatriya* ought to do for the protection of society, was tantamount

to compromise with evil. Still you should always remember that your action is not for your selfish end, but for a higher purpose — for the service of the Universal Life. That is the supreme religion; that is the keynote of our *Sanatan Dharma*. You must not swerve from the truth. Be prepared to face all kinds of sufferings for the sake of truth, but never compromise with evil. Remember that our Lord Krishna is constantly urging us to fight evil by all means, and never to suffer it to thrive for the ruination of the society through our neglect. Evil is the darkness of the Unreal, the sinister cloud of *Maya*, that degrades life into the ditch of suffering and bondage. So it must be fought off and dispelled for the betterment of society. This is another aspect of our *Sanatan Dharma*. If we can sincerely follow this teaching of Sri Krishna in life, the national life of India would be glorified immensely. Not only shall we be able to manifest all those healthy activities which have made some of the nations of the modern world strong and aggressive but to make our nation a great corrective of those giddy-headed peoples who drunk with power and wealth, are out in the world for self-aggrandisement by exploiting the weaker folks. But these nations in their hopelessly inebriate condition have lost all peace and joy of the soul. Either they are feigning happiness of a drunkard or eating their own entrails to find it. All religious teachers of the world have taught humanity that the path of peace and beatitude lies not in self-aggrandisement

but in self-renunciation and self-dedication. Modern Western world heeds them not, but India knows the lesson by heart. Her Sri Krishna teaches her how to act through renunciation. There are two ideals we notice, one of the East and the other of the West. The West is trying to show how much a man can possess and in that attempt it has murdered sleep. It has become restless and mad with ambition. But India's ideal has ever been how little a man can possess and by pursuance of that ideal she has learned to relinquish all her possessions and yet gain all the wealth of inner peace. She still knows the art of gaining the Kingdom of Heaven within. Because India has heard the voices of her Prophets and learned at their feet this great lesson of renunciation and sacrifice of the external kingdom for the kingdom of Heaven and of soul that we find her great kings and monarchs in ancient times renouncing all the luxuries of the royal life and repairing to the solitary forest in quest of that Kingdom. It is a unique spectacle witnessed in India alone. So India's ideal is altogether different from the ideal of other nations, particularly those of the West. Our principle of renunciation is really the principle of self-mastery and self-realisation. Thus teaches Bhagavan Sri Krishna how we can sacrifice through *Karma Yoga* our little self, little concerns, our little interests, for the realisation or attainment of the highest goal in life, the supreme peace and beatitude of the Divine Being — the final liberation.

## SECOND DISCOURSE

### THE PHILOSOPHY OF YAJNA OR SACRIFICE

In the course of the third chapter Sri Bhagavan speaks to Arjuna incidentally, to show him, as it were, a perfect example of motiveless action, that even though He has no duty to perform in this universe, nor has He anything unattained or attainable, still He is ever engaged in action. If He gives up work, the whole world will go to ruin and all beings following his example will bring about self-destruction. Indeed, God has created this universe and is still holding it on in its position without any motive or purpose of His own. He is incessantly active in this creation, yet He maintains His transcendental tranquillity within Himself! He is active, yet He is not active; He is moving, yet He is in His eternal stillness — that is the grandest of all mysteries of His being. This creative process of His has been designated in the Vedas as *Purushamedha*, that is, the *yajna* of the *Virat Purusha*, in which He sacrifices Himself for self-manifestation and self-realisation. If we ponder over the activities of nature, we cannot fail to notice this grand cosmic *yajna* that is constantly going on around us. And man being part of this creation must contribute his quota to this cosmic *yajna* in the same selfless

spirit as the Lord of the creation is Himself doing. This is another aspect of *Karma Yoga*. But before he takes up the various aspects of *yajna*, He likes to tell us something about His own self. He has been constantly telling Arjuna to dedicate his actions to God — to Him. He uses the first person when He says, "You think of Me and fight". Further at the beginning of the fourth chapter, He says that it was He who taught the secrets of this wonderful *yoga* to ancient sages. This evokes a question from Arjuna as to his antecedents and his real nature. Perhaps it was subconscious in Arjuna's mind that Krishna was only a human being, born in Vasudeva's family, although he might be endowed with almost superhuman powers, he could, as such, be some higher being incarnate in flesh. How would then the dedication of mind to him bring salvation in life? Or, at best, he might be a personal deity, but he could never be the impersonal immanent *Paramatman* or *Parabrahman*, whose grace alone could give man the emancipation from the fetters of life. Moreover, it is also a great enigma that presents itself to all thoughtful men when they go to understand the persono-impersonal nature of God. Logic demands Him to be a strictly impersonal immanent principle; but human feeling and humane religion wants Him to be a *person* to receive all the devotion and worship of the human heart. Therefore we notice the conflict in understanding the true nature of God — God as He Himself is and as He

appears to us. So Bhagavan proceeds in this chapter to remove that kind of misconception in Arjuna's mind, asserts with all the emphasis He can command that His Being is eternal and He is no other than the cosmic Soul; only the ignorant know Him to be Krishna, the son of Vasudeva.

#### THE PHILOSOPHY OF DIVINE INCARNATION

In this connection another great truth He speaks out here for the enlightenment of the whole humanity. It is the much disputed theory of the Divine Incarnation. He says: "Though I am birthless, of the nature of the immutable Self and Lord of the whole creation, yet I do incarnate Myself again and again by My own *Maya*." By *Maya* Bhagavan means no doubt that mysterious power of His which produces these phenomena of creation. It is sometimes questioned how an infinite God can incarnate Himself, how the principle that is transcendental can take a body under the limitations of matter and appear as an individual being, and again what is the necessity of his doing so. These are the two most pertinent questions that can be raised against the incarnation theory. Some of the principal religions, *viz.*, Hinduism and Christianity do accept the theory of incarnation of God, and others again there are, namely, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism and Zoroastrianism, which deny the possibility of such incarnation. They hold that God being infinite in His power and wisdom can

do things without undergoing any kind of limitations — without suffering any kind of bondage of the flesh. So according to them, the incarnation theory is wrong. So-called incarnations are only Prophets or Divine Messengers. But the incarnationists hold that God does incarnate Himself in flesh and blood of His own sweet will and through His infinite power. The reason of their belief is only faith in the words of their Pophets. If you ask me about the rational basis of this incarnation theory, I may tell you, logically speaking, we can neither maintain the incarnation theory nor the non-incarnation theory; both are illogical. The strict logical position is the absolute non-creation theory, which is calld *Ajatavada* by the Vedantists; it means that there has been no real creation at all, so no question of incarnation or non-incarnation can arise. But if this incarnation theory is to be substantiated by logic, it will be of this wise: When we speak of the infinity of God, we should remember that it is not of the mathematical kind, but it is the philosophical infinity. There are two kinds or conceptions of infinity: The one is the mathematical conception, the other is the metaphysical. The mathematical conception denotes an entity that is very difficult to comprehend by human mind and so it is called infinite. Here is this table before us, which has definite dimensions. Suppose if you go on multiplying this table to infinite number, piling table upon table until the whole sky is filled up with it, you will define that great concourse of tables



as infinite, simply because your mind is incapable of comprehending the huge dimensions that that infinite series will produce. But, logically speaking that cannot be really infinite, because all the dimensions, *i. e.*, length, breadth and thickness of this table, which constitute its limitation, will still continue to be there, although multiplied to an infinite degree. When X is multiplied by infinity, the quantity becomes infinite for all practical purposes and therefore mathematically, but X remains there all the same, it is never annihilated. X means limitation here. So that infinite mathematical series is really limited in the eye of logic. When we say 'matter is infinite', 'space is infinite', 'time is infinite', we mean that all these infinities are mathematical in their value. But there is the other kind of infinity which we call transcendental infinity — an entity that is beyond all limitations of time, space and causation. And such an entity alone can be really free from the least tinge of finitude, limitations of any kind. Hence that entity is rightly and logically described as infinite. This sort of infinity can be termed the metaphysical infinity. It is a transcendental entity beyond all matter, therefore beyond time, space and causation. When that transcendental entity appears through the screen of matter in a particular way, we call it the individualised expression of the Infinite Being. It is something like the solar light or the sky. The light or the sky is infinite in its own being, but when we open the door of a room and look at the

infinite sky or light beyond through the door, it appears in the shape of the door, although what is visible through the door is really the infinite sky, and not a fragmentary piece of it, as sky cannot *really* be broken into pieces. As in this case the limitation of the aperture puts, as it were and not really, a kind of limitation upon the sky, so when God does appear through the aperture of matter, through material bodies, He only assumes those forms and is not really conditioned by them. And exactly that is what Bhagavan says of Himself :

“Fools consider Me to be an embodied person without knowing My supreme reality which is transcendental and lord of all creatures.” The possibility of incarnation then becomes clear. This incarnation, like His creation, as we shall see later on, has real substantive connection with His real being. It is only an appearance, a phenomenon that He puts on Himself. Though He assumes this limitation of form, yet His transcendence never suffers the least, and this truth is well borne out by the fact that those great personages whom humanity worships as Divine Incarnations, exhibit in them a perfect model of human life and bring such a mass of spiritual energy as revolutionises the human society. They come like huge tidal waves and make epochs in the history of mankind. Nay, these Prophets and Incarnations become the perennial sources of inspiration for men and thus elevate them to a higher state of life. When these persons, who fascinate the soul

of man so much with their knowledge, power and purity, say that they are incarnations, either we must reject them wholly as liars and imposters, or accept them in their own words as incarnations of God. There is no other alternative left for us. When Rama, Krishna and Christ come and tell us with all the wonderful manifestations of power, piety and wisdom that they are God incarnate, can we really think that they are imposters? If they be so, how can they exhibit such power over human society? Thousands of years have passed through the corridor of time since their advent, yet we see that these great souls still hold the mind of man under sway and sublimate man's life for the attainment of the Kingdom of Heaven. Hence man naturally accepts them as truly divine. So Bhagavan Krishna also says: "I am the same Eternal Principle which is the basis of all life and creation, and again I create myself by subjugating my own *Maya*."

Then He gives the reason why he incarnates Himself. He says, "Whenever there is the decadence of virtue and the rise of impiety, I embody Myself. From age to age I incarnate Myself to emancipate the virtuous, to punish the wicked and to uphold *Dharma* — the path of spiritual salvation." Here is the wonderful formula that He gives out to the world for the necessity of God-incarnation. God has some duties, as it were, such as the creation, the preservation and the destruction of the

universe. He creates it from its primordial condition, He maintains it, and at the end of the *Kalpa*, when time comes for final dissolution, He draws it back to Himself. So, creation, preservation and destruction are His three-fold duties. Then again, He has two other kinds of work, namely, the protection of the virtuous and the punishment of the wicked. The virtuous have to be protected for the maintenance of the society, it is from the virtuous that man can learn the true value of life and know of the goal towards which he must wend his way up. And the wicked must be punished, so that they can understand that there is a law of justice in this universe and that too is ultimately for the redemption of their souls. Now, it may be questioned here: Cannot God do those very things being in His transcendental state? Why should He incarnate Himself? The answer that the incarnationists give is that God is no doubt perfect and infinite, and as such there is no need for Him either for incarnation or creation. God being perfect, strictly speaking He needs nothing, as Bhagavan Himself has said: "I have nothing to do and there is nothing that I have not done. I being immanent, all are in Me and all belong to Me." Under such circumstances there is no need for Him, no purposiveness whatsoever. Yet He does these things. Then you come to the very fundamental question: Why should He create the universe? If He is perfect, He must not have any necessity for creation. The answer is given by Vyasa in his

Vedanta Sutra: He creates out of sheer inner joy. Just as a child dances not for any necessity but out of mere inner joy which is expressed by the dance, just as a musician, when his heart is filled with the joy of music, bursts forth into music, similarly the divine musician, the divine artist, out of the very fullness of His inner bliss, bursts with joy in the form of the creation. The great Nataraja is dancing His celestial ecstatic dance and from his foot-fall springs forth the creation. This creation again is His song, and is His poem! All these figures are used in our ancient scriptures. So His coming down in physical form and playing with His devotees are also a part of that great *leela*—not for any purpose but simply to lead and shape the evolution of life. In one form He is the leader and in another form He is the led—that is the wonderful mystery of His creation. Is He not Himself *Jiva*, *Jagat* and everything that is? And perhaps that is why in the Puranas a theory is maintained that at every stage of evolution of life God incarnates Himself to direct the process of evolution. When the earth was filled with water and there was no living creature except fish living in that aquatic region, God incarnated Himself as *Matsya* (fish) to guide the evolution at that primary stage of life. Then, again, when there emerged a little of solid earth beneath water, then came the next stage of evolution, and perhaps it was fit for God to incarnate Himself as *Kurma* (tortoise). At the third stage of evolution when the earth became

still more manifest in the form of marshy soil, he incarnated Himself as *Varaha* (boar). At the fourth stage, when dry land emerged and mammals began to grow, there arose the necessity of God's incarnating Himself in the form of *Nrisingha* (man-lion). Next, when man emerged on the face of the earth in the process of evolution, God appeared as *Vamanu* (dwarf man). Then, as the evolutionary process continued and man evolved more and more, we find greater and greater manifestations in the form of Rama, Krishna and others. There is a very great philosophical significance behind these allegories of the Puranas. It means that there is no life without God, immanent in it, nor can there happen any evolution in life without the guiding hand of the Divine Being behind it. Sri Bhagavan further tells Arjuna that He incarnated Himself many times before and so also Arjuna. But Bhagavan remembers them all, being conscious of the past, present and future. His being the cosmic mind, past, present and future all are blended into one eternal present. With God there is no past, no future, but only eternal present. There is another important point to be noted here. When Bhagavan speaks of Himself, sometimes He speaks of Himself as a person, sometimes He speaks of Himself as an immanent principle, sometimes He calls Himself the Absolute. In fact, in the Vedas, God has been described in these three aspects: God the absolute or transcendental, God the immanent, and God the personal.

## THE TRIUNE VISION OF GOD

All these three are true, and they are the three aspects of one and the same principle. So Bhagavan says :

“In whatever way men worship Me, in the same way do I fulfil their desires: it is My path, O son of Pritha, that men tread, in all ways.” He knows the intention of every being and so He appears to everyone as he desires Him to appear. This is a wonderful gospel of harmony which again is peculiar to the Gita. There is another truth that Bhagavan speaks about Himself in this chapter which is also very vital to a correct comprehension of the deity. First he says, “I am the one creator of all divisions and pluralities in life.” Thereby He distinctly means that He is the active agent—both the efficient and the material cause—of this universe. But in the very next breath he denies it by saying, “But know Me essentially as an immutable and actionless being.” Here Sri Krishna speaks again in an enigmatic language. What he really means is that He has both transcendental and relative aspects. In the relative aspect, *vyavaharika rupa*, he is certainly the First Cause and the First Principle. But in His absolute aspect, *paramarthika rupa*, He is ever immutable and inactive, and is perfectly unconcerned with the affairs of the creation. In a transcendental being which is beyond time and space, there can be no action. All actions, motions

and changes are conceived only in time and space. Therefore, truly speaking, the transcendental intelligence (*Paramatman*) is immutable and actionless. Yet He appears as *karta*, the doer of all actions; that is the beauty! He is really an *akarta*, non-agent, in the absolute sense, but from the standpoint of the relative He is the *karta* as nothing else can be an agent save an intelligent entity. For instance, when rice is cooked in hot water which is being boiled by the fire in the hearth, we all know that it is being cooked by the heat of the water, the fire of the hearth does not directly boil the rice. Yet, it is the fire that is heating the water. So in one sense the fire does not boil the rice, but in another sense it is the fire that really boils the rice by heating the water. Similarly, this creation that has proceeded from the primordial non-intelligent Energy derives its power of working from God — from that transcendental Intelligence. Even mind and intellect which are material according to the Hindu psychologists derive their light of intelligence from *Atman*, and thus in reflected light it assumes the role of an active agent. So in one sense the Supreme Intelligence, God, is *karta* and in another sense He is *akarta*. Therefore Sri Bhagavan says: "I have created the four *varnas* according to *guna* and *karma* and you must know that I am the originator of these, although I am really immutable and *akarta*."



## THE INNER SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FOUR CASTES

I may tell you here that I like to give a very wide interpretation to the word "*varna*" in this passage of the Gita. It cannot mean the narrow caste system as sometimes the orthodox commentators take it to mean. *Varna* literally means colour, and the idea of creatures having specific colour according to their intrinsic qualities has developed from the fact that since all creatures, nay, all material objects, are produced from the admixture of the original three *gunas*, viz., *sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*, which are inherent in *Prakriti*, the primordial matter, creatures must have also the colours of the *gunas*. *Sattwa* is of white colour, *rajas* is red, and *tamas* is dark. Therefore, every creature should have the colour of the *guna* that is predominant in him. And the classification based on these colours of the *gunas*, is called *varna*. The word "*varna*" is now generally taken to mean the caste system that is prevalent in Hindu society. But I see in it a wider significance, because from our scriptures we learn that these four *varnas* are not limited to human society only, they exist among all creatures of the universe. Orthodox Hindus maintain that a *Brahmin* is of the *sattwik* quality, a *Kshattriya* is of the *sattwik* and the *rajasik* quality, a *Vaishya* is of the *rajasik* and the *tamasik* quality, and that a *Sudra* is of the *tamasik* quality alone. And they again assert that these four castes are determined by birth, i. e., from *Brahmin* father

and *Brahmin* mother alone, the *Brahmin* boy is born, so is the *Kshattriya*, the *Vaishya* and the *Sudra*. But in this narrow sense, *varna* can at best signify race that depends on blood. And the four *varnas* then mean the four races or *jāti*. But, as a matter of fact, we know, no race holds an exclusive monopoly of a particular quality or *guna*. Then the *guna*-theory of the *varnas* has to be thrown overboard. But Bhagavan clearly says here,

“The four *varnas* have been created by Me according to the classification of *guna* and *karma*.” What Bhagavan means here by *varna* based on the three primary *gunas*, has been made amply clear in the 41st to 44th *slokas* of the eighteenth chapter of the Gita. We shall hear of it when we come to that chapter. If colour and race both constitute the *Brahmin* *varna*, then all members of the white race should be *Brahmins*! The word “*varna*” indicates colour, no doubt, but it is the colour that belongs to the three *gunas*, which the mental body of man is endued with. When a man’s mind is *sattwik*, there is a kind of halo which emanates from his inner body, and those who have the eyes to see can perceive the *sattwik* emanation. Similarly, the *rajasik* and the *tamasik* man have *rajasik* and *tamasik* emanations. So these four colours really belong to the mindstuff, the mental body. They do not belong to the physical body, and therefore *varna* cannot be deter-

mined by birth. Then, again, Bhagavan says about *karma* which is instrumental in the classification of *varnas*. There are two meanings of the word "*karma*" — (1) the *prârabdha*, and (2) the *vrittis* in this life. A man is born with certain qualities and tendencies in a certain environment according to his *karma* of previous birth. This previous *karma*, which we call *prârabdha*, directs the birth and controls the present life, so the birth is not an accident, its quality and environment are absolutely predetermined by one's own *prârabdha*. Moreover, we, the Hindus, maintain that the soul sheathed in its previous mental body, *sukshma sharira*, comes to be reincarnated in the present body, hence the mental condition of man, be it *sattwik*, *rajasik* or *tamasik*, is almost fixed and can never be materially influenced by that of the parents. How can then the child get the *varna* of the parents? So the *varna* or the mental cast — and not caste — is determined by the previous *karma*. If you take *karma* to mean *vrittis* or profession in life, then also the above mentioned conception of *varna* holds good. Man adopts his *vrittis* according to his inherent tendencies only; his actions are nothing but concrete expression of his own inner life. Do we not often judge a man by his actions? So if we want to understand whether a person is really of *sattwik* temperament or not, we have to discern his actions in daily life. Bhagavan says exactly the same thing in the eighteenth chapter. There are natural tendencies of a *Brahmin*

that makes him a *Brahmin*. But when we see a boy born of *Brahmin* parents exhibiting the tendency worse than that of a *Chandala*, how can we call him a *Brahmin*? So Bhagavan clearly says: "These four *varnas* I have created according to *guna* and *karma*." Early in the Rig Veda we find an explanation of these four *varnas*. In the famous Purusha Sukta we read,

"The *Brahmin* was the head of the *Virat Purusha*, the *Kshattriya* was born of his arms, the *Vaishya* was the thigh and from the feet originated the *Sudras*." The meaning is, the *Brahmin* is to be considered the head, the *Kshattriya* the arm, the *Vaishya* the trunk and the *Sudra* the legs of the *Virat* — the cosmic life. Now, we see that these four *varnas* constitute the entire body of the *Virat Purusha*. But the hereditary caste system exists only in India and the Hindu society forms only a fragment of the entire human society of the world. How can it be then the body of the *Virat*? Nor can we seriously maintain that God has created only the Hindu society and all other human beings of the world have been created by the Devil! Even to think of it is insanity! Therefore the sane view of the Vedic conception of the four *varnas* is that the entire human society which forms the body of the *Virat* is divided into four classes. All those who exhibit the *sattwik* quality by their word, thought and deed are the real *Brahmins*. Those who exhibit the *sattwik-rajasic* qualities in

their life are the *Kshatriyas*. Similarly those who exhibit the *rajasik-tamasik* qualities are the *Vaishyas*, and those who are purely *tamasik* are the *Sudras*.\* These are the four types of men existing everywhere in the world. A *sattwik* man is the real *Brahmin* whether he is born in India or in Europe, or in America, or anywhere else. And perhaps the ancient leaders of our society knew this significance of *varna* and therefore they never made the society so rigid as it is now. All ancient Non-Aryans, such as the Huns and the Scythians who came to India from outside were wholly absorbed in Hindu society and were given the status of *Kshatriya* or *Vaishya*. The *Kshatriyas* of Agnikula of Rajputana are of Scythian origin. Now, when the original *varna* which is so natural to man has been petrified into caste system, it has become a veritable millstone on the neck of the society and retarded its progress. It has produced quite an abnormal condition in the society and spurred the base tendency of scrambling for rights and privileges instead of laying the due emphasis upon *guna* and *dharma*. But our Lord Sri Krishna

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\**Vide* Mahabharatam, Shanti Parva, Chapter 188, 10-14 slokas.

Mahabharatam, Shanti Parva, Chapter 189, 3, 4  
& 8 slokas.

Mahabharatam, Anushasan Parva, Chapter 143,  
48-51 slokas.

Bhagavat Skandha VII, Chapter 11, 32 sloka.

is always insisting on the duty or *dharma* aspect of life in the Gita. A *Brahmin* is *Brahmin* only when he performs his *Brahmanical dharma*, a *Kshattriya* is *Kshattriya* when he maintains his *Kshattriya* virtues and translates them into functions of life. I may also tell you here that according to our *Shastras* there are these four *varnas* in all creatures. Among the gods there are four *varnas*; as for instance, Brihaspati and Sukracharya are considered *Brahmin* gods, Indra and Varuna are *Kshattriya*, Kuvera is *Vaishya*, and the Aswin twins are *Sudra*. Among the animals also there are four *varnas*. The cow is considered to be *Brahmin*, the lion and the tiger are *Kshattriya*, the camel and the horse are *Vaishya* and goats and sheep are *Sudra*. This is not all. We go still further even to plants. According to the *Vaidya Shastras*, certain plants of white colour having *sattwika* qualities are *Brahmin*, those with *rajasia* quality and of red colour are *Kshattriya*, while others are *Vaishya* and *Sudra*. So you see, in the entire creation of the living world, beginning from the vegetable kingdom up to the celestial world — the world of the *Devas* — these four types exist. Hence *varna* cannot mean caste system.

#### TWO STAGES IN KARMA YOGA

There is another important point in Bhagavan's teachings in this chapter, which we must pay attention to. From His teachings we understand

that there are two stages in *Karma Yoga*: In the first stage, as he has taught us in the third chapter, the *Karmayogi* performs his duties and works in the ordinary way of life maintaining the full consciousness of agentship, '*kartritva*', i. e., with the sense "I am the doer", just like any other man. Only he denies himself the idea of "enjoyer" — *voḥkritva*, he dedicates all the fruits of his actions to God. He thinks that he is worshipping his God by the performance of his duties. Such an attitude of mind and such performances gradually bring about the purification of the heart. And when the impurities and the ignorance of the mind are slowly purged out, the *yogi* begins to feel the real grandeur of the deity — the divine sun begins to shed its full lustre upon the heart. And in the light he beholds that everything is He — He is not only the 'enjoyer', but the 'actor' also is He. With the dawn of this consciousness, begins the second stage of *Karma Yoga*, which is practically the same as *Jnana Yoga*. That is why this fourth chapter is designated as *Jnana Yoga*. But the whole of this attitude of self-dedication, as it has been said before, Bhagavan calls *yajna*. In this chapter, he describes various kinds of devotional practices terming them all *yajnas*. But he lays particular emphasis upon *Jnana yajna*. He eulogizes *Jnana* by saying, "Nothing is so holy as knowledge". And he defines knowledge thus: "He who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, is really wise and the doer of all actions." The really wise man, the *Jnani*,

feels that he being the pure principle of intelligence, is neither the doer, nor the enjoyer; in his own inner consciousness he is ever 'inactive' although externally his body is active. He being devoid of ego is really actionless. But the ignorant man who has no light of *Atman*, feels his agentship — his ego — even though externally he may be inactive. That is action in inaction. Sri Krishna describes *Jnana-yajna* thus:

The offering is *Brahman*, the *ghee* that is offered is also *Brahman*. By performance of this kind of work as *Brahman* one attains *Brahman*. Here Bhagavan says clearly that the *Karma-yogin* in that higher stage develops the spiritual insight by which he observes every thing around him and even all actions as manifestations of *Brahman*. Thus he attains the full realisation of the Absolute *Brahman* through the realisation of the immanent aspect. This knowledge is the noblest achievement of human life, because by its realisation all bondages of life are destroyed, all sufferings are annihilated — man attains the *summum bonum* or the highest salvation.

*Jnana* means the knowledge of the transcendental. Along with the consciousness of the transcendental there cannot be any action. In the previous chapter Bhagavan speaks highly about *Karma Yoga*, and exhorts Arjuna to do his duty, but in this fourth chapter He speaks of the transcendental entity where



there is no action. Arjuna gets confused again and does not know what to do, whether to follow the path of action or the path of *Jnana* which is really a path of inaction. So he asks Bhagavan which path is the best for him to follow. In answer, Bhagavan again repeats the same wonderful synthesis between *Jnana* and *Karma*. The glory of the Gita is in its synthetic presentation of the entire philosophy of life. The different schools of philosophical and religious thought speak differently about the best practical life. Some lay emphasis upon *Karma*, some on *Bhakti*, some again upon *Jnana* or upon *Yoga*, to the complete annihilation or starvation of other sides of the human life. For instance, in certain religions too much emphasis is laid upon self-surrender to God, and naturally there is developed a kind of abhorrence of knowledge or *Jnana*; therefore, such religions give no scope for the transcendental realisation. Then, again, another religion like Buddhism, which insists upon the transcendental reality or *nirvana* for all, gives no scope to the human mind to display its spiritual emotions. So Bhagavan answers the question of Arjuna in the most beautiful synthetic language. He says, "Only a child-mind makes the differentiation between the path of *Jnana* and the path of *Karma*, and never the wise one, because the fact is that if one is well established in one of these paths, one is sure to attain the full result of both." Moreover, no one can attain the true *Jnana* without the performance of *Karma*, and when one is well established

in *Jnana* one can do action in the most perfect way, because then only one can do work in the really selfless manner. But when man soars high up in that transcendental consciousness of *Brahman*, all activities of life are suspended, even the blood circulation of the physical body is stopped, the heart ceases to beat in that stage of *nirvikalpa samadhi*. Then man becomes practically dead to all affairs of the relative life. In that state all plurality of perception and conception is completely wiped out from consciousness. Consciousness becomes perfectly contentless. Therefore, when man attains to that state of perfect illumination through *Jnana*, there comes the perfect actionless state, *naiskarma*, for him. This state is attainable both by plodding through the path of *Karma Yoga* and by the process of self-analysis of *Jnana Yoga*.

#### THE COMMON ETHICS AND THE TRANSCENDENTAL ETHICS

Next in passing I may tell you that according to our *Shastras* there are two kinds of ethics: the ordinary ethics and the transcendental ethics. That is why sometimes foreigners, especially the Christian missionaries who do not understand our scriptures, find fault with the Hindu scriptures. They say that Hinduism has no ethics because a Hindu is allowed in a certain stage of his spiritual life to give up all duties and concerns of the mundane life, as duties are then looked upon as a veritable bondage.

Abandonment of duty is non-ethical, and therefore Hinduism has no fixed ethical system. But that is very foolish; because Bhagavan says in the Gita that so long as human mind is in the relative plane dealing with the relative values of life, man must perform his duties. That is the first stage, the very first step of the spiritual life. But when the physical relationship is transcended through the awakening of the absolute consciousness of *Atman*, it becomes quite impossible for man then to understand the relationship of the physical life which alone enforces the conception of duties on us. Therefore in that transcendental stage, there is no more any conception of duty. Although there may remain some physical activities when one returns from *samadhi* to the relative consciousness, yet the conception of duty which is based on false interpretation of life can never occur again. This is the higher or transcendental ethics. That is what Bhagavan speaks of in this chapter:

After all it is the body, the senses and the mind that are running after the sense objects and working variously. I am not doing any of these actions. And when a person maintains such an attitude of detachment and always fixes his mental gaze upon the inner *Atman*, the absolute reality of his being, he finds himself perfectly untainted by any activity of the world even as God Himself is not tainted by the contagion of the world He creates,



Sri Bhagavan gives a beautiful description of such a *Jnani* in the following *sloka* :

Such a person finds all treasure of joy within himself; he finds that his inner self is the source of all illumination and he rests on nothing else but on his own self; he feels an ocean of bliss rolling through his soul. Such a *Yogi* gets the Kingdom of Heaven, the great liberation in *Brahman* within himself. He finds that he has done all that has to be done, nothing has been left undone for him. He feels within himself that after all the goal of life is reached and he is merged in that immortal ocean of infinite bliss, *Para Brahman*. There is nothing more to be achieved than that.

#### THE PRAGMATIC VALUE OF GOD-REALISATION

Now the question arises: What is the practical value, the pragmatic significance of this kind of realisation. Suppose a man goes to the Himalayas and realises God, how is humanity benefited by him? What kind of benefit this sort of realisation gives to society? Modern mind which has become so utilitarian in these days, sometimes criticises that this kind of spiritual realisation of an individual who runs away from the social duties and social obligations is really spiritual hibernation and a religious selfishness. Often we hear wiseacres, who ought to know better, condemning such achievement of the human soul. To that Bhagavan answers,

He says that every action has to be judged from two sides: subjective and objective. As there are two aspects of a thing, *viz.*, as it really is in itself and as it appears to others. Its value also has to be judged from these two sides. The subjective side of a religious action is the enjoyment of the spiritual beatitude and the feeling of stability or the attainment of immortality. That is the most wonderful spiritual value for a man. As one of the foremost thinkers of modern time, Dr. Whitehead, says rightly that religion in its very core means singularity or solitariness of the human soul. When the human soul detaches itself from all its environments and stands face to face with its Divine Maker, then only there is the true birth of spirituality. True spirituality does not take cognizance of society. That is at best the ethical and moral side of religion, not the spiritual side. True spirituality means the mystic communion with the Divine Maker or the Divine Substratum or the Divine Reality of life. There is no question of society here. We find in history that all great saints and sages first had this communion with the Supreme Being in the inner solitude of their souls, having withdrawn completely from the bustle of life. Next, when they had communion with God and were filled with the Divine Illumination, they came out and gave their messages to humanity for its upliftment. So all of these saints and sages have rendered the greatest amount of service. Who served the society more than Krishna, Rama, Christ or Mohammad? Who

were greater benefactors of the human society than the great saints, seers and sages of the world? Indeed they are the salt of the earth as Jesus puts it. Their experiences also show the possibility of the human soul and the expanse to which man can soar in the attainment of perfection in life. Moreover it always happens that when a man realises the transcendental state, his whole life stands transfigured, as if it works a Divine alchemy: the baser metal is transmuted into gold. Such a man cannot but come out to serve the human society by his message, by his spiritual power, by his love and service. So he becomes a veritable beacon light of self-devotion. By manifesting in himself the wonderful bliss of the god-life he brings hope, he brings life, he brings light to man. So none can serve the human society more than these men of God-realisation. That is what Bhagavan says at the end of this chapter and also elsewhere. "Such *Jnanins* and *Bhaktas* are ever engaged in the service of humanity."



### THIRD DISCOURSE

#### THE EMPIRICAL METHODS OF GOD-REALISATION

The sixth chapter of the Gita is one of the most important chapters as it speaks of the very practical aspect of religious life which is commonly called *Raja Yoga*. This chapter is designated as *Abhyasa Yoga*. In the previous chapter Bhagavan speaks of the highest aspects of *Karma Yoga* and also of *Jnana*, in which the *Yogi* has to feel in himself the fundamental unity of life called *Atman*, existing behind all transitory aspects of life. And this transitory aspect, the creation itself, is considered as a grand universal *Yajna*. It is meant only to make a display of the grandeur of the First Principle, God. When a *Yogi* fixes his mind upon that Fundamental Reality, whatever he may be doing, that is, in whatever way the cosmic energy may be expressing itself through him, his soul is not bound or affected by the action, just as the sky is not tainted by the impurities of the wind that blows through it. But that is the culmination both of *Karma Yoga* and *Jnana Yoga*. Thus having harmonized *Karma* and *Jnana*, the two opponent schools of the Vedic time, Lord Krishna tries further in this chapter to show that the realisation through *Karma Yoga* and *Jnana Yoga* can very

well be verified by another method called *Raja Yoga*, lest it might be doubted that the truth realised by the two aforesaid methods of *Karma* and *Jnana*, is only a figment of one's own fancy, a mental aberration, which is called in the language of philosophy solipsism, and owing to which one may think that he is proceeding in the right path. So, if the truth of God is a real truth, is a reality, it must be capable of being verified by other methods also. A devotee, no doubt, starts with the assumption that there is God, a fundamental unity, and all his actions are arranged in the light of that fundamental truth. So he begins with a prepossession, and naturally at the end he realises what he assumed to be the truth: He finds ultimately that by the process of motiveless work and self-dedication, *i. e. Karma Yoga*, he attains the *summum bonum* in life, Supreme Bliss, Supreme Peace, which is in fact the criterion of God-realisation. Every religion speaks of God as a supreme bliss, supreme light and immortal being. So God-realisation must bring to the consciousness of the devotee the feeling that he is immortal — birth and death never condition his being; and that he is an heir to infinite bliss, nay, he is drowned, as it were, in the Ocean of Bliss. His mind is filled with illumination, the light of Supreme Knowledge. There will be no more doubt in his mind about the condition of things. As we never take the help of a candle to see the sun, the sun manifests itself with all its grandeur when it rises, so when God-consciousness



dawns upon us, it comes with all the surety of God's existence. There is left no room for doubt or suspicion, for groping in the dark. The man feels as if he is standing face to face with Reality, and there remains absolutely not even a shadow of doubt in his mind. And as his mind is filled with inner light, all doubts and darkness of suspicion are dispelled, so also all bonds of miseries and sufferings are destroyed. He realises that he is filled with an infinite ocean of joy, as sometimes mystics do express that experience in the figurative language that, the ocean of bliss has, as it were, entered into a pond or a well and is flooding it. So the individual soul finds itself completely merged and lost, as it were, in the infinitude of Supreme Bliss. Then he is conscious also of his immortality. The realisation of such a state of consciousness we call God-realisation, because we define God as *Sat Chit* and *Ananda* — absolute existence, absolute knowledge and absolute bliss; and when our inner consciousness transcends the limitation of our being and all other conditions of life, and becomes filled with that experience of infinity just described, naturally we have no other go than to accept that state of consciousness as the real God-consciousness or God-realisation. We shall see, as we proceed, that Bhagavan shows the possibility of that realisation through various paths. It has been shown in the previous chapters that that stage can be achieved through the performance of our daily duties without

attachment and with self-dedication. In this chapter he tells of the direct method, the empirical method, the scientific method, of God-realisation through the practice of what we commonly call *Raja Yoga*.

#### THE PRELIMINARY DISCIPLINES FOR GOD-REALISATION

First he says :

Those who are desirous of ascending to the path of *Yoga*, for them work is indispensable. But for one who is established in *Yoga*, there is no *karma* (work). Of course, the word *karma* is used here in the technical sense. We, Hindus, consider that all activities of life — not the physical actions like eating, drinking, sleeping, etc., can be divided into four classes, viz., *nitya*, *naimittika*, *kamya* and *nishiddha*. Daily and occasional obligatory duties are those which must be performed by a man for the maintenance of his present position of life in the scale of evolution. By the performance of these no fresh merit is gained. But if one wants to progress in life, one must do something more, one must do *kamya karma*, i. e., action done with a desire of gaining some merit. And *nishiddha karma* is the forbidden action that should not be done, it is the sinful action which brings about retrogression in life instead of evolution. So it should be shunned and avoided. Sri Bhagavan says that those who are desirous of the practice of *Yoga*

must first do their duty properly and in a disinterested manner. By so doing the first thing that is necessary, *i. e.*, the purification of the heart (*chitta-shuddhi*) will be attained. These *nitya*, *naimittika* and *kamya karma* if one does as duties without seeking any merit therefrom, then slowly those very actions performed disinterestedly will bring about self-purification to a great extent. At last that will bring the initial mental strength which is necessary for the starting of the practice of *Yoga*. Without some initial strength of mind and *sattwa guna* it is not possible to practise *Yoga*. Unless the mind is purified to some extent of its impurities of *rajas* and *tamas*, it is not possible to attain *siddhi*, that is, the goal of all *Yoga*, as our Upanishad also says:

“*Brahmins* try to seek the realisation of that Supreme Being through disinterested *jajna*, *dana* and *tapas*.” Without self-control, without the spirit of charity, without the spirit of love and compassion for your fellow beings, without the eagerness to commune with the higher beings, gods, and without seeking the blessings of God, you cannot advance in the practice of *Yoga*. Then he says, no doubt this kind of *karma* is necessary at the initial stage only but not later on. For those who are established in the practice of *Yoga* these *karmas* are no more necessary. For them there is only one *karma* left and that is the practice of concentration. Bhagavan next describes the nature of the *Yogin* who is well established in *Yoga*;

When the senses do not feel any attraction for the sense objects, when the mind is not attached to the effect of *karma*, when all desires for enjoyment — whether of this world or of hereafter, *i. e.*, heavenly enjoyment, — are relinquished, then the man may be considered as established in *Yoga*. So long as there is the least desire for the sense enjoyment, so long as there is the great fascination felt in the minds for the sense objects, one is not established in *Yoga*. Of course, this is the state of a perfect *Yogi*. That is the ideal to be achieved. It is the culmination of the *yogic* practice, the *siddha* state. In the *sadhana* state one must practise it with effort. In the *siddha* state it becomes natural. In the stage of practice one has to relinquish all desires and hankering for sense enjoyment here and hereafter. Only the realisation of God must be kept supreme before the mind. That is why *vairagya* is absolutely necessary in spiritual life. As Bhagavan says subsequently, the mind itself is our friend or foe: When the mind is controlled it becomes our greatest friend, because it is by the help of the mind only that we can attain God-realisation. But if the mind is uncontrolled, then certainly it becomes the arch-fiend, the greatest enemy of ours. Therefore, it is the control of the mind that is so absolutely necessary in the practice of *Yoga*. As in the experiment of scientific truths we do require certain instruments like microscope, magnifying glass and contrivances of similar kind to detect the subtler and subtler phases of matter,

so if any one wants to detect what is even behind mind and matter — mind being the subtlest aspect of matter — he must take the microscope of his mind and must focus it upon the object of his investigation, *i. e.*, God. So the mind must be made a perfect instrument to unravel the mystery of the Supreme Soul. How to do it?

#### RAJA YOGA OR THE DIRECT METHOD OF GOD-REALISATION

“The *Yogi* should constantly practise concentration of the heart, retiring into solitude, alone, with the mind and body subdued, free from hope and possession. Having in a cleanly spot established his seat, firm, neither too high nor too low, made of a cloth, a skin, and *kusha-gass*, arranged in consecution, there, seated on that seat, making the mind one-pointed and subduing the action of the imaging faculty and the senses, let him practice *Yoga* for the purification of the heart. Let him firmly hold his body, head and the neck erect and still, (with) the eye-balls fixed, as if gazing at the tip of his nose, and not looking around. With the heart serene and fearless, firm in the vow of a *Bramachari*, with the mind controlled, and ever thinking of Me, let him sit in *Yoga*, having Me as his supreme goal. Thus always keeping the mind steadfast, the *Yogi* of subdued mind attains the peace residing in Me, — the peace which culminates in *Nirvana (Moksha)*.”

In these few *slokas* Bhagavan summarises the entire practice of *Raja Yoga*. He instructs man who is willing to see the truth of God for himself by the direct method — and the quickest method if I may be permitted to say so. First is the purification of mind. Mind which is going to be utilised for the investigation of God, has to be purified to a certain extent by disinterested work and by a spirit of detachment and renunciation. Without that spirit of detachment it is not possible to get concentration. Then he advises that the *Yogi* must seek some solitary place where he is not disturbed by external influences. It must be a pure place where there is no fear from men, animals and insects — a place which is likely to be most congenial for the practice of *Yoga* and which must produce a kind of helpful feeling within him. The atmosphere of the place must be very healthy. All these conditions are necessary about the place, the selection of which is of very great importance in the practice of *Yoga*. Then having selected a place for the practice, the *Yogi* has to spread a nice *asan*. First, *kushasan*, then the deer skin, then some kind of soft cotton or woollen stuff. The *asan* has double significance. This kind of *asan* is necessary for two reasons, one is the physiological and another is the psychical. The physiological necessity of the *asan* is that when man sits for a long time in a straight posture, he does require some soft support underneath so that the nerves and veins of the legs, particularly the sciatic nerves, may not be affected.

Otherwise, the blood circulation will be impeded, and there will come all sorts of pain, stiffness and other discomforts. So to avoid that kind of trouble a little soft and nice *asan* is necessary to sit upon. The second necessity is much more important. *Yogis* say that during the time of *sadhana* all the electric and magnetic energy of the body have to be conserved within. It is a physical truth that this physical body is maintained by vital energy which is only another aspect of *prana*. And *prana* in its subtle aspect is not different from what is commonly termed in modern science as magnetic energy or electric energy. These are but different names: after all the energy is one. When one wants the concentration of mind, the energy of the body must be made rhythmic, *i. e.*, one-pointed. The mental energy, the vital energy, the physical energy, all these different kinds of energy are aspects of the same *prana*. So the concentration of or the rhythmic condition of the mental energy is dependent upon the similar condition of the vital energy, and the vital energy again is dependent on the physical energy. So physical, vital and mental, all these are but gross, subtle and subtlest aspects of the same energy, and one is controlled by another. For instance, in a factory there are different kinds of wheels, a big fly-wheel and then smaller and smaller wheels that move the machinery. If the fly-wheel is controlled, then all other smaller wheels are also easily controlled. So, when the physical energy is made rhythmic, then naturally the *prana*, *i. e.*, the

vital energy within is also made rhythmic and by the *prana* the mind also becomes rhythmic. That is the process. This physical body is the gross aspect of matter, of which the mind is the subtlest aspect. Now it is easier to go from gross to subtler than coming down from the subtler to the gross. But either way is possible. If you can control the subtle, the gross will be controlled also; if you can control the gross, the subtler will be controlled gradually. The easiest method is to control the gross first and then subtler and subtler until you reach the subtlest. That is *Raja Yoga* principle. So the first thing required is to control the physical body. The first condition about *asan* is just to spread the nice cushion on which you can sit comfortably to a length of time. Next comes the posture of the body. This posture has to be so practised that it becomes very natural for you, but one thing is primarily necessary for the *asan*, and that is keeping the body erect. The head, the neck and the trunk must be in one perpendicular line, so that the spinal column will be straight and all subtle spiritual nerve currents will be allowed to pass through the spinal column. The spinal column, as we ordinarily know, is the conduit both for the afferent and the efferent currents; sensory and motor nerves pass through it and branch out to different parts of the body. Therefore, any injury to the spinal column produces a kind of disruption in the nerve current and disease in the physical body. Similarly, the opposite also is true. The perfect condition of the column makes



it easy for the nerve current to flow through it. Something more. The *Yogi* claims that there is a certain subtler nerve in the spinal column which is called *sushumna*. It is not active in ordinary man, but it becomes active when we begin to concentrate upon spiritual principle. That is the subtlest *nadi* (nerve) and it passes along the central portion of the spinal column. So, if the spinal column is kept straight, then the passage remains unobstructed and the upward rise of the current becomes easy. So the *Yogis* always like that the spinal column must be straight. There is another point that has to be looked to in this connection. The lungs play a very great part in the concentration of mind. We all know when our mind is concentrated then there happens a suspension of breath. Suspension of breath comes of itself. When we are very much engrossed or absorbed in a thought we become breathless as it were. Concentration always brings suspension of breath. This produces a kind of pressure upon the lung muscles. If the lung muscles are not habituated to that kind of suspension, then certainly one cannot remain in that condition very long and that is why we can ordinarily remain in suspension of breath only for a few seconds. It produces a kind of pain in the lungs and that distracts our attention. So by sitting straight the lungs are left to have a free play. There is no depression or restraint put unnecessarily upon the lung muscles. So this is the importance of the *asan*. By practising *asan* the body is made rigid and perfect, and

the physical force is controlled. As in *Yoga* the control of the physical force is indispensable, the right posture is absolutely necessary. The *Yogis* say that if one can sit in one posture for six hours together without any movement, the mind is sure to get calm. That is an experienced fact. If one can sit in one posture for six hours continuously, the mind comes under control easily and becomes calm. So the fixed *asan* is very important in the practice of *Raja Yoga*. Then Bhagavan speaks of the control of *prana*. *Prana* means breath; it also means the vital energy. The Hindus know how one *prana* is divided into five, viz., *Prana*, *Apana*, *Samana*, *Udana* and *Vyana*. The fivefold vital energy controls the entire physical body. It is the nerve energy and the muscular energy as well. Mind also is its subtler aspect. So this *prana* has to be controlled for the concentration of mind. The gross or the most manifest form of this *prana* in the body is respiration. So Bhagavan advises to control the respiration. Why is this necessary? There are two necessities of it again: the physiological and the psychological. The physiological necessity is to control the lung muscles: to get the lung muscles accustomed to suspension of breath. That is the only necessity on the physiological side. As to the psychological necessity, when *prana*, the vital energy, is made rhythmic, naturally the subtler aspect of *prana*, i. e., the mind, also becomes controlled. It has been repeatedly experimented and realised that, however disturbed the mind may be, if one can

practise *pranayam* for half an hour the mind is bound to be controlled. It becomes perfectly still. So *pranayam* is very helpful, and it has been the challenge of the *Raja-yogis* that if a man can practise *pranayam* three years continuously, however atheistic he may be, without the least prepossession of faith in God, simply if he practises three years regularly and assiduously according to all the necessary rules and observances about *pranayam*, then certainly he will realise the truth of religion. He can see God. So *pranayam* controls mind also. There is a proportion in inhaling and exhaling. If inhaling takes one minute, then exhaling must occupy two minutes and the suspension must be four times the period of the inhalation. When we try to concentrate the mind on something the lung action is automatically stopped. If then all of a sudden we inhale very quickly or exhale suddenly; it gives spasmodic action to the lungs, and such spasmodic action produces rather unhealthy condition of the lung, and is very injurious to health. That is why in the practice of *pranayam* there are so many other restrictions which I do not like to dilate upon here. But I may tell you that the main purpose of this *pranayam* is to control the lung muscles in such a way that it may get the capacity of inhaling and exhaling air or remaining without breath for a long time. I have seen one *yogi* who has become such an adept in *pranayam* that he can control the lungs at will. He can make both of his lungs stop and work alternately and then if you tell him to

take 50 respirations in a minute, he can produce respiration at that rate. He can increase or decrease the rate at will. The fact is that there are certain muscles in our body which the modern physiologists call the involuntary muscles. These involuntary muscles can really be made voluntary by certain practices. Every bit of our physical body can be brought under control and every muscle can be made voluntary. There are persons who can even control their ears and move them. So the practice of *pranayam*, the control of the lung muscles, has to be done in such a way that the lungs should remain without breath or full of breath as long as we desire. Ultimately through the control of the lung muscles breath is controlled and through the control of the breath the vital energy is controlled. I have told you that nerve forces are controlled through rhythmical breathing, and all these forces converge, as it were, to a particular point where you like to fix your mind. Both the physical and the psychic energy are made to concentrate upon that particular point. The particular point selected is sometimes the heart, sometimes the middle of the brows, sometimes the tip of the nose, sometimes the temple, sometimes it is below the coccyx. These are different centres for concentration. In one of these centres mind should be fixed.

Next to *asan* and *pranayam* you have to practise *pratyahar*, i.e., withdrawal of the senses from their respective sense objects. This is very

difficult to do in the beginning. If you have the aforesaid preliminary attainments — if your mind is pure, if your hankering after God-realisation is true, if your *asan* has been well established, if you have become an adept in *pranayam* — then only you will find *pratyahar* comparatively easy. In passing, I may tell you that up to *pranayam* the preliminaries are external practices, part of *Hath Yoga*. The real *Raja Yoga* begins with *pratyahar*. *Pratyahar* literally means withdrawal, secondarily, restraining the mind from going outside. Mental effort has to be made for the withdrawal of the senses from their objects. But along with that one has to fix one's mind upon a particular aspect of God. In this case Bhagavan advises to fix the mind on *Atman*, the pure principle of intelligence that is within you. The mind sees the body and there is another aspect of the mind which sees the mind itself. We all feel how we are conscious of things that are passing through our mind. Mind is the onlooker of the actions of the senses, senses see things outside, but that portion of the mind which I call the 'subjective mind' looks upon the mind itself. When you try to fix your attention upon that 'subjective mind' and withdraw the senses from outside, then you will notice a change coming upon your consciousness. First, it will appear that it is a part of the mind, it is a part of your ego and it is connected with the external things, and all sorts of adumbrations of the physical and the mental personality will be there. But slowly as concentration will be stronger

and stronger, you will find the physical consciousness, the external consciousness, even the mental consciousness disappearing. All the distractions that are crowding your mental plane will disappear one by one just as the morning mist fades away before the rise of the sun. So when in course of time concentration is complete, all plurality of contents will disappear from consciousness and the soul will be aglow with the spiritual lustre of the soul. Exactly the feeling will be that an infinite ocean has, as it were, entered into a tiny pool and is flooding it. Bhagavan describes it so very beautifully:

'Always try to fix yourself upon the *Atman* and when you have withdrawn from all sense objects, you will come into contact with *Brahman*, with the Supreme Bliss. Then you will realise immortal life, infinite illumination, infinite bliss.' Exactly that will be the God-realisation.

So it is the path of direct God-realisation. Here in India this has been made a positive science for God-realisation. If you want to adopt this method you must be prepared to undertake all the tedious journey that will be necessary to take you to the hill-top, to the shrine of God.

Then Arjuna complains that it is very difficult to control the mind. The mind so fickle, so restless that it is impossible to control it. It is easier to control the passing wind than to control the mind. But Bhagavan holds out hope to Arjuna and says,

"No doubt it is very difficult to control the mind because it is only matter after all, and you have been so habituated to give indulgence to it that it is very difficult now to control it. But it can be controlled through practice and renunciation." Somebody gave a fine example: When girls are very young and are in their fathers' house, they are accustomed to go about romping in the neighbourhood. All of a sudden, they are married and they go to the husband's house. There in the husband's house, as the custom is in India, the new bride is not allowed to go out. She is restrained in the house itself and her mind becomes very restless, because the past habit of wandering here and there is checked. But slowly, through fear of mother-in-law or sister-in-law or through some other conditions, she gets accustomed to that restraint although there is constant struggle within her; and gradually as her love for her husband increases the restlessness dies out and in course of time she completely forgets her past habit. Exactly that is the case with a *Yogi*. Ordinarily, mind is accustomed to roam about, then all of a sudden you begin to practise *Yoga*. The past habit of the mind to wander about is still there, and that is why the novice feels such great difficulty to concentrate it. But as he proceeds on, his love for God increases. He begins to taste the sweetness of God-contemplation. Even a few minutes' concentration slowly cures all his restlessness, and ultimately he finds that even if he tries to take his mind away from God it is very difficult. Concen-

tration becomes a natural thing with him. So one has to practise it and then one can realise. "Test of pudding lies in tasting." For those who want to taste the truth of God, truth of religion, here is the path to verify the truth, and let them verify it. First, they must undergo the necessary preliminary discipline and then if they do not realise God, let them come and say there is no God.

Then another question that Arjuna puts very pertinently here is about the future of those *Yogis* who may get a slip in this path of *Yoga*. It is possible there may be persons of weak heart, of strong old tendencies who cannot attain perfection in this life: they get a slip. What will be their future? All their attainments will be gone? Will they be hurled down to the deepest depth of degradation or what little they have achieved will hold them on for future progress? Bhagavan answers to the effect that such souls as have been doing good things may get a slip, but that does not mean that they will be hurled down to eternal perdition. They cannot be degraded like the ordinary sinner or a felon. On the other hand, it may be that their progress will be impeded a little, but hereafter they will be born in some well-to-do family, in some congenial circumstances, in some very helpful environment where it will be easier for them to take up the cue, to take up the thread of their work exactly from the point where they left it and complete their journey onward. So there is no cause for



desperation. There is no cause for dejection. So even if there be a slip, even if there be imperfection, God, who is immanent, the knower of our heart, will help us. He will pull us through and fulfil the desire of our heart, if not in this life, in the future life at least. It is possible that in one life one may not achieve God-realisation. That does not matter, we are sure to realise God one day or the other, if we persist on faithfully and assiduously. So Bhagavan says that if a man tries to purify his mind, he will slowly attain purification, and, through several births, slowly, step by step, he will ascend until he reaches the highest rung of the ladder, which is God-realisation.

#### PHILOSOPHY OF HIGHER AND LOWER PRAKRITIS

Then the question arises, perhaps a philosophical question, in the mind of an enquirer, what is the nature of this Supreme Being. Sometimes Bhagavan Himself says, "He will attain Me," sometimes, "He will attain the Supreme *Paramatman*", and so on. So the question is: What is the nature of that attainment and what is its connection with this universe? What are the hereafters of a man when he does not get God-realisation? What are the conditions that he is likely to undergo after his death? So Bhagavan says that in this world perhaps one in a million feels true hankering after God-realisation. The reason is that animality in us is so strong that we always plunge headlong into

the mire of sense life. Though sense life gives us very little pleasure, yet it appears to us very tangible. Ordinarily our eyes are so perverted, our mind is so clouded with ignorance that we cannot get a peep beyond, and in this shortsightedness of ours it is very difficult for us to cherish the hope that there is such a thing as transcendental entity called God, and we cannot relinquish the worldly enjoyment which is so very palpable and concrete for us, for the sake of that intangible life. So myriads are bent upon sense life alone. But when after going through all this experience, we get tired of the emptiness of the world, getting hard knocks from the outside world, when our hopes are shattered by the buffets that are hurled upon us by fate, then only we begin to feel the emptiness or the vanities of the world, then we begin to feel satiety for material life, and then only we begin to think of a Being who can help us out of this miserable condition. So world-satiety is the very first condition of God-ward march. And when a man starts, he can reach that state, if he persists on. But what about those millions who do not feel the hankering after God-realisation in this life? No doubt, for those who realise God in this life by the practice of *Yoga* aforesaid, the bubble that rose on the ocean bursts. His individuality is completely annihilated, he becomes one with the Infinite. So Bhagavan says that he attains him. As pure water poured into water becomes one water, so his individualised existence ceases, and the whole cosmic process vanishes for

him. There is no more universe for him as when you stand outside you see the beautiful display of infinite waves upon the bosom of the ocean, but if you take a deep plunge into the depth of the ocean, you find one perfect eternal equanimity. So when we plunge into the depth of the Eternity, then there is no more creation. Creation disappears from our vision. But those who may remain standing on the shores will still see the rise and fall of the waves. Then what is about them? What is their future? Bhagavan says: "I have two *Prakritis* (energies) that create things. Energy means power to act. One kind of energy has the eight-fold expressions, *i. e.*, the five fundamental principles of matter, the senses, the mind and the intellect. These produce the multiplicity of creation. They constitute the lower *Prakriti*, because they produce the grosser form. Then there is the *Para Prakriti*, a higher energy, and this higher energy is the cause of human beings. So the living creatures are the emanations of the *Para Prakriti*. So both living and non-living are emanations from Me." Sometimes the Western philosophers and missionaries, who know very little of our philosophy and religion, think this doctrine to be pantheism, which means that the First Cause has exhausted Itself in undergoing the transmutation and producing the creation. So, if God is the First Cause then His being is the totality of the creation. But the Vedanta does not hold this view, it is not pantheism. The Vedantic conception is that God has not exhausted Himself in producing

the creation. The earliest expression of this view we find in the Rig Veda (*Purusha Sukta 2 and 3*). But it was subsequently abandoned for a more rational view of Transcendentalism, which means He is the creation, He is in the creation and again He is beyond it. That is the mystery. His real nature is immortal, but the cloak of mortality, the changeable aspect, is only an appearance that he has put on. This whole universe with creatures is only a portion of His being, as it were, but his reality is of the transcendental nature. How can the same principle be transcendental and relative? It cannot be. How can the same principle be really both mutable and immutable? It cannot be. How can the same principle be infinite and finite at the same time? That is illogical. This world, which is mutable and changeable, is only a vesture, is only a *maya* of His. That is the Divine jugglery. He has assumed many forms through His *Maya*. So this creation has not the absolute value or absolute reality as God has. It is not real in the same sense as God is. It is real for all practical purposes; for us it is real. But it is not real in the same sense as God is real. When we say this world is unreal, we say so from the standpoint of God's reality, *i. e.*, absolute reality. And if the world is not real, there does not arise the question how the Infinite has become finite. Yet for all practical purposes, for all relative conditions of life, we have to say that this universe is an emanation from God as it is an effect, and effect must have

a cause and no other cause there can be except God. So we have to connect both the living and the non-living to that fundamental cause, God. Hence the living have come from Him, the non-living have also come from Him. He is the substratum on which arises the phenomena of the living and also of the non-living. This is KNOWLEDGE. "One who knows Him as the sustainer of all this creation, knows the reality and he attains Him at the end." But those who do not know that, what happens to them? Bhagavan says there are two kinds of *jivas* in this world. Some are devoted to the Supreme God, and some again ignorantly worship gods. You must remember that different gods of the Hindu pantheon are but different aspects of the same God. It has been repeatedly said in our Vedas that "there is only one Supreme Being and that Supreme Being has been described differently by different names as Indra, Chandra, Varuna, Agni, etc." "There is only one reality, and its infinite aspects are given different names." So, those who worship Gods, the one God in different names, with pure heart and devotion, they go up by a particular path by which they attain ultimately the highest goal through the attainment of the final illumination. And those who worship the Supreme One with full knowledge, attain Him in this very life.

## FOURTH DISCOURSE

### HARMONY OF JNANA, YOGA AND BHAKTI

In the seventh chapter, Bhagavan speaks only of *Bhakti*. After speaking of the *yogic* practices in the previous chapter, he says that he who tries to attain Him through love and love alone, also attains the same goal. He says :

“This My *Maya* is made of the three *gunas*, and these three *gunas* impel the *jivas* to actions, but those who take refuge in Me, pray to Me, come to Me, with all love and devotion, also easily cross this wonderful, otherwise uncrossable, *Maya*.” What the *yogis* attain by the process of concentration, what the *karmis* realise by the process of disinterested work, the devotees can get by devotion to Me. As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, there are three kinds of intense devotion in human society, *viz.*, the devotion of a chaste wife to her husband, love of a mother for her child and the love of a miser for his hoarded gold. When the intensity of these three kinds of love is united in the heart of devotees, God is sure to reveal Himself. So, for one having such pure love, no other practice is necessary. Simply if you take the name of God and increase your devotion to Him intently, and esta-

blish some relationship with Him, you are sure to realise Him, through the path of *Bhakti* alone.

There are four kinds of people, Bhagavan says, who worship Him: the man suffering from some miseries, the man in need of money, the philosopher and the seer. All these are good people because they worship God in some form or other. Of all of these, the *Jnani* is regarded as His very Self.

#### PHILOSOPHY OF ADHIDEVA, ADHIYAJNA AND ADHIYATMA

Having been told in the previous chapters about the different methods by which one can realise God—either by the practice of selfless work, or by the practice of devotion or by the practice of *Raja Yoga*—Arjuna wants to know at the beginning of the eighth chapter the true significations of such philosophical terms as *Brahman*, *Karma*, *Adhideva*, *Adhiyajna*, *Adhyatma*. These terms were prevalent among the Hindus and conveyed great religious import to the people and there were great differences of opinion about the true meanings of these terms. So naturally Arjuna wants to know their significance from Sri Bhagavan Himself. Bhagavan answers the questions in definite, precise and very terse language. He first defines *Brahman*. Though this term has been explained definitely in the Upanishads, yet it is used in different senses in other places of the Vedic scriptures. If you read the Samhitas of the

Rig Veda, you will find the word used in the sense of either prayer to God or sacrifices. In other Samhitas, e. g., Sama and Yajur, *Brahman* means *yajna* and also *stuti*. In some places, though the occasions are very few, 'Brahman' is used for *Brahmana* caste. So the word *Brahman* might be used in any of these senses. But when we come down from the Samhita period to the Aranyak or the Upanishadic period of the Vedic age, we find the word undergoing a great change in meaning. Its 'prayer' significance drops altogether and it very rarely means *yajna*, but it is found to assume completely a different orientation and signify that Divine Substance which constitutes the substratum of all existence and forms the very basis of all realities. Here, in passing, I may tell you in a few words the method of approach that was adopted by the ancient sages of India with regard to the fundamental verity of life. There were three groups of enquirers, as it were. One group tried to pursue the search by the theological process, another group through the psychological method and the third through the metaphysical analysis. Those who followed the ancient tradition of theology, tried to pursue the path by eulogising and exalting the different Vedic deities of worship and in their spiritual pursuit to understand the true nature of their gods, they found ultimately their conception of the deity sublimated and slowly melting away into something universal and transcendental—beyond all concrete expressions and definable ideas. So, in



searching the Real by the theological process, they started perhaps with an anthropomorphic conception of God—God as an individual person, but slowly they realised that the personal god they worshipped was but an imperfect symbolic presentation of an impersonal, immanent entity which is also the transcendental reality. This explains the reason why in the early portions of the Rig Veda, the theological conceptions are first ranging round such gods, as Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, but all of a sudden, in its later portion, the sages develop a new concept of the Deity and glorify it with a new name 'Purusha' so that none of the connotations of the old theological terms may obscure its true import. They realise that the old conception of God as a mechanic of the universe who resides in some extra-cosmic regions and fashions from there the destinies of man is illogical and therefore cannot be true; they realise ultimately that the gods whom they worshipped as Indra, Chandra, Varuna, Agni, are but different aspects of one and the same principle which is also transcendental. The word "Purusha" ordinarily means person, but literally it indicates the principle which infills all existence; hence *Purusha* really signifies a principle which is both transcendental and immanent. And this very conception we find finely expressed in the *Purusha Suktam* of the Rig Veda, where the *mantras* speak of the highest transcendental entity becoming immanent in a mysterious way through the cosmic process and thus becoming related, as it were, with the universe

in a causal relation. Similar ideas we find also in many places in the Sama Veda and the Atharva Veda Samhitas. That was the theological method of approach.

Then there was the psychological method. Though we find the indication of this method given here and there in the Rig Veda, such as in the Maya Sukta of Mandala X, and some mention of *Atman* in the Samhitas of the Sama Veda and Yajur Veda, this is more fully developed in the later period of the Vedic age, in the Aranyakas and the Upanishads. By the psychological analysis of their own personality or ego, and the proper scrutiny of the psychological values of the so-called objective world they found that after all there is but one principle which is behind all existence both animate and inanimate. And they gave it the name "*Atman*". This is peculiarly a psychological term and means the permeating principle, the intelligent entity that is all-pervasive. What the theologians understood by "*Purusha*" the psychologists recognised as "*Atman*", the inner core of reality of all, in the term of Knowledge.

Then there was the third process of approach and it was metaphysical. Early in the Rig Veda we find another group of *Rishis* raise these questions: 'Whence has this creation come? What has been its material? If God be the efficient cause, what is the material out of which it has evolved?'

The theory of creation out of nothing was thrown off as irrational even in the very early days of the Vedic age. Hence, naturally arose the question about the primordial cause of the universe. What was the First Cause and what was Its nature? Various definitions or ideas were put forward on this point. With such queries, there began the real metaphysical search after the fundamental verity. A *Rishi* in the Rig Veda tried to answer it by saying, "After all the nature of the Real which has produced this creation is beyond human comprehension". Another Rishi proclaimed in one of the sublimest Suktas of the Rig Veda, the famous Nasadiya Sukta, "Before this creation there existed only One without a second and that Being remained stirless without motion. What existed then was covered with the unreal; by *tapas* manifested His glory and His power manifested in the form of creation." It means that the creation which is only a manifestation of His grandeur (*shakti*) has not the same value — has not the same reality — as the Being Itself. The word used in the text is *tuchchha*, which means insignificant, unsubstantial. The commentator notes here the origin of *Maya* theory of the later Vedantins. *Maya* has not the same reality as *Brahman* Itself. So you see the same transcendental unity was reached by the metaphysical analysis also, in the early period of the Vedic age.

In the Upanishads we find, no doubt, that these theological, psychological and metaphysical find-

ings meet at a common point more definitely and in a more conclusive manner. And that common point was hailed with a new name again — the *Rishis* of the Upanishads called it, *Brahman*, using the term in a quite new sense, as has been said before. *Brahman* was here identified with *Purusha* and *Atman* in the Upanishads. So Bhagavan calls *Brahman Akshara*, *i. e.*, the immutable, transcendental entity which is behind all creation and on which rests the creation itself.

Again, the same transcendental principle is reflected in the mind of the individual and energises its being. It is something like the sun throwing its images in innumerable pots of water. As each pot is illumined by the image of the sun formed in its water, so the heart of each man is aglow by the rays of the same Divine Sun, and the image formed in it constitutes his soul. Every *jiva* which appears to be individualised and distinct in ordinary consciousness is but an image of the Divine Sun. This image has a double nature; it partakes of the nature of the sun, inasmuch as it is formed by the rays of the sun only; but again it has also the limitation of the water and the pot in which it is formed. It is the water and the pot — the *upadhis*, which give the image its limitation, the individuality — and they are the opposite of light. But the light-aspect of the image is the most important. So the intelligence-aspect of *jiva* is the principal point to be remembered in spiritual life, and this aspect is

called by Bhagavan *swabhava* and *adhyatman* — that is to say, *Atman* is the real nature of *jiva*.

Then the question was: What is *karma* in the technical sense? Anything that is offered to God is called *karma* or *yajna*. What is done for selfish purposes in ordinary ways of material life, is not *yajna*, but when things are offered in the name of God or for God, *i. e.*, for the maintenance and renewal of the universal life, such offerings or actions are called *karma*.

This universe is verily an eternally changing phenomena. But no change is possible without an unchanging principle existing behind. So this changing aspect which clothes the immutable principle of Reality is called *Adibhuta*, *i. e.*, matter; and it is perishable. Matter is nothing but a shadow of the spirit or a misreading of the spirit according to the Vedanta, inasmuch as it has not the same value or reality as *Brahman*. Sri Bhagavan further calls *Purusha*, the immanent Being, *Adhidaiva*, *i. e.*, the only Being to be worshipped, or the spirit that presides over all activities of nature.

*Adhiyajna* is that image of God which is residing within this body, and is the doer of action. As it has been said erstwhile ago, the ego is developed out of the image of God. If there is no image, there is no motion, no creation, no activity. That is why Bhagavan says here, "I am the *Adhi-*

*yajna* in every body: I am the one actor in all the embodied beings: I am the soul of all souls."

#### THE FUTURE CONDITIONS OF THE DEPARTED SOULS

In this chapter Bhagavan speaks also about the future of ordinary men. Those who have dedicated their mind and self completely to God in this life, for them there is no going anywhere hereafter. The 'bubble' bursts or the 'wave' merges into the 'ocean' after the fall of this body. They are the *Jivan-muktas* — the great emancipated ones even while in this body. But what of those who have not merged? The first thing to be remembered in this connection is, Bhagavan says, that man gets the condition heret after exactly as are his thoughts at the dying moment, and the thoughts of the dying moment are assuredly the outcome of the tendencies which were dominant in life. Those who are devotees, who have controlled their *prana shakti* to a great extent, yee have not attained the highest *Jnana* at the time of death, they take their *prana shakti* up to the temple and by the *Sushumna nari* they go out of this body at will; and when they leave this body thus being in *yoga*, they go to higher and higher spheres. According to the Vedantic scriptures there are seven higher spheres — *Sapta lokas* — viz., Bhur, Bhuva, Swa, Maha, Jana, Tapa and Satya. Of these the basic *loka* is *manushya loka* or *Bhur loka*, and the highest or the subtlest is *Satya loka*. This *Satya loka* has been described in various sec-

tarian books as *Vaikuntha*, *Goloka*, *Shivaloka* and so on. These heavens are different planes of consciousness appearing as different worlds where beings live in their individualised condition. The highest plane is *Brahmaloka* or *Satyaloka* as has been stated above. The *yogis*, after the fall of this body, go through the sun's rays, through subtler and subtler aspects of matter until they reach the subtlest, *i. e.*, the cosmic mind, and this cosmic mind is *Brahmā* or *Hiranyagarbha*. In that cosmic mind limitations of ordinary life are gone, so necessarily that state is full of bliss, and that is also called a state of relatively immortal existence. The souls of the *yogis* remain in that plane till the end of the Cycle, when they merge into *Brahman* and the whole creation goes back to its original First Cause. Thus these *yogis* attain salvation gradually step by step, as it were, and so it is called the path of *krama-mukti*. Those who die like this with *jnana* and devotion and piety, Bhagavan says, they go first to Agni (the spirit of Agni), from Agni they go to Light, from Light to the deity of Day, from there to Bright Fortnight, and from Bright Fortnight they go to higher and higher spheres until they reach *Brahmaloka*, and they remain there till the cycle of the present creation ends. Such souls never come back to be reborn again in this world. This path of soul's migration is also called the 'Path of Light' and the 'Path of Gods'. But those who lead the life of ordinary *karma* and attachment, for them is the path of *Chandraloka*. First they go to the

spirit of Smoke, then to the spirit of Night, then to Dark Fortnight, then to the *loka* of Southern Solstice, then to *Pitri-loka* (the world of manes) and last to *Chandraloka* (the world of the Moon) and there they remain for the enjoyment of their pious deeds; and at the expiry of their enjoyment they come back again to be reborn in this world. This is the path of rebirth and is known as the "Path of Smoke" or *Pitriyāna*. I may tell you that among the first three *lokas* there is a constant interchange of souls. But from the other four *lokas* souls seldom come to this human world. The inhabitants of those planes being of higher spiritual attainment, do not come to this earth ordinarily and of their own accord; but sometimes they do come here to fulfil some great purpose according to the will of God and it is they who are born as great spiritual teachers and prophets in this world and produce spiritual upheaval in society.

So these are the two paths. There is a third one also which has not been spoken of here, but in other places Bhagavan refers to that also. There are persons who live the life of actual brutes, getting completely immured by animal propensities. Such souls after death are drawn back immediately to the animal plane, sometimes even to the vegetable world. But after the expiry of their sufferings or *bhoga*, they come up to the human plane again. These are the possible conditions of the human soul after death,



By this delineation Bhagavan tried to impress upon Arjuna's mind that after all death is not the end of life, nor birth is its beginning. Life is eternal. Death and birth are only changes that condition this physical vesture. There is an implied hint in Bhagavan's giving this instruction to Arjuna, he intends to point out the ephemerality of this physical life: it is ever-changing and transient. We are like a sojourner in this world. Why is then this attachment, this morbid clinging to this world? If we understand the real value of life, this world cannot fail to appear to us just like a *musâfirkhânâ*, a caravanserai in the grand pilgrimage of life. This life is only one link of the infinite series that constitute the chain of life. How could we cling to one link, leaving all other links of the chain? Let us be wise and look to the entire chain and not take account of the value of one link only. Thus we shall be able to understand the true value and purpose of life. Then only we shall be able to raise ourselves from the slough of spiritual deterioration we have fallen into so miserably. So to produce *vairagya* in the mind of Arjuna, Bhagavan speaks about these two relative conditions of the *Akshara* — the Imperishable. The reality of the Soul is immutable, and the conditions of physical life are changeable. Do not put too much premium upon this changeable aspect of life. Go back to that transcendental source of your being and be saved. That is the real purpose of Bhagavan in speaking

of *Akshara* side by side with the changes that necessarily come upon the physical life.

#### PSYCHOLOGY OF YOGAS AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF SUPER-IMPOSITION THEORY

In this ninth chapter Bhagavan in fact puts the quintessence of all the *yogas*, combining *karma*, *jnana* and *bhakti margas* in one attitude of human mind towards God. First he desires us to know that He is pervading all beings :

“You must know that I am the basic principle permeating all beings and so all beings rest in Me, but I do not rest in them.” In the cause the effect rests, but the converse is not true. Without effect cause can remain, but without cause effect cannot exist. So, if God is the First Cause and the world is the effect, the effect remains ever dependent on the cause, but the cause is perfectly independent of the effect. So Bhagavan says, “I do not rest on the world, but the world rests upon Me.” This relating of the universe with its great First Cause is what Bhagavan calls *jnana* — science.

An ordinary mind may think that it is pantheism, *i. e.*, God has changed Himself into this creation: when milk is changed into butter, we all know that in milk butter exists, but never the former in the latter. And it is also plain to us that butter is only a transmuted form of milk. Can that really be the case in God's bringing forth the creation out

of Himself, even as spider does its web? An absolute positive answer will entail a great logical fallacy. We all know that effect is a changed condition of cause: cause reproduced. Unless the effect is inherent in the cause, as butter is in milk, it cannot be produced. And as something cannot be produced out of nothing — being out of non-being, creation of any kind means logically only reproduction. Therefore, the cause and the effect must partake of some common characteristic, otherwise there cannot be any actual causal relation between the cause and the effect. If God be the cause of the universe of this kind, the material cause, then all that is the characteristic of this material world must remain latent in Him; and we see that this material world is inert, conditioned, full of misery and sufferings. If this universe remained latent in God before creation, then God also would have been defiled by the impurities of this world. And after the creation he must have lost His infinite perfection and wholeness, even as the skim milk after the separation of cream: But this is an absurd conception about God! So it is illogical to hold that God is the material cause of this universe in that sense. An untrained ordinary mind cannot grasp all at once the subtle metaphysical truths. So it is given first a gross appearance of the truth for comprehension. And then it is taken gradually to subtler and subtler aspects of the Supreme Truth by implication and association. You know that at the time of Hindu marriage the bride

is asked by the bridegroom to look at the small star called *Arundhati*. It is such a very small star that if you want to see it all at once you cannot find it. So the bridegroom asks the bride to look at a bright star of the *Ursa Major* which is just near *Arundhati*, and says, "Look, there is *Arundhati*". When the bride finds out that star, the bridegroom says next, "No, no, that is not *Arundhati*. See, there is just a small speck of a star by the right side of that bright one, that is *Arundhati*." Thus the bride is led to find out the real star by implication and association. This is technically called *Arundhatidarshana Nyaya*. So by this method the ordinary mind is taken from the gross to the subtler and the subtlest principle of Reality. First it is said that God is the basis of this universe. He is the one reality of all real objects, — the really Real. By such assertion man can easily comprehend the reality of God getting Him associated with this world which he is accustomed to look upon as the only concrete, tangible reality. So Bhagavan first says that the whole universe has come out of Him and is supported by Him, *i. e.*, He is the First Cause of the universe. But lest Arjuna might fall into the same pit of error of pantheism as mentioned above, He next corrects him by saying, "Nor do the creatures rest on me, behold my *yogic* grandeur. My self supports all beings, but does not depend upon them, it permeates all." Take, for instance, the snake vision. There is a rope lying in some dark corner of the

room. You mistake it for a snake. What happens then? The snake vision is evoked by the partial sight of the rope owing to darkness and it is super-imposed on the rope, identifying it with snake. In this false identification the rope has not really undergone any change; and the snake vision has been a product of your own ignorance of the rope owing to darkness, so in that sense it is a subjective creation. Further, it is to be noticed that in this kind of super-imposition or *Adhyasa*, as it is called in Sanskrit, the rope has not really become the snake, nor the snake is in the rope; nevertheless we see the snake in the rope. So *Brahman* has not become the world, nor are the worldly impurities existent in *Brahman* in any way. Only the world-vision has been super-imposed upon *Brahman* through *Avidya*. This is the great superimposition theory or *Vivarta vada* of Sri Shankaracharya. So Bhagavan says, "For truth, you must consider Me as the basis of the universe, although, neither it is in Me, nor am I in it." Is it not true that the rope of the snake-vision forms actually the basis of the vision, and is the only reality although the vision itself is false? This is the super-science — *Vijnana*, according to Bhagavan. Is it true then that this cosmic vision is no better than a mere subjective aberration? Is cosmic process only a subjective idealism? Nay, that is illogical. So Sri Bhagavan denies subjective idealism by saying, "This creation I make out of my own *Prakriti*, the cosmic energy. It is by my own *Prakriti* or

*Maya shakti* that I create this universe, and all *Jivas*, all creatures, are thus created being wholly controlled by that *Prakriti*." Here he tells something further about himself. This universe is the wonderful jugglery of His *Maya shakti*. He is sitting at the centre and describing around Himself this grand circle of phantasmagoria we call the universe, and thus He appears to be the immanent First Principle. Just so the physical body that He puts on in incarnating Himself on earth is also a part of His *Maya*. "So only fools", He says, "consider that I am an embodied being, that I am a human person. It is ignorance! The Truth is that I am the same Eternal Supreme Principle, the Lord and Sustainer of the whole universe. Though I create all and appear in many forms and myriad personalities, still I remain ever the same impersonal, eternal, immutable, all-pervasive principle of intelligence. Only fools and the ignorant look upon Me as the son of *Vasudeva*, as none but fools and the ignorant consider this world to be real, having not realised the immutable transcendental entity behind."

Next Bhagavan speaks of the path of *Bhakti*. "Fix your mind on Me, fix also your heart's devotion on Me and let all your actions be for Me, and prostrate yourself to Me, and when you will thus become wholly dedicated to Me, you will attain Me." 'Concentrate all your intellect on Me' — that is *Jana Yoga*. 'Do all your actions for Me' — that

is *Karma Yoga*. 'Bestow all your heart's affection on Me'—that is *Bhakti Yoga*. So *Bhakti*, *Karma* and *Jnana*, *i. e.*, emotion, volition and judgment, all the three faculties of the human mind have to be converged wholly to God. Bhagavan says, "If you can do that, your salvation is near at hand. Then you will understand what I am. Through all your actions, through all your meditations, through all your affections, you will be able to realise My true Self". These are the only three faculties of the mind which enable man to comprehend Truth. And God has to be known by all these three — that is GOD-REALISATION.

#### VISVARUPA OR IMMANENCE OF GOD AND COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

At the beginning of the tenth chapter, Bhagavan first tells Arjuna that He is the source of all existence, and He is in all, and He must be known in that way. He further says that when a man turns his mind wholly towards God, He being the inner self of all, gives the proper illumination to the mind from within in which He becomes fully revealed to him.

Then Arjuna wants to know the real nature of Bhagavan. Arjuna asks, "Please tell me what are the various aspects by which *Yogis* meditate upon Thee. How am I to concentrate my mind upon Thee?" In reply Bhagavan describes His various

expressions in the material universe and His various aspects of excellence. Ultimately summing up all Bhagavan says, "Wherever there is great expression of power, of grandeur, of excellence and beauty, know that as the expression of My power and grandeur. All spectacles of power and light are but expressions of My own glorious being. Nay, the whole universe with its infinite grandeur is but a partial exhibition of My being."

Take, for instance, a room in which screens of several colours are hanging and through them light is passing into the room. Now through the white thin screen greater light comes, less light comes through thick and coloured screens, and no light comes at all through the thick dark screen. Though the room is filled with a kind of mellowed light, we notice the different expressions and various grades of light in it — and the whole of the light of the room comes from the sun. And it is plain that the difference in the expressions of light through red, white and dark screens are all due to different kinds of obstacles, put in the way of the light, but all the light belongs to the same sun. Similarly the different screens of matter are obstructing from our view the true glory of God. Wherever there is a lesser obstruction, *e. g.*, *satwik guna*, there is great expression of grandeur, of power, of truth, of knowledge and piety, etc., and wherever there is such an expression, Bhagavan says, "Know that as My expression. Wherever you see an expression of power,



be it in the inert world or in the animal kingdom or in man, take it to be the particular expression of My grandeur, although the whole universe itself is an expression of My glory and power."

Then comes the eleventh chapter, the grandest chapter of the Gita. In this chapter Arjuna wants to see actually the *Virat Rupa*. When Bhagavan says to Arjuna in the previous chapters that He is the soul of the whole universe, Arjuna wants to see actually the vision of that universal form of God. So Bhagavan grants him the request. He says, "O Arjuna, with your ordinary eyes you cannot see that vision. I give you the eye of wisdom by which you can see that." And then He shows him the *Virat Rupa*; Arjuna gives a description of the vision he sees, "I am seeing in You all gods, all *Rishis*, all spirits, all human beings, all kinds of creatures: in fact, the whole of the physical world is in You. Your mouth is wide agape and into it are entering all these great heroes that have assembled in this battlefield of Kurukshetra even as rivers enter into the ocean. I see that in Your mouth are existent all of us, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, and our armies also are all there, and all are entering with great haste into Your mouth; and Your mouth is burning like a huge pile of fire. It is a terrible thing to behold and I am filled with horror. I cannot bear the terrible sight." So Arjuna began to pray, "O Krishna, I have committed so many sins by considering You my friend, my relation, my equal.

I may have insulted You. You are the Supreme God. Forgive me." Here I may tell you that in our scriptures we have several places where this *Virat Rupa* is mentioned. First we read of it in the Upanishads, in the case of the great Vedic sage, Vamadeva. He, having attained the cosmic consciousness, said, "I am all. I am the sun, the moon, the gods," and so on. He identified his soul with the universal Soul, *Virat Purusha*, and thus realised the *Virat Purusha* within himself. That is one description of *Virat Purusha*, given in our scriptures. Then in the case of Krishna Himself, we read in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* that when he was a young child, and the mother Yasoda was suckling Him, He yawned and in His mouth Yasoda saw the whole world. Again when Krishna grew up into a boy, He was accused by His elder brother that He had eaten mud, and Yasoda wanted to see whether that was a fact. So when she went to examine Krishna's mouth, she saw again the whole universe in it. In the description of the first vision it is mentioned that Yasoda saw the whole universe. But in the second vision we are told that she saw not only the whole universe, but she saw also the whole of Vraja and all the Gopas and Gopis including herself. Then for the third time Krishna showed this *Virat Rupa* to Duryodhana. When Krishna called on him before the Great War to negotiate for reconciliation, Duryodhana in his wickedness thought within himself that as Krishna was the greatest ally of the Pandavas, if He could be cap-

tured, all the Pandavas would become very weak. While he was thus contemplating and arranging for Krishna's capture, his uncle Vidura understood the mind of Duryodhana, and informed Sri Krishna of the wicked intention. At that Sri Krishna remarked, "Oh! Is that so? Foolish Duryodhana wants to capture Me, the Soul of the Universe!", and so saying He began to laugh, and while He was laughing His body began to grow and it assumed a tremendous proportion and then Duryodhana, Vidura and all present saw the whole universe in His body. He was horrified to see this spectacle and got humbled in spirit. Then for the fourth time He shows the *Virat Rupa* to Arjuna. Now if we study closely the occasions and descriptions of these *Virat Rupas* which Bhagavan showed to different persons at different times, we cannot fail to understand that they are not *real* universal form of God, but only a vision of the same — more symbolic and purposive than substantive. Logically speaking, the real *Virat Rupa* cannot be *seen* objectively, just as we see another body. It can at best be realised or felt subjectively when we become one with the Universal Being, as it actually happened in the case of Vamadeva Rishi. This is called *Hiranyagarbha Yoga* in the Vedanta, or the attainment of the cosmic consciousness. We can never really *see* Infinity, but when we do see it, it is only a symbolic infinity. As in a school the boys are shown the globe in order to produce in them an idea of the terrestrial globe on which they live, so Bhagavan wanted to

produce in the mind of Arjuna the idea of what kind of being He is, and hence it was only a symbolic vision. Moreover, there was a specific purpose in Bhagavan's showing the kind of *Virat Rupa* to Arjuna. Arjuna must know that Bhagavan is the real actor of the whole universe, while human beings are mere puppets in His divine hand. And with this knowledge Arjuna must proceed to perform his duty as a soldier. Further, Bhagavan wanted to show to Arjuna that really speaking, all the heroes of the battlefield were killed already by their own *karmas*. He said, "I am the terrible Time, the All-destroyer. In reality I have destroyed everything that is created, so have I killed all these great heroes assembled here. You have seen that they are all entering into My mouth. So let your self be only an instrument for their destruction and attain glory." Time is the great destroyer in the sense that it produces effect from the proper cause: cause leads to the effect, but that very change is caused by time. Time is the link that joins effect with cause. As time is the real producer of effect, so Bhagavan says, "I am Time, the great killer of all, and that is why you have seen symbolically that all these warriors enter into My mouth; they are already killed by Me: you need not be afraid: you be My instrument. My will must work, so, O Arjuna come and fight: And by fighting you will be the great winner of both fame and kingdom and also of heaven: by performing your duty you will only be doing or

manifesting in the gross plane what I have already done in the subtler or causal plane.”

The chief intention of the eleventh chapter is to show that God is the great doer of all actions. So all emotions, all actions and all functions of life are the expressions of that Supreme Power of God. He is the supreme *Karta* and we are mere puppets in His hand. But the difficulty is that we think of ourselves as doers and that is why we suffer. We should practise to maintain constantly the idea, ‘I am not the *karta* but He is the *karta*’, in every minute, in every second of our life. If we can establish this kind of consciousness in us, certainly the greatest peace, consolation and bliss will be ours. This grand truth is hidden from our vision by our own nescience, and a kind of false notion is harboured, which is really responsible for our egoism and consciousness of agentship and thereby naturally we suffer and enjoy the fruits of our actions.

#### THE PATH OF PURE DEVOTION

In the twelfth chapter Bhagavan speaks of the grand *Bhakti Yoga*. The question is raised who is the greater spiritual man — the Jnanin or the devotee, *i. e.*, whether the man who fixes his mind upon the transcendental Reality, the *Nirguna Brahman*, or the one who worships Him as *Iswara*, the Supreme Lord of the universe. They are but two

aspects of the same principle: the one is the absolute aspect and the other the relative. Take, for instance, the sun: it has two aspects, the sun as it is in its own real form, and that you cannot understand, unless you go to the solar region and be within it; secondly, as it appears to us from this earth as the great luminous orb, the sole giver of light and life to this earth. So also in the path of religion there are two standpoints to look at God: God as He Himself really is, and God as He appears to us in relation to our present finite being. From our present position we look at Him as the 'infinite personality' (although it is an illogical conception), and as such, He is the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer of the whole universe. But from the standpoint of God, *i. e.*, as He Himself is, there is no creation, no second existence at all. So Vedanta declares that from the absolute standpoint, *i. e.*, from the standpoint of the Absolute Reality, there has been no creation. But on the relative plane, that supreme substance, *Brahman*, assumes a different appearance—the appearance of causality and of plural being. So necessarily to one whose mind is thus circumscribed by Time, Space and Causation, *Brahman* cannot but appear as God or *Iswara*. As a man becomes a father only in relation to his son, so *Brahman* becomes God or *Iswara* in relation to *Jivas* or individual creatures. That is the difference between the Absolute *Brahman* and the relative *Iswara*. So the question naturally arises in Arjuna's mind as regards the

comparative merit of *Jnana* and *Bhakti*. Further, the sectarian views on this particular point have much obscured the truth: the followers of *Jnana* path hold that the worshippers of *Iswara* or *Saguna Brahman* cannot attain the final liberation in this life, at best they can attain *krama mukti*, the gradual liberation. The followers of the *Bhakti* cult, on the other hand, maintain that the *Jnanis* are really atheistic at heart and heretic in their conception, so they cannot attain the beatitude of the Supreme Heaven. Therefore the question is quite natural to all seekers of the Supreme Truth. Sri Bhagavan gives the most beautiful answer to the question, and the whole purpose of His answer is that after all, the *Nirguna* and the *Saguna Bhava* are but two aspects of the same Being. He who sincerely and wholeheartedly attaches himself to any of the aspects of God having chosen or elected it as his own *Ishta*, is the best. So the merit does not really lie in the selection of the aspect but in the depth and ardour of the pursuit. Bhagavan says: "He is the most steadfast in devotion who worships Me always having centred his whole mind on Me, being imbued with great faith. They also attain Me, who meditate upon the absolute, immutable, unmanifest, all-pervading ever-the-same transcendental Principle." But, for an ordinary man, conditioned as he is by human limitations and untrained mind, it is very difficult to contemplate upon the Absolute. Nay, it is well nigh impossible to have any definite idea of the Absolute, excepting

a vague negation of the relative, for an ordinary mind. Then what is the easier path for the general humanity? The easier path is to worship Him as *Iswara*. Is it not easier for an ordinary man to develop his spiritual emotions by giving to the mind a definite tangible hold than pursue an intangible abstraction and undefined negation?

#### FOUR STAGES OF BHAKTI

Next, Bhagavan speaks of four stages of *Bhakti*: The highest state is that where our intellect, our emotion and volition, all are concentrated upon Him and our mind is completely absorbed in that contemplation. It is called *samadhi*. When human soul drops this physical vesture being in that kind of *samadhi*, it gets merged in the Supreme Soul having transcended all limitations of individuality. Sri Bhagavan further says, "If you cannot attain that state as that is the highest state, then you should constantly try to fix your mind on Me through Love. Even if you cannot do that then do all your actions only for Me." Though it is hard to fix our mind on one object, our mind being drawn out constantly by the activities of the senses and their impressions, yet we *can* control our will to a certain extent and do actions only for the sake of God. This gentle method of leading our mind Godward is comparatively easy. So let our actions be for God. This is the third aspect of *Bhakti*,



Next Bhagavan advises, "Even if you cannot do that, do actions as you are doing ordinarily, only dedicate the fruits of your actions to Me." That is the fourth aspect of the *Bhakti Yoga*. But really speaking this is the very first or initial stage of *Bhakti or Karma Yoga*, as technically it is called. You need not wrench yourself away from your surroundings. You do your actions—do your duty considering that it is the command of God. Consider that you are doing your own *Dharma*—and *Dharma* is the eternal injunction of God. God has ordained that each man at a particular stage under particular circumstances must do a particular thing to maintain his well-being. So *Dharma* should be considered as the commandment of God, and by the performance of your duty or *Dharma* you are only serving God indirectly as we serve our king by obeying his command. In this attitude of mind towards life's task there is no tendency to hanker after the fruit of the work that we do and therefore it does not forge bondage on us. On the other hand, it slowly brings about self-purification. When we begin to feel that the results of all that we do must be dedicated to God, our heart cannot but be purified of selfish dross. Thus then comes of itself the *Chittasuddhi* and when *chitta* or the mind is purified it begins to reflect like a clean mirror the rays of the Divine Sun, and the knowledge slowly dawns upon us that it is God's power that is ensouling and energising us. This is what the devotees call "Grace" of God,

“Grace” cannot be established logically. If you begin to argue logically you cannot substantiate it, because it is beyond all law. Those who have been fortunate to get “Grace” in their own life, can alone understand its true import and testify to its truth. Then the devotee feels that all actions that are being done by his mind and body, are but expressions of His power—the Power that is moving the suns, the moons and the stars, the Power that is threading atom to atom, molecule to molecule and producing this glorious spectacle of the physical world! Then all the fibres of his inner self get quickened with the consciousness, and he spontaneously bursts out “Not I, not I, O Lord, but Thou. Thou art doing everything!” When the mind is filled with the consciousness of the Divine Being, God appears as imbuing all objects the eyes behold. It so happens that if you consider God with form, you will see the form everywhere, you will feel His presence everywhere. Then again through His Grace, the mind will be slowly drawn up to a still higher plane where the form will melt away into the Formless—into one sublime, indescribable, transcendental existence. So Bhagavan says here, “This is the safest and most perfect path for all persons. Those who practise such single-hearted devotion with great concentration of mind, will certainly attain God and be blessed with Life Immortal. Their heart will be filled with My Grace, with My Love, with My Bliss.” Just as a bale of wires becomes magnetised when brought

into contact with magnet, so all those who approach Him with such intense love get surcharged with the divine light and grace; and these great souls become like 'spiritual dynamos' in society. They emanate as it were the power of spirituality and *Bhakti* and establish in the ordinary doubting mind the truth of the Divine existenc, and also show to the world how man can ennoble his life and raise himself from the deepest depth of animality and sensuousness into the most sublime spiritual life of God. So in the twelfth chapter Bhagavan describes the *Bhakti Yoga*, combining in it all *Jnana*, *Karma* and *Bhakti* which is the safest and the best path for all humanity. The highest form of spiritual intuition that directly apprehends God as the Supreme Reality of life cannot be attained without a proper, well-balanced, harmonious culture and convergence of our emotion, volition and judgment, *i. e.*, the senses, the *manas* and *buddhi*. In the concluding verses of the chapter Sri Krishna gives the most beautiful description of such a typical man of God-consciousness and devotion, exemplifying the wonderful balance of action, thought and feeling—all sublimated by the touch of that divine consciousness. He says that such a devotee is the most dear to Him.

## FIFTH DISCOURSE

### HARMONY OF SAMKHYA AND VEDANTA

According to some commentators the entire contents of the Bhagavat Gita can be divided into three divisions, each division comprises six chapters. These three divisions purport to express the famous Vedic formula "*Tat twam asi*" — Thou art That, It occurs originally in the Chandogya Upanishad, and as it is well-known, the formula really means that the individual soul (Thou) is the same in essence as the Supreme Soul (That). The contents of the Gita it is believed, have been arranged according to the three words contained in the formula. The first six chapters express the real nature of *Tat*, the Supreme Brahman, the second six chapters convey the significance of *Twam*, the manifestation of the Supreme, and the last six chapters are meant to show the relation between *Tat* and *Twam*, *i. e.*, how *Tat* has become *Twam* and that *Twam* is in reality *Tat*. But I must own here that such divisions of the content of the Gita are forced and are hardly supported by internal evidences. In fact, when we enter into the detail of the contents of the Gita, we hardly find there any clear-cut, well defined divisions among the themes of the different chapters. It becomes obvious to us that

there is no artificial division or any preconceived scheme in Bhagavan's mind in presenting the theme. The whole of the book appears to be a dialectic development of the theme in a quite natural way. It relates how Arjuna's mind was caught in the whirlpool of misconception of Reality and how Bhagavan proceeded step by step to clear the misconception by presenting the different phases of the Reality. Up to the 12th chapter, we have noticed that Bhagavan is expressing really His own Transcendental Nature as well as the Virat Rupa, *i. e.*, the Universal Form which is but a *relative* aspect of His. He tells Arjuna that there is one Reality which is both transcendental and immanent, and it is the basis of the entire phenomenal universe. A true knowledge of this Absolute Substance or Basic Reality can alone afford us the proper understanding of the real value of life, and enable us to harmonise all our activities in such a way as to bring about their highest fruition.

The thirteenth chapter of the Gita opens with the question of Arjuna about *Prakriti*, *Purusha*, *Jnata*, *Jnana* and *Jneya*. These technical terms must have been prevalent in ancient India among some of the philosophical schools, and Arjuna wanted to know the true significance of these terms from Shri Krishna. Some of these terms, *Prakriti*, *Purusha*, *Kshetra*, *Kshetrajna*, *Jnana* and *Jneya* are peculiar to that particular school known as Sankhya System. But some of these terms are also used in

Vedanta School and Nyaya School, although in each, with different connotations. It is Bhagavan's purpose to show the fundamental harmony among the principal schools of advanced thought in ancient India, so he has mentioned here and there some of the most important technical terms of the different systems like *Mimansa*, *Vedanta*, *Sankhya* and *Nyaya*. In the previous chapters, particularly in the 8th and 9th, when He speaks about *Adhibhuta*, *Adhidaiva* and *Adhijajna*, in fact He speaks in the language of *Mimansa* in trying to explain these terms. As the *Mimansakas* hold different views about the truth of the individual soul and its relation with the performance of sacrifices and the enjoyment of their fruits, Bhagavan tries there to remove the misconception regarding these terms prevalent in the popular mind. And here again, he picks up some of the terms that are prevalent among the *Sankhya* School and is going to show the fundamental relation which underlies all these different schools.

Accordingly Bhagavan takes up here *Purusha*, *Kshetra* and *Kshetrajna*, *Jnana* and *Jneya*. These are the points of doubt in Arjuna's mind. Bhagavan first speaks of *Kshetra* and *Kshetrajna* and their true significances. He says that the body or mind is called *Kshetra* and the Intelligent Principle indwelling this body is called *Kshetrajna*. It is perhaps known to you that man has three kinds of bodies, *viz.*, gross, subtle and causal. All these three bodies are referred here by the term *Kshetra* lite-

rally means 'field', and a field is a place where seeds are sown. These bodies are called *Kshetra* because the seeds of *Karma* are sown in these bodies whose fruit we reap and enjoy hereafter. As fields require constant cultivation, proper watering and nurturing for the good development and fructification of trees, even after the seeds are sown, so also these bodies require proper care for the production of the desired result. The Intelligent Principle that dwells within all these three kinds of bodies is the *Kshetrajna* (the Knower of the field). He is quite different from the *Kshetra*. But as the master of a field, and he is the controller of the field, so the *Kshetrajna*, the *Jiva*, who indwells these bodies knows fully well, *i.e.*, is conscious of these bodies, and he also controls them.

#### PSYCHOLOGY OF THE SOUL

Now, here I may tell you in passing, that some of the modern psychologists deny the existence of a conscious intelligent principle in human body. They hold that what we call consciousness is but a function of the brain cells and there is no separate entity or a distinct principle called mind, or consciousness apart from the physical body. The experimental psychology, as it is called, goes to prove that certain functions of the mind have their physiological bases in the brain. Take for instance, memory. Memory has a distinct analogous existence in the brain cell. If you take away certain portion of the brain, *i.e.*,

the grey matter of cortex, the memory may be completely wiped away for a period. If a small portion is scratched from a particular place, then memory is lost for a certain period of life, say three years, or six years. Such a thing has been actually experimented. So it clearly shows that the brain is really the repository of the memory of a man. Further, they hold that with each function of the brain, whether it be affection, or volition, or judgment, that is, in every form of mentation, there is consciousness. Just as we light a match, each time it brings illumination, and when the flame is put out, there comes the darkness; so, along with certain brain function, *i.e.*, during some chemical changes in the cortex, there comes the consciousness. But during sleep or in any other state of unconsciousness, when the activities of the brain are completely suspended, there comes complete disappearance of consciousness. So, consciousness is but an abstract term, even as whiteness is an abstraction derived from the sight of various white objects. Consciousness of Soul is not an entity, but, merely an abstract idea derived from various conscious functions. This is the general notion now prevalent among modern psychologists regarding the principle of consciousness or what we call Atman or Jnana. So according to this materialistic view of life in which every thing is sought to be reduced to terms of matter and its chemical actions, Soul is only a misconception. But Bhagavan gives here a reply to such an assertion. He does not enter into the logical aspect of the



question but deals with the psychological side of it. He first asserts unequivocally that there is an intelligent entity called Soul or *Kshetrajna* who is non-material and hence quite distinct from all forms of the material sheaths called body which it inhabits. The logical implication behind his assertion is that a compound entity cannot come into existence without there being an extraneous force to bring the different elements of the compound together. For instance, this house is made up of various elements like brick, mortar, stone, wood and other ingredients which have been put together to produce this house. As this house is a creation, produced through the combination of diverse materials, there must be another force, a creative power quite distinct from the combining elements, which could bring all these materials together to form the house. Therefore, the *Sankhyans* hold it as an axiomatic formula *i. e.*, "all combinations are for others"; it means that there cannot be any combination or compound of inert substances without a separate combining force quite distinct from the component ingredients. So, in the case of the human body which is a compound, the combining force that brings together all the different component elements, must be different from them. And as the builder of the house is an intelligent man, so also there is the spiritual principle of intelligence called Atman who is the real architect not only behind the construction of this body, beginning from the very embryological condition to its full maturity, but also behind all its

manifest activities. There is another way of refuting the modern psychologists: when they assert that consciousness is a function and not an entity, and soul does not exist apart from the brain function, they indulge not only in mere conjectures, but forget the fact that modern Physics is subverting the very foundation of matter. While the modern Physicist is dematerialising matter, it is curious that the modern psychologist should be anxious to materialise the soul! Even psychologically speaking, consciousness can never be considered as function, because then it must have been intermittent. All functions are intermittent in their aspect and can never be continuous; but in the case of consciousness, we feel it not as intermittent but continuous. Therefore it cannot be a function; it is always felt as an entity. No man, however self-analytic he might be, would be able to detect a state when his being was not. The annihilation or suspension of his being is never felt. For example, in that so called unconscious state of deep sleep, or in any other unconscious state, you will notice that although there is a suspension of the consciousness of the external body, though there is an obliteration of the content of the consciousness for the time being, still the pure consciousness *does* exist there. Otherwise, the man who enters into that so-called unconscious state and he who emerges from it would be felt as different persons. But it does not happen so, we all feel that the thread of the continuity of the being is never broken. That is the reason why we all feel

“I am the same person who entered into deep sleep, I am the same person who was made unconscious”, as if the continuity of the being is still maintained in spite of the obscuration of the content of the consciousness. That is a great point the modern psychologists ought to understand. The ancient psychologists of India made a thorough study of it and made it perfectly clear for the proper apprehension of that contentless consciousness called ‘Suddha Chaitanya’. So we see, pure consciousness cannot be a *function* inasmuch as it is never intermittent. It is ever continuous, or better, it is ever self-existent. Moreover, the existence of the dis-embodied mind in the form of spirit has now come within the scope of experimental science. Many scientists like Sir Oliver Lodge, are trying to experience and have succeeded to a very great extent in proving the existence of dis-embodied mind. So in the very same language of the modern scientists, I say that their mental analysis does not prove at all the non-existence of the soul, on the other hand it proved that the pure ego, *i. e.*, the principle of consciousness is different from the empirical mind. What the modern psychologists speak of consciousness is true of the *chitta-vrittis*, *i. e.*, the mental activities, they are indeed functions. But not the pure consciousness. So Shri Bhagavan tells us definitely that the principle of intelligence which looks after this ‘field’ of a body, controls it and energises it, yet it is quite distinct from the body. Without its existence the body would disintegrate.

The principle of consciousness, called *jiva*, enters into the very embryonic condition of life and begins to manufacture the body with a certain definite purpose and tries to build up the physical body to its requirements. So this activity of the protoplasmic life as it is called in biological language, can never be explained in terms of chemical science, nor can it be explained properly in the term of physical energy. It is a subtle vital principle that illudes all grasp of gross experimentation. Therefore this Kshetrajna, the existence of the subtle intelligent principle within the physical body, is self-evident; it is manifest to all. Yet the true nature of Kshetrajna is rather a point of controversy, as in ordinary condition, it is very difficult for us to understand who is the real owner of this body, whether the mind, or the senses, or any other principle apart from the mind. Ordinarily the mind appears to us as the sole monarch of this physical body, but a close analysis reveals that mind is not the last phase of the human personality. Physical body comes first being the grossest, but as the physical body itself is energised by the vital energy called *Prana*, it comes next. The *Prana* again is controlled by volitional mind called *Manas*. It again, in its turn, is energised and controlled by intellect or *Buddhi*, but there is something else which is behind intellect even and forms the background of all aspects of life; it is conscious of all activities of intellect even and without which even the intellect cannot function. It is this ultimate conscious background of life appear-

ing as the very core of the individuality, which is called the *Atman*. Bhagavan calls it *Kshetrajna*, because it fills this body with sentiency. So, it is really the knower of this body. Bhagavan further says here most explicitly that it is He Himself who is the *Kshetrajna* of all Kshetras, thereby He means that the indwelling principle of intelligence of all beings is one and the same, and it is no other than He Himself — the Cosmic Soul.

## PRAKRITI AND PURUSHA

Sri Bhagavan next refers to the two terms *Prakriti* and *Purusha* which are peculiar to the *Samkhya* system of philosophy. These two terms are quite analogous to *Kshetra* and *Kshetrajna* of the *Vedanta* philosophy. According to the *Samkhya* system there are only two fundamental principles which have caused the emanation of the entire universe. The first is the *Purusha*, the principle of intelligence which ensouls all living beings and makes the modifications of matter possible to exist as such. The second principle is *Prakriti*, *i. e.*, the principle of matter or substance which constitutes the form or body of the universe. Though *Purusha* is the principle of intelligence, and as such, it is essentially the intelligence manifest in life, yet it cannot move or have the capability to work. That is why it is called a mere *Bhokta*, *i. e.*, enjoyer; whereas matter or *Prakriti* is essentially inert and incapable of moving by itself, yet it is the one principle that

*moves*, which means that all actions and changes appertain only to matter, *Prakriti*, and not *Purusha*. So these two principles of changeless intelligence, *Purusha*, and everchanging non-intelligent *Prakriti* combine together to produce the universe. But they are two separate coeval, uncreated, self-existent, independent principles.

But Sri Bhagavan tacitly refutes here this aspect of Samkhya philosophy by saying that though there are *Prakriti* or matter, and *Purusha* or intelligence, yet *Prakriti* is not an independent entity. Though both are uncreated in the strictest sense of the term still they are the double aspects of one Reality. In the beginning of Chapter VII it is clearly stated how both the sentient and the insentient aspects of the universe belong to Him only, and He calls these two aspects as His own *Prakritis*, viz., *Para* and *Apara*, higher and lower. So what we cognise in the outside world as inert and insentient matter is not a different, distinct, independent principle, but is only an imperfect "reading" of the same Intelligent Being, the Parama *Purusha*, and this imperfection of the reading is also due to His "Maya" as He often says in many places of the Gita. And the sentient principle, the *Purusha*, individual soul, is obviously a ray of the same Divine Sun. This matter has been well-explained in the Chapter VII and we need not reiterate here. But it will suffice to tell you that in this chapter Sri Bhagavan is trying to reconcile *Samkhya*

and *Vedanta* systems by adopting the terminology of both the schools and showing the ultimate sameness of both *Purusha* and *Kshetrajna*, and *Prakriti* and *Kshetra*.

It must be clear to you that logically speaking there cannot be two ultimate principles like *Prakriti* and *Purusha* which are both fundamental and infinite at the same time, because two infinities cannot exist side by side. If *Prakriti* is infinite, *Purusha* cannot be separate and independent from it, or if *Purusha* is infinite as the *Samkhya* school holds, calling it "Vibhu", then *Prakriti* or matter cannot stand apart and separate by its side. Philosophically speaking the true infinity should be one synthetic whole which engulfs every other entity within its being. Now, in our experience of matter and intelligence, we notice that intelligence is the background of consciousness and what we call matter constitutes the object of experience or the content of consciousness. So naturally, speaking from the psychological standpoint, the principle of consciousness or intelligence, the "container", must be considered as superior in value to the "content"; as for instance, in the experience, "I see this table", 'I', the intelligent experiencer, comes first and the 'table,' the content of the experience, comes next; but be it noted that both the experiencer and the experienced are ensheathed with *one* experience or knowledge. And therefore, in *Vedanta*, Matter is supposed

to be an emanation, in the form of antithesis, from intelligence.

The modern Neo-realists of the West hold that there is a neutral stuff out of which both mind and matter have been derived. They do not accept the principle of consciousness or soul, but they say both mind and matter have been derived from one principle which is neither mind nor matter and therefore — a neutral stuff. The *Prakriti* theory of the *Samkhya* school answers exactly the theory of the neutral stuff of the Neo-realists, but with this difference that the *Samkhya* like all other systems of Indian philosophy holds that mind is wholly material in its nature, only it is more subtle than the object of perception, and therefore there is virtually no difference in value between the gross material objects of perception, the instruments of perception and the perceiving mind — they are all derivatives of one principle of matter called *Prakriti*. But this *Prakriti* is being constantly energised and quickened by a soul of sentiency which is, according to Vedanta Philosophy, neither absolutely different from it nor is it exactly the same, as in our own experience we notice the principle of consciousness which forms the background of experience cannot really be isolated from the object of experience or the content of consciousness; they appear as obverse and reverse of the same coin, and this is exactly what the philosophers of the Tantric school also mean by saying *Shiva-Shakti Samyoga* — *Shiva-*



*Shakti mayam jagat.* (The union of *Shiva* and *Shakti*, the world is composed of *Shiva* and *Shakti*.) The Vedantins also are very emphatic in asserting that "*Maya*" or matter has no independent existence apart from *Brahman* or *Atman*. Matter is but a shadow of the spirit, but even as a shadow it has a different value from the object, so matter also is different in value from the *Atman*.

Next, Sri Bhagavan points out how *Prakriti* or matter in all its three stages of evolution, viz., the causal, subtle and the gross, is the real root-cause of all the different kinds of bodies that *jiva* takes for the sufferings and enjoyments of *karma* in the universe, and Purusha, the ensouling intelligence is simply the enjoyer and the witness of the changes and modifications that come over the bodies through action and re-action. So all births and re-births are due to action and re-action of these two principles working upon each other as it were. But He reminds us again that the same Supreme Paramatman is in reality the enjoyer or the sufferer, although seemingly, in all these bodies, appearing broken up in fragments as it were. In the concluding Sloka of the chapter Bhagavan sums up his philosophy of life by drawing our attention to the fundamental philosophical truths that all that are changing and of active nature belong to the category of *Prakriti* and its modifications, and all those intelligent entities which appear to be suffering and enjoying having been thrown into the rolling waves

of the material universe, are but different aspects of the Supreme Purusha. Yet, the real truth is that as all these apparently diverse souls are essentially the different expressions of one central Supreme Soul, their sufferings and enjoyments which appear in the garb of reality for the time being, are not really real when looked from the standpoint of that Absolute Reality, even as the sufferings and enjoyments of dream-life are not reckoned as realities when judged from the experience of the awakened state. So Bhagavan asserts, "Being without beginning and devoid of Gunas, the Supreme Self, immutable, O son of Kunti, though existing in the body, neither acts nor is affected. As the all pervading Akasa, because of its subtlety, is not tainted, so the Self existent in the body everywhere, is not tainted."

It is something like the sun's image formed in different cups of water. The water is different, the cups are different and the images are also different. And yet the cups and waters are different aspects of one matter and the images are formed by the rays of the one sun, so each of us in our heart is manifesting a particular image of that Supreme Paramatman, which constitutes our individual soul. In one sense, just like those solar images in the cups of water, all these souls are essentially one and the same substance, and in this particular sense Bhagavan says: "Me do thou also know, O descendant of Bharata, to be the Kshetrajna in all Kshetras."

Who is the Soul of the whole universe is in reality the soul of this physical body also. The same sun which illumines the whole world is illuminating this little room also.

And according to Bhagavan the true knowledge consists in the knowing of the real values of the pairs like *Kshetra* and *Kshetrajna*, and *Prakriti* and *Purusha*. But the real value will always connect itself with realisation of the Supreme Truth which Bhagavan described erstwhile ago in this chapter as Supreme Brahman "with hands and feet everywhere, with eyes and heads and mouths everywhere, with ears everywhere in the universe, — and as existing pervading all, the Absolute shines by the functions of all the senses, yet without the senses, sustaining all, devoid of Gunas and yet their experiencer." (XIII. 14, 15.)

#### MATTER AS MIND

In the Chapter XIV Sri Bhagavan speaks of Prakriti and its structure in greater detail. First he tells us that all objects with form, *i. e.*, concrete manifestations have come out of *Mahat Brahman* — the Cosmic Mind, and He Himself is the father of the whole creation. He means thereby that all manifestations of gross form have been evolved from that subtle aspect of matter called mind, and mind itself cannot produce these modifications in the form of thought without being energised by the presence

of the Cosmic Soul. It has been already explained in the previous chapter how one Cosmic Intelligent Principle is appearing broken up into myriad souls, having been reflected in the heart of each individual being. And having thus been reflected and energised, mental waves in the form of thoughts and ideas get themselves more and more concretised and appear as gross universe. This is another peculiar theory of Vedanta philosophy. This gross universe is but an emanation from the subtle world of ideas or Cosmic Mind. As a painter or a musician first conceives the object of his art in his mind and then translates it either in the term of colours on the canvas or in musical sound to the outside world, so also the whole universe appears first in the Cosmic Mind in the form of ideas and then gets itself projected or concretised from the same into its present visible form. So really speaking, the gross matter is not at all intrinsically different or more real than the ideas and thoughts of mind. How astonishing it is to note that the modern science after so many centuries of researches in the realm of so-called realistic material universe, would at last come to proclaim, in the words of Prof. Eddington, that "matter in the last analysis is mind-stuff." This eminent English scientist tells us, "We have found the strange foot-print of the source of the unknown. We have devised brilliant theories to account for its origin. At last we have succeeded in re-constructing the creature that made the foot-print, and Lo! it is our own." He further thinks "That

the idea of the universal mind or logos is a fairly plausible inference. The universe may seem mechanical viewed from one standpoint, from another, from the aspect of the mind — and mind in matter is fundamental — spiritual." A strange corroboration — isn't it?

## CONSTITUENTS OF PRAKRITI

Next, Sri Bhagavan speaks of the nature and construction of that primordial substance, Prakriti. He says that Prakriti is constituted of three Gunas — Sattva, Rajas and Tamas — and these three Gunas getting themselves modified in various ways go to bind the soul to the body. Literally Guna means a rope and the three Gunas are so-called because they bind the soul just like a rope. The conception of Gunas as constituents of matter is as old as the Vedas. There is a positive reference of it in some of the Suktas of the Rig-Veda. In the Upanishads like Chandogya and Swetaswatara its mention is very explicit. But in subsequent systems of philosophy, much emphasis was laid upon their nature and import. All the different systems of Indian philosophy have accepted that matter is made up of the three Gunas, *i. e.*, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. But the connotation of the word "Guna" differs in different systems. The Nyayaikas take "Guna" to mean quality, and they hold that substance, "Dravya," is a distinct category and quite separate from the Guna, even as whiteness can be conceived as sepa-

rate from the white object like cloth, milk or white wall. But with the Samkhya school Guna is not distinct or essentially separate from the object it inheres in. As no substance can ever be cognised without some fundamental quality which is inseparably associated with the object, so, the Samkhya philosophers maintain, Guna is not merely a property, but actually matter itself, and when they say that Prakriti is made up of three Gunas, they mean that Prakriti is made up of three kinds of matter which are permanent and unconvertible. But Vedantins means quite differently when they say that "Maya" or "Prakriti" is made up of three Gunas. According to the Vedantins, Guna is a mode of matter, and as such, the three Gunas, *i. e.*, the three modes in which the matter appears are quite convertible through the processes of evolution and involution, and it is in the latter sense that Bhagavan speaks of the Gunas in the Gita. Sattva is something like the rhythmic condition of the material energy, Rajas is the vibratory condition and Tamas the inert condition. Rajas and Tamas are like two extreme poles, such as positive and negative aspects of the electric energy of modern science and Sattva is the middle point of harmony or balance in between these two poles. The Vedantic thinkers explain all diversity of appearances of the universe in terms of these three Gunas. Bhagavan tells us in this Chapter that Sattva Guna with its effect of radiance, purity, healthfulness, intelligence and happiness binds the soul to the body, that is to say, the soul forgetting

its own attributeless absolute nature, gets itself identified with the body and mind possessing these expressions of Sattvic Guna.

The characteristic of the Rajo Guna is intense activity and its necessary psychological motive forces like ambition, lust, attachment and pride; it always blurs the vision of the true and gives a wrong lead. The taintless soul gets tainted as it were, with these expressions of Rajo Guna, as we all experience in our life.

The characteristic of Tamo Guna is inertia and dullness, and its expression results always in idleness, stupidity of thought, perverseness of mind and want of light of both head and heart. The ever-pure Atman gets itself contaminated by these expressions of Tamo Guna by getting itself identified with the body and mind.

Bhagavan Sri Krishna concludes his discourse on the Gunas by saying "He who can transcend these three Gunas, goes beyond birth, death, disease and suffering and attains immortality. He having known an entity beyond the Gunas, attains My state."

Both on the moral and physical side of life, all that are considered good, are the results of Sattvic Guna, and its natural outcome is happiness. But the other two Gunas produce only suffering, delusion and darkness, and therefore deepen more

and more the bondages of life. So these three Gunas are spoken of simply to indicate the three stages of evolution in life, the Sattvic state being the highest. So far the teachings of the Gita are quite on par with other ethical systems. But Sri Bhagavan further tells us, lest we might misunderstand the Sattvic state to be the highest attainment in life, that even the so-called good Sattvic condition is a bondage for the Atman, and that a seeker of Truth must go beyond even the Sattva Guna. Unless one goes beyond all the three Gunas, one is not freed from the shackles of matter. When one transcends the Gunas, one realises his *being* as perfectly untainted by any of the Gunas; then he becomes absolutely unconcerned to and unaffected by the modifications of the material universe and all the pairs of opposites in life like, good and bad, heat and cold, friend and foe, pain and pleasure, profit and loss, praise and blame, honour and insult. Sri Krishna then concludes the chapter by saying—"Also he who serves me with an unswerving devotion, going beyond the Gunas, is fitted for becoming Brahman." Here again Bhagavan reconciles Jnana, Bhakti and Karma Yoga. The implication is that the transcendental state beyond the Gunas would be attained not only by those Yogins who have withdrawn themselves from all the Gunas by supreme dispassion (*Para-Vairagya*) and rigorous discrimination, but also by whole-hearted dedication in love and service to God.



## SIXTH DISCOURSE

### THE NOUMENON AND THE PHENOMENON

In the Fifteenth Chapter Sri Bhagavan describes the same old truth regarding the phenomenon and noumenon, although in a different way. He likens this universe to a big banyan tree (*Aswatha*) whose root is fixed upward in the transcendental region, and the branches have come down and down, spreading in myriad ways! The whole of this physical universe is exactly like that: what we perceive here as gross and tangible aspect of matter has its root and origin ever fixed in the intangible Transcendental Being, the supreme Brahman. And from that subtlest Being proceeds this creation, with all its gross and subtle aspects, branching out downward in its infinite ramifications. In another sense again, this universe is indeed as *Aswatha* as it does not remain the same for two days together, that is exactly what the Sanskrit word *Aswatha* indicates. It is the common experience that this universe is an ever changing process and never remains the same for any length of time, although it affords shelter for the Jivas to enjoy the fruits of their Karma even as a tree does for the birds. But a little critical observation would reveal the fact that this phenomenal universe is not only

ephemeral in its value, but has neither beginning, nor end, nor any permanency; it is just like a dream. And the more and more we dwell upon its non-permanent nature, the more it would lose its hold upon our mind, just as any phenomenon, however charming and tempting might be the appearance, would lose its attraction if it is analysed away as nothing but a mere vision. Therefore Bhagavan exhorts us to cut this tree of *Aswatha* by a strong weapon of detachment. And having given up the phenomenon, you must seek the Immutable Noumenon, the *Parama Purusha*, because that is the one thing real, that is *really* real. The Noumenon or the Absolute is expressing itself through the phenomenal, so it is said that the creation has proceeded from the Absolute. And Sri Bhagavan tells that the absolute state is His *real* self, having attained which souls never come back again to this world.

He reiterates again here the supreme truth, "I am existing in every heart, all principle of intelligence or consciousness is my reflection, and from me has come all knowledge and also the opposite of knowledge, *i. e.*, ignorance (Are not light and darkness aspects of the same reality?) I am the promulgator of the Vedanta and I am the knower of the Vedas. I am the true teacher of all knowledge. From me has proceeded everything". He further asserts here again what He has said elaborately in the tenth chapter that it

is He who is the great sustaining principle not only of the animate, but of the inanimate objects also: He is the light of the luminaries, the power of sustenance of the material universe and the sapidity that keeps alive the vegetable kingdom; it is He who energises all the senses and keeps them agoing. The ignorant cannot see Him, but He is seen only by the "eye of wisdom" — *Jnana Chakshu*.

#### THE MUTABLE, THE IMMUTABLE AND THE TRANSCENDENTAL

He then describes the triune aspect of Reality. He says that there are two kinds of *Purusha*, *Kshara* and *Akshara*, i. e., mutable and immutable. When a man thinks of himself as Mr. So-and-So, he is considering then only of the physical aspect of his personality. This physical body is the *Kshara Purusha*, it is material and mutable. It changes and perishes. But there is another aspect of his personality, the principle of intelligence or his ego which remains the same in spite of the different changes that may come over the body. We all feel that as we grow our body changes, even our mind changes, yet the ego which makes us feel "I am," does not change. It remains the same for all time in our life. So the ego must be considered as the imperishable aspect of our personality, *Akshara Purusha*. It is also called *Jiva*, and it incarnates after death. Then Bhagavan says that there is still another *Purusha* who is superior

to both and who is called the Supreme Soul and Lord of the universe, as He sustains all, being immanent in all. This Supreme Soul may be called in a sense our Over-Soul or the Transcendental Ego in contradistinction to the former ego which is empirical. It is called *Sakshin* or the absolute consciousness in Vedanta. As the Supreme Soul or Over-Soul, He is called Purushottama, and He should be worshipped and meditated upon as such.

#### DIVINE AND DEMONIAL TENDENCIES

In the Sixteenth Chapter Sri Krishna speaks of two kinds of tendencies prevalent in human nature and He calls them divine and demoniacal tendencies, *Daivi* and *Asuri sampat*. Here Bhagavan deals with the fundamental problem of Ethics, *viz.*, the origin of good and evil. It is a vexed question of ethics that if God is the creator of the whole universe, who was it that created evil? God being the soul of excellence we can understand that good has come out of Him; but how was evil originated? Some religions hold that evil is the outcome of certain fallen angels like Satan. When man was first created he was given freedom to choose his own ways of life; but unfortunately he fell a prey to the allurements of Satan and began to violate the commandments of God, — that is how evil was originated in human society. And the phenomena of evil still continue to exist in the society being prompted by that Evil One. This theological ex-

planation may appear satisfactory to those who believe in personal God. But it is hardly rational and philosophical. It has been told several times and I need not reiterate here, that personal God cannot be the absolute reality: It may be a human necessity and his emotional creed to have faith in or to love personal God but it is not strictly logical. God cannot be both infinite and personal at the same time, as personality cannot be finitude of some kind. Even allowing the personal view of God, it belittles the grandeur and omnipotence of God, if we believe that in spite of His omnipotence, the Evil One is thriving well and reaping a bumper harvest in this world. Indeed, seeing the strength of Evil in the living world, we ought to conclude that Satan is more powerful than God. So we see, logically speaking, such theological explanations are not at all satisfactory.

But the Vedantic theory of the origin of good and evil is very logical. The Vedantin holds that good and evil are but relative terms, it is viewing a thing from different angles of vision. There is nothing absolutely good, nor is there anything absolutely bad. As there is no absolute light, so there is no absolute darkness. But what you call light or darkness is so in relation to your own self: It appears so according to your own capacity of observation. For instance, at night we human beings can see nothing and therefore we call it darkness, but to an owl it is perfect light. Therefore what we call

light or darkness is only so in relation to our own power of sight. So also in ethics, what we call good or bad is just so only in relation to our own particular position. What is poison to one, may be food for another. So what is good for one may be definitely bad for another. An absolute good should be so for all beings, for all times and in all circumstances; similarly should be also what is absolutely bad. But we know no such conduct or virtue in our life. Even the highest virtue like truthfulness, charity, compassion, when misplaced, becomes evil and a positive source of harm under different conditions. Life in matter is relative and naturally all actions in life derive their values in relation to a particular point or particular position. God being absolute and immanent, He is behind both good and evil; but in Him there is neither good nor bad: He is above both position; He is absolute and above the relative. It is in reference to that absolute point that things are adjudged in their values as good or bad. Whatever takes us Godward is called good, and whatever takes us away from God is called bad.

Then again, as both the phenomena of light and darkness are due to the sun: when there is more light of the sun we call it light, and where is less light, we call it darkness. It is a question of degree. Similarly, where there is less expression of *Sattva Guna* we call it bad or evil, and when there is a greater expression of the same we call

it good. The evil tendencies are produced in the mind and the body by the excessive presence of the Rajas and Tamas. And there is the reason for calling the Sattvic tendencies as good; the Sattvic tendencies produce the evolution of life and ultimately bring about liberation for the soul. Moreover, Sattvic conduct always brings real joy, peace and contentment in life. And therefore Bhagavan calls them divine possessions or moral assets. The other set he calls as demoniacal, because they bring involution in life and strengthen the bondage for the soul. This difference of the *Gunas* is the real philosophical explanation of the ethical disparity existing in the world. The three *gunas* existing in various grades and shades of expressions in human nature, are responsible for all the varieties of conduct in man's life.

Among the divine tendencies Bhagavan enumerates the following virtues, *viz.*, fearlessness, purity of heart, establishment in Jnana, charity, self-control, sacrifice, scriptural knowledge, self-mortification, guilelessness, non-injury, truthfulness, commiseration, non-covetousness, tenderness, modesty, steadiness, prowess, forgiveness, fortitude, cleanliness, gentility and humility of soul.

Among the demoniacal tendencies, Bhagavan speaks of the following moral defects, *viz.*, self-consciousness, false pride, vanity, anger, self-aggression, and delusion. He further tells that those

who are of the demoniacal tendencies, never care for righteousness or truth, nor do they observe any sort of purity of life; they are really atheistic at heart and do not believe in any moral basis of the universe; their whole soul is filled with lust for power and enjoyment, and they like to secure the object of pleasure by any foul means. Bhagavan tells us here that men of such demoniacal nature really hurts Him by causing suffering and injury to others, as it is He who is residing in every heart. Such souls being deluded by their own ignorance and shackled by their own bad Karma, are dragged on from birth to birth, eking out the most miserable life of bondage and suffering. Such souls are sometimes called *Nittyā-baddhas*, that is, eternally bound souls who will not get emancipation in the whole of this present Kalpa (cycle). Then Bhagavan sums up the whole of the "demoniacal" defects in three words, *viz.*, lust, anger and greed, and he calls them as the veritable gates of hell. One desirous of self-emancipation must guard himself against these three arch enemies of men.

#### SHRADDHA AND HUMAN TEMPERAMENT

In the Seventeenth Chapter Sree Bhagavan speaks chiefly of the three kinds of *Shraddha*, faith, which subconsciously formulates the motive power of action in our mind. Here He tells us that man develops *Shraddha* just according to the nature of his mind. And indeed, as is his *Shraddha*, so he



himself is; it reflects truly his inner nature. In Sanskrit, *Shraddha* means something more than mere passive faith. It is the dynamic attitude of the inner self, born of a deep innate conviction, which prompts us to choose and act. And as the human nature is primarily divided into three classes, viz., *Sattvic*, *Rajasic* and *Tamasic*, so there are also the three kinds of *Shraddha*. The man of Sattvic mind worships gods with proper rites and due respect as have been prescribed in the scriptures. The man of Rajasic temperament is devoted to *Yakshas* and *Rukshas* (demi-gods). But the man of Tamasic mind is drawn instinctively to worship only the vulgar spirits and spooks.

## THREE KINDS OF FOOD

The three kinds of propensities natural to the Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic characters become manifest even in their taste. In choice of food, the Sattvic man instinctively likes such food as is pleasant to the taste, nutritious, not inebriating, healthful, soft, juicy and non-irritant. The man of *Rajas* likes to take the food which is bitter, sour, salty, hot, hard and irritating, and such food always produces disease and suffering in the long run. The man of *Tamasic* nature is fond of taking putrid, dirty, impure, unwholesome food, food kept overnight and devoid of all juice.

## YAJNA, DANA AND TAPAS

Next, Bhagavan gives us a comprehensive description of the nature and value of the three kinds of *Yajna* (sacrifice and religious rites), *Dana* (charity) and *Tapas* (penance) appertaining to the three Gunas. In this connection I may tell you that from the very ancient time, even from the Vedic ages, *Yajna*, *Dana* and *Tapas* have been considered as the very corner stones of the Sanatana Dharma. They have been called the three heads of Dharma :

In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad it is said,

“Brahmanas wish to realise THAT by *Yajna*, *Dana* and the *Tapas* which is not painful”.

And ever since, these three have been considered as the very fundamental principles of the religious practices of the Hindus. Moreover, these constitute the very essence of their spiritual civilisation as manifest in their cultural life and social institutions. These three, as we shall see presently, are the greatest means of self-purification, only if they are performed properly. Through the performance of these, man's animality will be slowly purged off and he would be enabled to comprehend by and by that he is a part and parcel of the Universal Life we call God. So no one should dream even to attain real spiritual knowledge and God-realisation without first performing *Yajna*, *Dana* and *Tapas* in

some way or other. In fact we find all great religions of the world have adopted these three in some form or other in their religious observances. Different scriptures of the Hindus give different commandments about their performances. But Bhagavan gives here the most sane and accurate views of the same. He also tells us the different values of their different aspects.

### THREE KINDS OF YAJNA

First he speaks of Yajna. He has already told us the significance and different kinds of Yajna in the third and fourth chapters. Here He simply mentions that when one performs the Yajna as an obligatory duty of his life and does so strictly in accordance with the rules of performance and without any desire to enjoy their fruits, then such Yajna should be considered as Sattvic. When it is performed with pride and self-laudation and for the enjoyment of its fruits, such Yajna is Rajasic. And the Tamasic Yajna is that which is performed in a haphazard way without paying any heed to the injunctions of the Shastras, and without any mantras and devotional feelings.

### THREE KINDS OF TAPAS

Next Sri Krishna tells us about Tapas and its varieties. As Yajna brings us in tune with the Infinity, Tapas helps us to manifest the divinity in

us by purifying our heart. No understanding or realisation of high spiritual truths are possible without Tapas. So Vedic Rishis have laid very great stress on Tapas for spiritual aspirants. There are three kinds of Tapas pertaining to body, speech and mind; worship of God, reverence to godly men, Guru and the wise, physical cleanliness, simplicity of life, continence and non-injury, — these constitute the Tapas of the body. Words that hurt nobody, truthfulness, loving and beneficent speech and devout study of the scriptures, — these constitute the Tapas of speech. Cheerfulness, peace, restraint of speech, self-control and purity of thought, — these are the Tapas of the mind.

When these threefold Tapas are performed with great faith and without any desire to enjoy any specific merit accruing for the same, then the performance is indeed Sattvic. But when they are performed with pride and for fame and self-advertisement, the performance becomes Rajasic. In the Tamasic performance the Tapas is done with much ignorance and mental aberration and with self-torture or to injure others.

### THREE KINDS OF CHARITY

Next, Bhagavan speaks of the three kinds of charity. When charity is rendered to one who has done no good turn to the performer, and it is done purely out of deep consciousness of duty, and

with full consideration of the fitness of time, place and the recipient, the act is Sattvic. But when it is made with a desire of getting a return or some other benefit, and with a grudging heart, the charity becomes Rajasic. Then again, when the charity is done in wrong time and at the wrong place, without any consideration of the fitness of the recipient, and with slight and disdain, it is said to be Tamasic.

It may be mentioned here that charity, just like Tapas, touches the fundamental chord of the human heart and chastens him to the degree of feeling quite resonant of the Universal Life. So we see the *Tapas*, *Yajna* and *Dana* form the basic principle of the spiritual culture of the Hindus.

## SEVENTH DISCOURSE

### TYAGA AND SANNYASA

In the Eighteenth Chapter, it being the last discourse, Sri Bhagavan gives us the quintessence of His teachings on religion and philosophy of life. The chapter opens with a question from Arjuna regarding the real significance of *Tyaga* and *Sannyasa*. A knowledge of the true import of these two terms was not only essential for Arjuna, as his mind was much confused over these matters, but it is equally important also in our present day, as the mind of the average Hindu is filled with a deal of wrong notions about both renunciation and duty. Since the days of the Upanishads the ideal of *Sannyas*, the life of an ascetic, has been held up as the highest ideal of life. In the Buddhistic age very great premium was put upon it both in honour and power, and the fascination for the life became so great that in five or six centuries after Buddha, nearly half of the population of the country became monks and nuns. Many took to the life not out of sincere hankering after spiritual *Nirvana*, but more for the honour and prestige attached to the life, and also to escape from the drudgery of worldly responsibilities. Such persons naturally fell far short of the high discipline required of the true ascetic life, encouraged

idleness and perversion, and brought degeneracy and disrepute to the Buddhist *Sangha*.

During the days of Hindu renaissance, Sri Shankaracharya again renovated the Hindu asceticism and organised it after the Buddhist *Sangha*. It served a very great purpose in those days of rehabilitation as the institution regularly supplied an army of religious experts to the Hindu society and helped it in maintaining the religious life to a very high degree of efficiency and purity. It is the Sannyas institution which was responsible for the production of a galaxy of spiritual men of first magnitude like Ramanujacharya, Maddhvacharya, Gouranga, Madhusudana Saraswati, Sadananda Yogi, Tulsidas and others. The influence of the lives and teachings of these men has been so great upon the Hindu Society that a Hindu still sincerely considers it to be highly meritorious to renounce his hearth and home and take to the life of an ascetic. The teachings of the Upanishads, Smrities and the Puranas, all tend to deepen the faith by holding aloft the glory of *Sannyas*. And so we find now, just like those days of Buddhistic decadence, that more than fifty lakhs of people are at present donning the ochre garb under some denomination or other in India. This state of affairs has brought looseness of life and lack of discipline on one part and false aberration about life's ideal on the other, leave alone the economical and social side of the question. So I say, the instruction of

Bhagavan on this point is equally important for us also as it was to Arjuna.

Bhagavan's reply to Arjuna's question, in His own inimitable manner, is terse and full of deep import. He says:

“The seers know that true *Sannyasa* means the renunciation of all activities for mundane ends. And real *Tyaga* consists in the relinquishment of the enjoyment of the fruits of action.” It is plain here that He takes no cognisance of the mere institutional *Sannyas*, but goes to the very root, the spirit of the institution, and tells us that a true *sannyasin* is he who has renounced all his worldly desires and mundane values of life, be he in the bustle of the market place or in the solitude of an anchorite's cell. And true renunciation does not consist in mere abandoning the worldly responsibilities or work, but in the relinquishment of the fruits of actions done in this life. Bhagavan spoke also in the same strain in the beginning of the fifth chapter while speaking on *Karma Sannyasa* and *Karma Yoga*, and told us there that one can go beyond duties only through the performance of duties without attachment. This necessarily means a life of the highest discipline, a life of complete dedication. There should not be even the least vestige of selfish desire or seeking of ease in the life of *Sannyas*. Any such practice in the name of religion is sure to defeat its purpose and should be rigorously discouraged in a society for its



healthy growth. So long as one does not reach the very highest point of spiritual life, one must go on performing selfless work, deeming it to be a service and worship of the Supreme Being Himself, manifest in humanity. Sri Krishna repeats here again what He had said many times elsewhere about the importance of selfless work in ordinary life as a great self-purificatory process. He tells :

“ Sacrifice, charity and austerity should not be given up, they are obligatory. Sacrifice, charity and austerity are great purifiers for the intelligent.” Of these we have already spoken in the previous discourse. In this connection Bhagavan further tells Arjuna that it is not possible for an embodied man to give up absolutely all activities. So the man of true renunciation is he who has renounced the fruits of action. Otherwise the man who has given up work simply to spare himself from physical exertion and out of the sheer laziness, cannot reap the benefit of the renunciation, as such an act is Rajasic.

#### THE FIVE AGENTS OF ACTION

Next, Sri Krishna points out that for every act there are five causes, *viz.*, the body, the senses, the different *Pranas*, and their presiding deities. All of these are equally responsible authors of the act. Whatever action man does, whether by his mind, body or speech, all of these five are the

conjoint agents of it. And the *Atman* plays no direct part in the act. It stands aloof as the great "witness" — *Sakshin* — of all changes and actions of both body and mind. Ego which is no doubt an image of the "witness" formed in the mind stuff, is indeed an agent, but only one of the five agents. This is the real psychological truth as regards the agentship of an action. Such being the case, it is but sheer folly and ignorance to hold the pure and taintless *Atman* responsible for any act done by the above mentioned five. It is true therefore, that one whose inner consciousness is not identified with any of the five agents, but stands aloof and single and the agents being left free to function, will never get tainted even if the destruction of the whole universe comes through him. Bhagavan describes here again the nature of the true knowledge: "Know that to be the true Sattvic knowledge by which one is able to perceive the one undifferentiated Being existing in all beings appearing as differentiated." Excepting this knowledge of unity in variety all other forms of knowledge are either Rajasic or Tamasic.

Next, Bhagavan speaks of the different kinds of workers (*karta*), characteristics of different intellects (*Buddhi*), three kinds of fortitude (*dhriti*) and happiness (*sukha*). All these differentiations are made according to the classifications of the three *Gunas*, and all in unision with the Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic knowledge described above.

## THE DUTIES OF FOUR CASTES

Then Bhagavan takes up once more the question of castes and their respective duties. First He indirectly points it out as a fact, what He has said clearly in the fourth chapter, that the castes are the natural products of the human society due to its inherent divisions created by the three Gunas, as nothing in this universe is free from the operations of the three Gunas which constitute nature. And therefore the four castes which are primarily based upon the preponderance of one of the Gunas, express severally their characteristic tendencies, and the duties and functions allotted to them are justly classified according to their own inherent propensities. He says :

“The duties of Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra, O Scorcher of foes, have been distributed according to the Gunas born of their own nature.” Then He enumerates: Tranquillity of mind, self-control, austerity, purity, forgiveness, straight-forwardness, knowledge and self-realisation — the practice of these are the works of the Brahmana, and they are born of his own inherent nature.

Prowess, valour, endurance, dexterity, unflinching steadfastness in the battle-field, generosity and sovereignty — these are the natural work of a Kshatriya.

Agriculture, dairying, commerce and trade — these are the natural duties of a Vaishya,

All kinds of service are the natural duty of the Sudra.

In connection with these duties, in each case, Bhagavan uses the word which means, "born of one's own nature," and it is very significant. From this epithet, it is perfectly plain, as we have said in the Second Discourse, that Sri Bhagavan never means the four castes by birth, but by Gunas only.

#### DUTY AS A MEANS TO SALVATION

Next, Sri Krishna tells us once more the same grand truth about Karma Yoga which He has said so many times elsewhere :

"From Whom have evolved beings and by Whom all this (universe) is pervaded, Him having worshipped by the performance of his duties, man can attain perfection." As I told you before, this is one of the greatest teachings of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, the like of which has not been told by any other prophets or teachers. It really means that every action, if performed with the right spirit and detachment, becomes a holy act of worship and dedication, which ultimately must consummate in Self-realisation or God-realisation.

Then by dint of such constant practice of detachment in action, one gradually develops in him a permanent consciousness of the absolute inactivity and perfect stillness of the soul — the great *Naish-karmasiddhi* of the Adwaita Vedantins,

“Being unattached to all, self-controlled, free from all desires, one attains the supreme perfection of going beyond all duties by the practice of *Sannyas*.” When such consciousness is gained, no more external work is possible for such a man; for him there is the higher stage of pure meditation — *Jnana Nistha*. Then his sole activity consists in complete withdrawal of his mind from the sense objects and the maintenance of its perfect tranquillity through meditation. And such practice of serene meditation will finally lead to the highest stage of absorption of the self in Brahman which is technically called *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, or the supreme God-realised state of the *Brahmavidvaristha*. Bhagavan says :

“Such a soul having attained the bliss of Brahma-consciousness, neither grieves, nor desires; he feels sameness in all beings and gets the supreme bhakti for Me.”

#### DUTY AND DEMOCRACY

Let me tell you here of the two great points that Sri Krishna brings out very forcibly: First, He tells us quite emphatically that man's spiritual evolution depends wholly upon his selfless performance of duty, and not on fighting for right. Individualism which has given birth to the doctrine of individual right in a society, is deeply rooted in ignorance and unspiritual basis of life. It is in short a denial of

the grand spiritual unity of the Aman. Therefore the right spiritual view of the sacred mission of life is the ungrudging performance of one's own duty, taking it as worship of God. All emphasis upon individualism and the necessary scrambling for right, which has become a great curse to modern society, is sure to perpetuate the miseries and disruptions obtaining among mankind, as it cannot give any rational basis of moral principles of life, nay, it is against the very moral foundation of the universe. It is truly a material culture that emphasises it and tries to interpret all concerns of life in the light of individualism. Bhagavan tacitly warns us against it by putting great emphasis upon duty.

Secondly, Bhagavan gives a broad hint here as to how such an attitude towards life will bring true democracy in the society. All other kinds of democracy based upon economical, political or social principles are bound to be unstable as they stand on a false view of life and do not touch the spiritual chord of the human soul. True democracy is a spiritual entity, and can never be attained without the adequate spiritual discipline or spiritual culture of the people. The man of self-realisation alone is the true democrat, because he *sees* the one soul in all and therefore he loves all even as he loves his own self. Hence the real permanent democracy can be built up in a society by the spread of the spiritual culture, the doctrine of Dharma, and the grand ethics of self-dedication. Modern man hankers after

democracy, but he begins from the wrong end. It will be well if he listens to Bhagavan and carries out His teachings into life. Then the vision of peace and prosperity which the word democracy conjures up in his mind, will ere long be materialised in his life. Communism, Socialism, Bolshevism and all "isms" of that sort, none of these will ever be successful in establishing the true democracy in the society as these cannot give human mind the adequate discipline which should chasten him of his animal selfishness and make himself forget his own in the service of others.

#### LAST SERMON ON SELF-DEDICATION

Next, Bhagavan exhorts Arjuna to remember the supreme fact in life that God Himself is residing in all hearts as the soul of all souls, and it is He who is really moving all beings to action by His Maya, just as puppets are made to dance in a puppet show. When man realises this fact in his inner consciousness, not only he becomes humble in spirit and equanimous in all conditions of life, but his resignation becomes so great that through the complete annihilation of the lower self, he becomes the perfect conduit for the outflow of the Cosmic Will, and through him God performs great work for the good of the humanity. This is the true *Jnana*, the true *Bhakti*, and the true *Karma* as well.

Lastly, Bhagavan sums up all His teachings in the Gita in these four words: "O, Arjuna, fix thy

mind upon Me. Dedicate thy heart to Me, Worship Me only. And by that certainly thou shalt attain Me, I promise thee, as thou art My favourite." I told you previously that in our *Shastras* we have two kinds of ethics, *viz.*, the ordinary ethics which is good for the common run of people, and the transcendental ethics. So Bhagavan having spoken first of the ordinary ethics, now speaks here of the transcendental ethics for the spiritually evolved souls. The ordinary code of ethics demands scrupulous allegiance to duty. But the higher ethics transcends duty through complete self-negation and self-dedication to the Supreme Being who is no other than the Universal Life itself. Here Bhagavan gives Arjuna His last word of instruction, which He terms as the "Supreme Secret," and is generally called the *Churama Sloka* (final advice) by the devotees:

"Give up all thy Dharma and Adharma and take refuge in Me alone. I will free thee from all sins. Fear not." It is nothing less than complete self-dedication — heart, intellect, body and mind, all laid as offerings on the divine altar. This is what is called *Sharangati* or *Prapatti* among the Vaishnavas. It is the doctrine of absolute self-surrender to the Supreme Being, knowing Him to be the one Universal Soul residing in every heart and manipulating all the forces of life. The devotee feels within himself that he has been completely engulfed within the Cosmic Being and his separate individuality is lost for ever to have any practical



value.\* When the mind is thus attuned with God it is obvious that such a man cannot do anything wrong, through him manifests only the Cosmic Will. He becomes an instrument in the hand of God. Hence are gone all his *Dharma* and *Adharma*.

On hearing this last advice of Sri Krishna, Arjuna said, "Now my delusion is dispelled, and I have understood the truth through Thy grace, O Immortal One; I am firm now. I will do Thy command. I will fight."

## CONCLUSION

Then let me conclude this series of lectures by repeating the last verse of the Gita, the words of Sanjaya to the blind king Dhritarashtra:

"Wherever is Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, where is Partha, the great wielder of the bow, there are eternal prosperity, victory, expansion and sound policy."

That is an eternal truth and Sanjaya speaks it out to all humanity for all time. Whoever makes Bhagavan Krishna, the Supreme Lord of the universe, as the charioteer of his soul, whoever

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\* The Vaishnavas of the Ramanuja's school hold a bit different view on this point. They being dualists, maintain that the individuality still remains, only it gives up the consciousness of a doer of action apart from God,

instals Him in his heart and makes Him the guide of his life, having taken the humble yet truly heroic attitude of a disciple like Arjuna, the typical man (*Nara*) and dedicated himself completely to Krishna, as Arjuna finally submitted, will certainly attain opulence, victory, glory, freedom, piety and everything worth having in life. It is true also in the case of a nation. If a nation can make Krishna as its guide and follows faithfully His instructions, it is sure to attain in the long run the final salvation. There may come a temporary setback, a passing depression, a momentary battle with the evil forces, but the evil forces shall be eventually vanquished, even as Kurus were vanquished, and the nation shall emerge in its full glory on the path of peace and prosperity, bliss and contentment. There is no doubt about that. Only our duty is to remain steadfast in our devotion to God, purify our heart and obey His words. There is no use in reading the Gita every day, if we make no effort to instal Bhagavan Sri Krishna in our heart and follow His advice in our work-a-day life. If a nation, at least the majority of its people and especially those who call themselves the leaders of the country, try to follow Bhagavan's advice as given in the Gita, in their work-a-day life, it is sure to achieve the highest benefit for the people — a permanent peace and prosperity in life.

If we Indians who consider Krishna as the Soul of India, follow His advice with more earnest-



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