



Look Within

talks on The Bhagavad Gita

Swami Venkatesananda



talks on The Bhagavad Gita

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Foreword

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The invitation to write a foreword to Swami Venkatesananda's talks on the Gita appears to result from the coming together for me of two streams which belong essentially to one river. The river formed by the union of yoga and depth psychology carries us to oneness in the ocean.

I first came to hear Swami because of my deep interest in the psychology of C.G. Jung. I found His talks immediately absorbing and illuminating, extending for me what I had read in Jung concerning human beings as individuals resting on a common substratum which is universal, unconscious and everywhere and always the same.

In His preface to His earlier book "Srimad Bhagavad Gita for Daily Life", Swami quotes from Krishna, "Each man devoted to his own duty attains perfection". As the meanings of devotion, duty and perfection developed in the Gita are revealed by Swami, it becomes evident that the empirical discoveries of Jung verify, and are in turn verified by the spiritual and practical teachings of Krishna, just as they are by the teachings of Christ. Devotion to one's own duty means, in psychological terms, seeing the truth as it is revealed in one's own consciousness.

It becomes evident that the only real "I" is the center of this consciousness, which itself is aware of that which thinks and feels, sees and hears in us. "To the man of the 20-th century this (the empirical nature of the psyche) is a matter of the highest importance and the very foundation of his reality, because he has recognized once and for all that without an observer, there is no world and consequently no truth". (Jung, C.G. Psychology and Religion: West and East, 2nd edition, Vol. II, Collected Worksp, 309.)

A one-sided rationalism has led the Western world (and recently much of the Eastern world also) to think statistically and egocentrically to the point of believing that if we can kill, say 3000, of the enemy today and they only 2900 of us, we must eventually win. Using Krishna's instruction of Arjuna as his source Swami asks who are we and who are the enemy.

In Jungian terms - if we identify with any one of a pair of opposites, black or white, good or bad, they or us, we see only one half of reality, and so only one half of ourselves. Swami in His 6-th talk in this series says that "sin is an acceptance of ... this division as reality".

If we are satisfied with no division but seek the truth which is inevitably wholeness, God-consciousness or, in Jung's terms, individuation, we cannot declare war on our dark brother, the world or the devil, because these too are ourselves, manifesting the indivisible totality.

The idea of indivisibility, of being a cell in a star, which is itself a cell in the body of God, of trying to contact directly the One, has always evoked fear or an equally dangerous fascination, especially in those evolved against a background of rationalism, materialism and individualism. On the other hand, the belief that the reality of our bodies and our senses is an illusion and that salvation depends upon a purely spiritual striving or the perpetual contemplation of some exotic image, is unfortunately held by many Western "converts to Yoga" and even some Yogis themselves speak as if matter, the ego and personal existence were objects to be overcome. However, the divinely inspired Gita, and the enlightening talks given to some truth seekers in Perth in March 1974 by Swami Venkatesananda, show these notions to be mistaken, because they are based upon a division which is illusory. Empirically the ego exists but psychologically, however important for the personality struggling to emerge from unconscious nature to conscious light, it is not an end in itself. Ego consciousness is the reference point from which to view the whole, to look within as well as without, to dispel the shadows and see reality.

I have an ego sense. "This ego sense is real," Swami explains. "I cannot get rid of myself. The ego sense cannot be got rid of." It is a given which automatically and everywhere arises, even in the most collectively unconscious societies. The illusion is that it is independent of the totality, that it creates itself, its thoughts and values. This gives rise to a feeling of separateness and division which can only be dispelled by consciousness of "my" relationship to God or the supra personal Self, Jung's psychic wholeness. While the division is not real, its effect is real. If we think we are separate, we act separately and are at odds.

In interpreting the modern setting and against the psychology, Swami Venkatesananda demonstrates that Man is whole in himself. Why seek perfection, asks Krishna, when we are already perfect. Imperfection comes from not seeing and therefore not being what we truly are. Similarly, in Jungian terms, individuation, the process of becoming undivided in consciousness, comes not from the projection of our problems into social, political or philosophical divisions or schisms, but from looking within, seeking the truth in our own hearts and our own minds.

The "I" of my own experience has been greatly enriched by my contacts with Swami Venkatesananda over the years since He first visited Perth. In many seminars, workshops, talks and informal discussions, He has lifted the veil of ignorance and division sometimes for a momentary glimpse, and sometimes

for a dazzling and lasting view. Not least in dispelling shadows and revealing truth are these most recent talks on the Gita, some of which I was honored to hear in person. I am delighted that they are now to be published and hope that they will bring as much joy to their readers as they did to me.

Introduction

The Bhagavad Gita needs no introduction. The narrator is unimportant!

Perhaps it is good to remind ourselves before entering into the study of the scripture that unless Arjuna's problem is ours, too, the teaching does not mean anything to us. Are we as earnest as Arjuna was, or is our life superficial and therefore "pleasant and peaceful" on the surface? Are we awake and alert to the complexities which we have created around ourselves? Do we realise that life has become a problem on this earth because we (each one of us) are so very full of disharmony and hypocrisy? If all this applies to you and me, then the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita is meaningful and vitally important.

Venkatesa

I

In these six lectures we will take just a glimpse of the scripture known as the Bhagavad Gita.

The teacher in the Bhagavad Gita is known as Krishna. I have a feeling that this Krishna was perhaps none other than the person who some other people call Christ - the pronunciation and even the life seem to be similar. I think you know the story of Jesus Christ, so I won't go into that. Krishna was born in a prison cell and immediately transferred to some other person's house because of fear of a king - like the Herod story. The king was against Krishna and so he had to be hidden away. The foster parents were cow herds.

They say that there is a missing period in the life of Krishna which was later filled in with lovely stories. I do not know how far these stories are facts, and how far they are imagination of writers. I think that those of you who are familiar with what are known as historical novels know that they are part fact, part fiction. I do not think it is possible for anyone to present the whole truth. You cannot even write the story of a contemporary personality (whether it is a friend or enemy) and present the whole truth, because you yourself do not know it! And, if you regard someone as saintly, you do not want to see anything ugly in his behavior, even if it is brought to your notice; so I do not believe that any description of any personality contains the whole truth - it is usually a mixture of fact and fiction - there are some overstatements, and some understatements. If you find a manuscript with pages missing, not wanting to leave a blank, you add a few nice stories. Even so, I feel that perhaps there was a missing period in the life of the person known as Krishna, and they were filled with lovely romantic stories of him - stealing into someone's house and taking butter and curd, and running around with girls. Or perhaps there were philosophical and esoteric meanings for all these stories. I do not know.

The teachings of Krishna and Christ are almost exactly similar. Krishna also defied traditional religion right from his boyhood. For instance, he stopped a certain ceremony saying, "Lead a simple, moral, natural life. All this pomp and show and ceremony is not necessary". They also seem to have led very similar lives, in that they mixed freely with all people, and their death seems to have occurred in similar circumstances - Jesus was nailed to a cross, and it is said that Krishna was seated under a tree when someone shot him, mistaking his foot for a head of a buck. An arrow entered his foot and pinned it to the tree - nearly the same as crucifixion. It is said that the hunter who shot Krishna came round to pick up his animal and was greatly distressed to find what he had done. Krishna said, "You do not know what you did. You only carried out my wish. This is my wish" - words similar to Jesus. Instead of praying "Father forgive them", Krishna sent the hunter to heaven in the

celestial chariot which came to transport him there, saying, "It is better that I see you are safely transported to heaven as a sign of forgiveness and appreciation that you have only done my will. You carried out my wish, you committed no crime". To underline this, Krishna actually sent the man to heaven before going there himself.

It is interesting, but not very important whether there were in fact two people, or just one person whom the Christians call Christ and the Hindus call Krishna.

The context of the text of the Bhagavad Gita is terribly interesting. There was one family with two branches - one branch was considered evil and vicious while the other branch was considered pious. They were cousins. I am sure you recall to mind that Cain and Abel were brothers, and they became enemies and Cain murdered Abel. I think it is good to remember that my enemy is not a stranger. This fact is plainly brought home to us in the Gita again.

aatmaivahyaatmano bandhuraatmaiva ripuraatmanah - Gita 6 Verse 5

"For this self alone is the friend of oneself and this self alone is the enemy of oneself".

No outsider, or stranger is interested in killing me - what for? These things may happen in wars and riots, but you do not call that murder. If you carefully investigate enmity, you discover that it happens only among people who know each other. The more intimately you know the other person, the greater the chances that one day you will hate him. I believe they conducted some kind of research in California and discovered that 80-90% of murders were committed by friends, and most thefts were committed by friends or servants - people who know you, who have been coming into your house quite often. There is a beautiful proverb in English which illustrates this - "Your worst enemy if a friend offended".

The Kabbalists are a very interesting branch of Judaism. According to them, I believe that what is called original sin is not so much Adam's disobedience, or sex, but the story of Cain and Abel - brother hating brother, brother being jealous of brother, brother killing brother. I think this is a very beautiful thought which appeals to me a lot more than the other interpretation of original sin.

This has been the tragedy of human life, that brother cannot live in harmony with brother. So, just as Cain and Abel were brothers, the heroes and villains of the Mahabharata - of which the Bhagavad Gita forms a part - were cousins. The villains were the Kauravas and the heroes were the Pandavas. The chief of

the Kauravas was Duryodhana, and the spokesman for the Pandavas was Arjuna. There were intrigues, blackmail and all kinds of things and conflict built up and up, until at one stage war became inevitable.

Krishna's help had been sought by both parties. It is said that Krishna was resting after lunch when Duryodhana, the wicked chief, entered the room, saw Krishna resting and went and stood by his head. Then came Arjuna, who humbly took up his position at Krishna's feet. When Krishna awoke, he opened his eyes and saw Arjuna. Duryodhana said, "I was here first". Krishna said, "I will be impartial, I will help you both. I will join one of you and the other can have my army". It is funny, isn't it? A strange deal. That means, some of Krishna's soldiers are going to be fighting against him, and, as he does not like fighting, he won't fight! Duryodhana chose to have the army, and Arjuna chose Krishna and appointed him as his charioteer. There is a beautiful teaching of Jesus - "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all else will be added unto you". I think that was probably illustrated in this story - that Arjuna asked for Krishna - who was considered an incarnation of God, in preference to might and numbers.

At the beginning of the Bhagavad Gita, the two armies were assembled on the battlefield ready to fight. Arjuna said to Krishna "Take my chariot and put it right in the middle, between the two armies, so that I can estimate the relative strength of ourselves and the enemy".

The Bhagavad Gita is considered a Yoga text, a scripture that deals with Yoga. I think that, when the hero says, "Let me assess the relative strengths of ourselves as well as our enemies", there is already a message, a very vital truth of Yoga. Look within, try to see where you stand - place yourself right in the middle. On one side all your lust, anger, greed, jealousy, hate, temptations and all sorts of things, and on the other side your good qualities. Nobody, not even the worst criminal in the world, is totally free from something good; and not even the greatest saint is totally free from some deficiency.

Are we prepared to look within? Here the chariot must be in the center, in the middle, not leaning towards one side - not rationalizing, not justifying, not saying, "Alright, I have some defects, but I know why they are there. As long as they are in me, they are not defects!" We do this very often. I tell other people not to smoke, but may be smoking myself, thinking "But of course I smoke in absolute moderation". As long as the defect is in me, I feel it is not a defect. Without rationalizing like this, without condemning, without justifying, can I have a look at myself, standing right in the middle - these are my spiritual and moral assets and these are my spiritual and moral liabilities.

I think it is very important for one to be able to honestly face one's own inner being, to see oneself for what one is. I am not looking for any testimonials -

who is interested in testimonials? If I am vicious, I am vicious can I become aware of this viciousness, can I become aware of the strength of my enemies? Or, am I saying that just because they are mine they are not weaknesses? Oh, no, because that is the second lesson we learn in the beginning of the scripture. This man who stands up right in the middle of the two armies and sees his army on the one side and his enemies on the other side says, "Oh, they are not my enemies, they are my cousins, uncles, grandfathers, relations. Do I have to kill them?"

This is the next lesson in what you call spiritual life, the life of Yoga. It can be seen in our life in a hundred ways. Let us take a simple example: you want to stop drinking. Suddenly you realise that the man from whom you used to get your supply has become your friend; so, when the next time you walk past his shop, and he calls out a friendly greeting to you; you think, "Oh, I am going to let this man down if I stop drinking and do not buy any more liquor from him. How can I let him down? He is my friend". Or, when you are passing a pub and all your friends call out to you, you think "Can I let down my friends? I will just have a glass to keep them company". Is it because you are serious that you should maintain this friendship, or is it because you want to be a rationalist, maintain and sustain a habit which somewhere in you appears to be unhealthy. How do we know? Something in me says it is unhealthy, but I do not want to give it up; and because I do not want to give it up, I look around for an excuse - and usually I find one. An excuse is always couched in such altruistic and noble expressions. One can always find a noble, beautiful reason for doing something terribly vicious.

"How can I let my friends down?" Do I really mean this, or am I motivated by something else? How do I know, unless I have a calm, peaceful mind, a mind that is inwardly alert, inwardly illuminated. It is only such an enlightened intelligence that can really see how the mind fools us, plays with us.

Later, in the second chapter of the Gita, you find some arguments used by the teacher, Krishna, that sometimes shock you. Krishna seems to suggest "Go, on, fight Everybody is going to die in any case. Stand up and fight - do not become impotent here". This seems to encourage violence, to suggest that fighting is good; but if you look at it from the stand point of wisdom, you see a completely different meaning in it. Here is a warrior standing on the battle field; he collapses and says, "I will not fight because these are all my friends. I will not kill them". The teacher says, "Are you sure that you do not want to kill them because they are your friends, or because you are afraid? What is the reason?" Are you going back to the pub to have another drink because you want to please your friends or because you want to please yourself?

Can you face yourself? Can you unmask yourself and see yourself for what you are - not what you think you are? That is the question. Is that clear? You are

saying, "These are my friends and therefore I do not want to kill them. I am terribly interested in promoting their welfare - I want them to live long, and happily" Are you sure? This I think applies to innumerable situations in our life. Somebody gets drowned in a swimming pool that is manufactured or sold by your rival. You jump up, "Ah, monstrous, this should be abolished". Everyone is up in arms. But, what about motor cars? Oh, no, no one is bothered, that is accepted. How many people are killed by the motor car? The motor car is my friend - however many people may be hit on the road. I do not want to say anything against it, but someone died taking LSD or hashish - then I am up in arms. Are you really interested in human welfare, do you have respect for human life irrespective of who is killed, or do you have some prejudice which you wish to cover up with this nice, lovely talk? That is the problem.

So the teacher, Krishna, says, "These people are going to die in any case. Now, do you want to fight or not? Whether you fight or whether you do not fight, they will all die. What about you now?" That is a different story. When the mask is lifted and taken away, you suddenly begin to face yourself. You want to please your friends and therefore you want to go to the pub - please do. How far would you please them if they tell you, "You are our best friend, none of us have any money". Would you stand them all a drink? Am I really interested in friendship? Am I honest with myself? Or am I merely finding polite, acceptable civilized excuses for covering something which is vicious?

This, I think is the first lesson that is given to us in the Gita. The rest of the scripture is unintelligible, a closed book, unless I am prepared to do these two things first. One: to face myself, assess my assets and liabilities, and two: to unmask myself, stand naked in front of my own gaze, without the need for rationalization, without the need for an external judge.

Can I look at myself? Can I see how, from moment to moment, from day to day, there is this constant urge, temptation or tendency to cover up all my weaknesses, not even by saying, "Sorry, I am addicted to drink - I have cultivated a bad habit," but by inventing a justification which seems to make what is evil appear to be good.

If that rationalization is knocked out, it is then that the truth that I like this comes out. It is then that we are able to see ourselves as we are, not as we think we are, not as we hope we are, but plainly as we are.

II

Last week we looked into the story of the genesis of the Bhagavad Gita, and right in the beginning of the teaching of Krishna there is a completely new approach to philosophy. Krishna does not seem to bother so much about God, the world, or how the world was created - all this comes later, but right in the beginning he takes us to a direct inquiry into the self. I think there again we have a message. It is not God who is a problem to any of us - if God exists, He is the quietest thing in the world, most silent, most peaceful, He does not worry us at all; and I do not think the world as such causes any worry or any bother to anybody - if you do not disturb the world, the world doesn't disturb you at all! You are the disturbance - if you do not create the disturbance from within yourself, there is no disturbance. Birth is there, and living progresses, and then there is death; I come into this world, I live, there is plenty of food to eat, and if there is no food to eat, there is plenty of space to serve as my grave. There is no problem - I can live as long as there is need to live. If I am not dissatisfied or unhappy about the body growing, and becoming bigger, there is no reason why I should be upset when the body grows down, instead of growing up; if I am not terribly worried about dark hair growing on my head, I should not be upset about white hair growing on my head; if I am not bothered about hair growing on my head, I should not be bothered about hair not growing on my head. It is all the same - coming into being, and going out of being. Why should any of these things affect me at all - unless I create them as a problem. Arjuna himself very beautifully brought out this one fact when he was reviewing the armies of both sides; he said, "They are not enemies, they are my people", my people - my.

It is not as though we are terribly worried about life, starvation, happiness, unhappiness, or disease- for instance, how does your heart react when you hear that in Vietnam 2.000 people were killed? Or that in some African country there is starvation? We think "Ach - silly things, they do not know how to live - lazy fellows", or "Over populated, breeding like flies." How do I react if the same thing happens to me, my people, or my family? Having traveled the world over, I see that this happens everywhere. As long as I do not identify myself with that person, group, cult, community or nation, I do not care; it can go to hell. As long as my thing is safe and sound, who cares about the others? As a matter of fact, in order to protect what is mine, I am prepared to destroy what is not mine.

So I am not really non-violent, I am not really a peaceful person, against killing, against death, against suffering. I am even prepared to create suffering as long as this thing called "my" is looked after. This "my" becomes narrower and narrower and narrower and narrower. If you are involved in farming or business, you speak in terms of the Australians versus somebody else. "I must ensure that all Australians are happy, are free from want, hunger and

poverty", but if you are not someone involved on a national level, or if you are caught up in a country like India or Africa, you do not think in terms of the whole country, but in terms of "my community". I am a Catholic - all Catholics must be alright; if you are a Muslim - Muslims must be looked after, or a Hindu - Hindus must be looked after. Then if I go to India, there are Christians, Hindus, and Muslims, but I am no longer treated as a Hindu - I am a Brahmin, I come from South India and I come from a certain linguistic group or section. So, that community must be alright, and for the sake of the welfare of that community I am prepared to sacrifice the others.

If you carefully examine this, you will discover that given a challenge it becomes narrower and narrower. If there is enough food for everybody, we are all generous; but when there is not, we no longer think in terms of even this group, we think in terms of "my" little family, "my" little village. Inevitably, one step more and 'brother is ready to kill brother'. If there are 100 loaves of bread, we can all share it - nice, marvelous, all brotherhood and sisterhood and what have you! But if it becomes five loaves - well, I begin to see who are my friends here. If it is three loaves, it is even 'who are my indispensable friends, my bosom friends'. If there is only one loaf, there is me, nobody else.

So it is not the world but this "my" that causes trouble. Nobody in the world is honestly and sincerely concerned about death, about killing - no. "I" and "my" people must be safe - and if violence is necessary in order to ensure that safety, that violence is then justified. Non violence then becomes violence immediately. As long as I can find a valid reason, it becomes "dharma" - it becomes sanctioned by religion. Who wrote religion? We did. Who decides the validity of it? We do. What is our authority? The scripture is our authority - and what is a scripture? That which we accept as a scripture. A marvelous thing - it goes round in circles! The circle appears to be so terribly secure because it has no exit; and you jump into it and you cannot get out of it. Like the quicksands - you jump into it, you are there forever; and you sink deeper and deeper, all the time thinking that you are more and more secure. If you jump into a pool of mud and if you sink only up to your knees, somebody can pull you out and chop your head off; but if you sink up to your waist, it is difficult to pull you out; and if you sink right up to your nose, nobody can chop your head off - you are under. So, unfortunately we find that this restricted view seems somehow or other to give us a sense of security. It is strange and a terribly funny thing.

A narrow view of life seems to be comfortable and secure. So, anybody who encourages any kind of "my" feeling - whether it is "my" community, "my" nation, "my" religion or "my" family, is sowing seeds of disaster to himself. Swami Sivananda taught me this lesson once. There was an American family

staying in the ashram in 1947 who supported the ashram very well. They were generous and the ashram was very poor and so it was grateful for financial assistance given. We treated them as nicely as we could but we were not very rich; so how nicely could we treat the guests? We only thought that we were providing them with a lot more convenience and comfort than we enjoyed. But the boss of the family was not pleased - he was a millionaire and he was not used to the rigorous life of an ashram; and he started complaining. He criticized the secretary, the kitchen manager, and the man who went shopping. When this reached the ears of Swami Sivananda, he was angry. He said, "Ask them to go away, to leave this place!" I just looked at him. Then he said, "You think they have given us a lot of money. We will pay them back. Tell them we will return all their donations. We will pay them little by little - not immediately. Ask them to go".

Right - that's disaster. We had no money at all! That man was such a clever business man he might even accept the offer! I was not quite certain he would not. Then I said something which I thought might postpone the evil day, "Swamiji, he is only angry with the secretary, and the kitchen manager and the shopping Swami, but he has great devotion to you". Even now I remember the extra-ordinarily piercing look Swami Sivananda gave me! He said, "Ha, - today he abuses someone, the next day he abuses somebody else, the third day he will abuse you, and the fourth day he will abuse me. Once the habit is formed, then it goes on, it finds it's own victims, progressively. You keep quiet because he did not hit me, he only hit somebody else. That is how we rationalize. But violence must come, must expand, must find more victims; and one day it will be you. If you escape, it is just a matter of accidental coincidence."

I will tell you a funny story. A man borrowed a thousand dollars from someone else and he promised to repay it in three months. The three months deadline passed and he had not repaid. So the money lender went to court and sued him. The borrower had given him a document - but still, lawyers can help you in any situation. The man went to a lawyer and said, "I am sorry, I did borrow the money, I gambled and I lost it. I had given him a promissory note. I do not have the money, what must I do? I have some money but not that much". And the lawyer said, "Alright, I will tell you how to get out of this, if you promise to pay me half the amount". He said, "OK. I accept". Instead of having to pay \$1000, why not pay the lawyer \$500. The lawyer taught him a very simple trick. "When you are summoned to court, whatever question the magistrate asks you, merely say, 'Bahhh ...,' and I will plead on your behalf that you are mad, and according to law the magistrate is bound to dismiss the case. That's all and you give me \$500 for this". "Agreed". So he went to court, and when the magistrate asked - "Did you borrow the money?" - 'Bahhh' "What did you do?" - 'Bahhh' The magistrate said, "This man is insane, case dismissed". The borrower came out of the court and the advocate

congratulated him and then a little later he said, "What about my \$500?" - 'Bahhh'

That is what is happening. When I justify something, saying because it is something "mine" - my religion, my cult, my ashram, my family, my community, it is alright - it becomes closer and closer and closer, and sooner or later I am involved in it. I am involved in it because I create it. I hope that it is clear. It is not as if somebody else planted this net and I am caught in it - no, no - I created it. I created it first by identifying myself with it, and naturally, as soon as I identify myself with it, I am asking for trouble.

So, right in the beginning of his teaching, Krishna points out that it is not the world or God that is the cause of your troubles and sorrow, it is you.

gataasunagataasumshca naanushochanti panditaah - Gita 2 verse 11

Thou has grieved for those that should not be grieved for, yet thou speakest words of wisdom.

Do not try to cover up your stupidity by bringing in any philosophy. I was reading the following story from the talks of Ramana Maharshi yesterday. A man was foolishly standing on a rock at midday looking at the sun and meditating, and when he came into the hall it was brought to Ramana Maharshi's notice. He said "Why do you do that? Do not do that. It is not right". The man said, "Oh, you are my guru, my master, and you are within me, guiding me to do this". Ramana Maharshi said, "Do not bring in all this philosophy". There is a right application of philosophy, there is a wrong application of philosophy, there is a misunderstanding of philosophy, a misunderstanding of truth. How do I recognize whether I understand or misunderstand, unless I know myself? Whichever way you start, whatever you pick up, you come back to this - I must know myself. I must be able to look within myself, to see myself. One who has self-knowledge does not find it necessary to cover up his own anxiety, foolishness, stupidity or short-sightedness with sublime philosophy. Why do we need it? Why not be honest and say, "Sorry, I am anxious, I am worried". Why am I worried? Because either I think these are my people, my friends, and I am worried that they will be killed, or I am worried that I may be involved in this action too. Am I merely finding a reason, a respectable reason for a suspicious motive?

This happened to a very respectable family years ago in India. There was a social structure which was inviolable and a girl wanted to marry someone whom she was not supposed to even look at. She did not say, "I love him, I want to marry him" - this is the end of the story - oh, no - the respectability is lost. So she came up with a fantastic theory that they have been twin souls - birth after birth they have been together, "In my meditation it has been

revealed that God wants me to marry him". Why bring in this poor God, and why bring in all your past incarnation story to hide the real motive. Who is interested in this? The real motive is that you want to marry him. Simple - Marry him!

How can honesty be achieved? Only by looking directly into yourself. And so Krishna warns us right in the beginning. "You talk as if you are a very wise man; but you are worried. You betray anxiety". Anxiety, worry and wisdom do not exist together. If I am wise, there must be no anxiety in my heart. If there is anxiety in my heart, then I am not a man of wisdom. It is silly to say, "I am very wise, but I am not quite sure ... " or, "I depend entirely on God - is there some more tea there?" Humbug, hypocrisy! There is no need for this hypocrisy because you are only bluffing yourself - what for? When you are anxious, worried, jealous or suspicious, no one else is worried - it doesn't involve anybody else at all. It worries you, it eats your heart away. Why do this?

There is another thing which unfortunately I have never understood. If someone is more prosperous, or happier than I am, and I am jealous, or if somebody insults me, I should not take more than three minutes to realise that I am eating myself away, I am punishing myself - for what? For nothing, for no reason. When my husband or my wife or my children are sick - again I am worried. By worrying myself, I am not going to improve the situation, I am only making things worse for myself, for everybody perhaps. When - it may almost sound like selfishness - I see that by this anxiety, jealousy, worry, fear, hate or anger, I am destroying myself - then these emotions seem to be not only meaningless, but destructive. Wisdom does not go with these, and when wisdom arises in me, all these things fall away.

gatasuunagataasumshcha naanushochanti panditaah

I have a wooden plaque with this motto written on it. "Today is the tomorrow that you worried about yesterday". You find that things have gone on fairly well - of course, it could have been better, but it might have been worse! We have been able to manage today fairly satisfactorily - we did not blow up - and now we are worried about tomorrow, about the next day - they will also take care of themselves, when they come along. People often say, "Oh, it has never happened to me before". Of course it has never happened to you before. Have you ever seen the 2nd of March 1974? You are going to see it for the first time in a few hours. It is happening for the first time - every day, every moment is the first time! The evening of the 1st of March 1974 has never happened to be before. It is happening now, but you are not worried about it - it goes on smoothly; and, even so, the 2nd of March will go on smoothly. Something might happen - something has to happen one of these days, just as in a couple of hours - instead of sitting up, you will lie flat. One of these days I will lie flat

and may not want to get up for a few more days - also alright, part of the game - as long as I do not call it a dangerous illness and think "Oh this should not happen to me. "It can happen to everybody else, but not me; I am so important, you know".

So again I must know that what I call 'my' - my body, my life - also kills me, destroys me. I do not want my friends to fall ill; and then I do not mind as long as I and my immediate family do not fall ill; and then I say, "I must not fall ill" - the bug may bite my wife or husband as long as I do not get bitten. Why not me? I am also formed of the same potatoes as the others.

I can look back into the past at something that I was horrified by, that I thought I would not be able to survive without, but I have survived. When I heard that Mahatma Gandhi was shot dead, I thought that the whole of India was going to sink into the Indian Ocean - it did not, it is there even today! When I heard that Swami Sivananda had passed away, I thought "Uhh - finished". But nothing is finished - life still goes on. Even so, everything will go on - with me, without me, in spite of me! That is more interesting - with you, without you, but sometimes in spite of you, things go on! What is this terribly important 'me' there?

gataasunagataasumshcha naanushochanti panditaah

If you stand in front of some of these graves of very important persons, like Lord Forrest - can you visualize what they were when they were here? How much they thought of themselves, and how they valued their 'me' and 'my'. Now all these are gone, they have done their job. Even so this will happen to me one of these days; it is nothing to be afraid of; it can be neither avoided, nor shunned. So neither the past nor the future in itself has anything that need worry me or make me anxious or frighten me. This, when it is seen directly, is wisdom.

III

We discussed the first words of instruction uttered by Sri Krishna in the Gita.

ashocyaananvashochastvam prajnaavaadaamshcha bhaasase

"You are worried about what you should not worry about; you grieve for those you should not grieve for". It seems, by inference, to suggest that worry is alright in certain circumstances - not for someone who is alive or someone who is dead, but for other reasons. For instance, one may be worried about one's own stupidity and may be sorry for remaining in ignorance and loving it - that is a rather miserable state of affairs. In some scriptures dealing with Bhakti - devotion to God, a certain type of unhappiness - not just unhappiness, terrible anguish - is described as being experienced by a devotee - one who loves God whenever he suddenly remembers that he had forgotten God. So, that anguish, grief, sorrow and worry seem also to have their own place in the scheme of life. What is emphasized here by Krishna is that you are applying it to wrong situations. You pretend to be worried about people getting killed in a war, but you do not really have respect for life - and that means there is hypocrisy. You are not facing the truth, looking at the truth as it is.

Today I was reading the Scientific American where they have some bits and pieces from their own publication of 50 years ago reproduced in this month's journal. This particular news item seems to have appeared in 1923 when there were just 300,000 cars, and there were 14,000 fatal accidents. The article goes on warning people that they must learn how to deal with them. We have never dealt with them, have we? The road toll has only increased over the years because we do not face the fact - and the fact is the car itself. Are we prepared to live without the motor car? No. We want to keep the motor car and then ... - and then what? You cannot deal with death; the two go together. Also for instance, we express great concern over some three people who jumped over Sydney Harbour Bridge; so, in order that other people may not go up this harbour bridge and hurl themselves down, we build all sorts of protective mechanisms there in our anxiety to protect life. How many? Three lives per year. But, that seems to satisfy people. .

Are we really and seriously concerned about people getting killed? Do we have respect for life? Then we must start taking a total view of the entire situation and not look at one little corner which seems to suit our conscience.

There was another extraordinary article I read when "Life" Magazine was still being published. The story is of someone who went into a burning house, and before he could run out, a burning beam collapsed on him and he was roasted. Someone else jumped in and rescued him, and then a whole army of doctors

and nurses went to work on him. After a long time and every type of surgical and medical attention, he was saved. In the "Life" Magazine there was a huge picture; a photograph of this man surrounded by doctors and nurses, and in the foreground was an array of the specialized drugs which were used to bring him back to life. I think the whole thing cost about \$2 million, for just this one person. While in the hospital convalescing, a nurse fell in love with him and when he went home they were married. Help poured in from all sources - he was provided with a house, a job, and a jeep. Six months later he was driving the jeep - it skidded, fell down the hillside and the petrol tank exploded, killing him in exactly the same manner in which he would have been killed two years before! I was reading it and I thought, "Good Heavens! This is almost the theory of Karma illustrated. The man had to die in that way".

We seem to pretend that we are so terribly concerned with the protection and preservation of life - are we? In which case we should take a total view of the whole situation, be concerned with all, wherever there is unnecessary killing - unnecessary in the sense of unnatural. You cannot prevent death, but you can prevent people killing one another, you can prevent murder by not providing the climate for it. You can prevent wars, you can prevent riots; you can prevent road accidents by wiping out this automobile! Ah, no, that does not seem to suit us. So we sweep all this dirt under the carpet, and to ease our conscience we get upset at cruelty to animals. For instance, a visitor from South Africa to Mauritius was a little distressed when she found someone had knocked a stray dog down while he was driving. She said, "Oh, we do not have stray dogs in South Africa". When I went to South Africa later I asked them, "How do you deal with your stray dogs? And what do you do with all the puppies? (there is no family planning there!) They said "Oh you know, the S.P.C.A. looks after them by putting them to sleep". So you see, as long as it is not done in front of you, and as long as you do not use the correct words (the S.P.C.A. doesn't kill them, it 'puts them to sleep') it is alright. The dogs do not run around on the road inviting accidents to themselves, they are neatly taken away and disposed of.

In Australia and in Europe there are no beggars - of course not! If you go to India or some other countries, there are beggars loitering on the road. What do you do with poor people here? Do you not have any poor people at all, people who cannot earn their livelihood, who cannot look after themselves? "Oh, of course we have. Old age - no, not even old age - senior citizens, they are all looked after." By whom? By an organization. How does that organization get money? "Well, we have flag days. They do not go begging, but we go begging on their behalf. We do not really beg, we stick a pin on everyone's lapel so that we collect funds." Right? In some countries you do not even have that because there is social welfare. Same thing. Instead of my going from door to door begging, the other system creates a whole hierarchy, again - which incidentally results in other kinds of abuses. I am not criticizing

any social welfare organization; but if you really and truly get into some of them - not all perhaps, you will find that hardly 20 to 30 percent of the money collected for a certain cause goes to that cause. The rest is distributed. Sometimes I am made to witness this. Let's say there is a home for crippled children and they have a Christmas party. If there are 50 crippled children, the Christmas party is usually attended by 150 people not involved in the work, except for a few who are donors, perhaps. There is beer and champagne, and savories and cakes. Who takes them? You and I. I am not a cripple. I do not belong a that place.

When you let the beggars fend for themselves, this wastage is not there. I am hungry, I come to your house, you give me two bananas and I walk out - my hunger is satisfied, and you have done your charity. Whereas, if you put me in a destitute home, form a committee and collect a whole lot of funds, you are still only going to give me two bananas at the most - the rest of it goes to you. Or, the system becomes more complicated and it is the Government that does that. Where does the Government get its money from? From Taxation. It is the same thing, except that your conscience is satisfied - not because you have the joy of having done something wonderful, but the truth is veiled from you.

I do not know if you see it this way. If I come to your house and you give me two bananas, you have great inner satisfaction of having appeased the hunger of somebody; whereas if the state taxes you, you are not happy at all! If I am your finance minister, I will shout from the roof-tops that we are not taking your money away to deposit in our bank account; it all goes back to society in social welfare projects - quite true, absolutely true. But there is hardly anyone who feels happy to give tax, not even the people in the highest positions. You are compelled to do charity, and because you do not see the people to whom this money goes, you are reluctant to part with it. So that the situation is not fundamentally altered, but the little good that there was in it is destroyed. If I am a beggar and I come to your house, your heart will be touched - your heart must begin to melt some day or other, and you feel happy. "Ah, I have done something good today. God, thank you", and I feel happy too. Instead, I go to this poor home, old age home, or whatever it is, and they treat me as dust there - they are not interested in me. If you have ever been to one of these places day in and day out, you become completely feelingless. When you first see these old people for ten days, your heart is full of sympathy; and then there is no more. You cannot go on having sympathy forever. One of these days the heart begins to harden and you do not treat them as human beings any more. It is a very serious problem.

Do I really have respect for human life? Am I really concerned that there should be happiness, that people should not die unnecessarily - by accident, riot or killing, or do I merely look away from the problem? Am I facing the

truth, do I insist upon finding the truth, or am I satisfied only when the truth is hidden, veiled?

You will discover that our satisfaction comes nearly all the time when the truth is not presented to us, when ignorance is bliss. Krishna merely points out this simple thing - do not bring in an argument merely to hide the truth. If you dare, face the truth, the excuse drops away and then there is the light of wisdom from inside.

As a matter of fact, this can help us a tremendous lot in our own personal relationships. Here, too, very often we form judgments of one another which are not based on truth, but on what you think 'I am' or what you think 'you are', and what you think our relationship is. Instead, is it possible for us resolutely to face the truth? I do not want anyone's opinion - I am not interested in other people's viewpoint, because your viewpoint can never be my viewpoint. Whatever I may do, I can never look through your eyes. So is it possible for me to drop all these things and look at truth, search for truth in all things; never to be taken in by opinions - not only in what is called God, or religion, or spiritual life, or Yoga, but in all things?

Once someone who was supposed to be a very great devotee of all the swamis and so on was driving me from one place to another and suddenly she turned to me and asked, "Swami, what do you think of this Yogi So and So?" I asked her, "Madam, do you want the truth or my opinion?" "Oh, of course, the truth". I said, "Sorry, I do not know" How do I know? If somebody asks me if someone is a holy man or an unholy man, what do I do? I do not know the truth. "Ah, but what do you think? What is your opinion?" I said, "That's my business, not yours. My opinion is for me, not for you". Oh, she was very cross!

I may have my opinion; I do not say I do not form opinions at all - but those opinions are my own private collection, not for public view. Why must I share my opinion with you, my prejudice with you? I may express an opinion and find later on that it is wrong. I have to go to the person I told, and all the people she may have told, and they may have told and tell them my opinion was wrong! It becomes like tracking down the movements and contacts of a person having a contagious disease. So every time you express an opinion, please remember this: my opinion is my opinion.

If someone comes and asks you about me, what does that show? That what is truth to you is not known to him. Why does he come and ask you? Because it is not obvious, and what is not obvious may not be true; it is only an opinion - forget it! If it is true, then I will know, he will know and there is no need even to ask. So, what is not obvious is perhaps an opinion - keep it to yourself.

What is obvious, everybody knows; so why must I go about declaring it? What is important to us in our life is the truth - there is nothing more.

So in life, in all our relationships, is it possible for us completely to ignore all these opinions, fears and prejudices, and examine each situation - and in each situation try to look for the truth? If in this manner we are able to search, then we shall discover the truth concerning God, the truth concerning the world and the truth concerning oneself (which we shall discuss next week).

IV

In the text of the Bhagavad Gita, all the 18 chapters are entitled Yoga - even the first chapter, which is the story of the collapse of Arjuna, is considered to be Yoga. Arjunavisaadayoga - The Yoga of the despondence of Arjuna.

There is despair - I feel I cannot do something - or I see why I should not do something, and I come to a dead end. I see and appreciate only one side. But what is on the other side? Is there any other point of view? When I see my point of view, it is my own mental projection, and that must come face to face with something else.

Any one-sided statement or dogmatic assertion is most probably untrue. If I declare that God is One, that means if you believe God is Trinity, you are wrong; so in my rightness, your wrongness is implied. Any declaration or dogmatic assertion is one-sided; and therefore destructive. This one-sided declaration may even be very nicely camouflaged, made to appear very nice, marvelous, glorious, highly spiritual. In the beginning of the second chapter, Krishna therefore confronts Arjuna's despair with quite a number of different points of view.

Sometimes people are a bit confused. "Why do you not say this is the truth and get on with it?". No, no, no. When Arjuna collapsed, saying, "I do not want to fight - war is wrong", what he said seems to be very right, very moral, very nice, very glorious. But Krishna merely wants Arjuna to see himself for himself, aided only to the extent of being slapped back onto himself; so he does not lead him by the hand to the truth, but merely confronts him with another point of view. For instance, He even taunts him, "If you run away from battle, people will think you are impotent, you are a useless fellow, you are frightened". That has nothing to do with the philosophy of the Gita. He even says, "They will talk ill of you, they will scandalize you, ridicule you, and you should not ask for this". Later on in the Gita, the same Krishna says, "You must be completely balanced in praise and censure", but here He says that Arjuna should avoid censure. That is, you have expressed your point of view, but there is another point of view. "If you run away from battle, they will think you are weak. They will slander you - disgraceful. Then, of course, you are a soldier, a prince - it is your duty to fight". All these are different aspects of the other point of view. You know your point of view, but also try to see if there are others - then it is possible to have an integral vision - which may still be imperfect and non-comprehensive, but you will at least know that as long as it is the human mind that is looking at this truth, it can only discern part of it. All human discernment can only be partial, and the partial is not true. The realization that this partial discernment is not true, is the truth. Is that right? It is simple. I can reach that far.

I may not be able to see the whole, total truth - if there is such a thing called 'seeing total truth', but I can definitely see that this is partial realization, partial vision. Partial vision is division - one half is seen, the other half is not seen. Therefore in the second chapter, Krishna merely confronts Arjuna with different points of view - look at it this way, look at it that way. "Ah, I did not see that before" - then the opening is made. Then He says, "I know you are worried that you would die and that others would die". It is possible - not only in war, but in day to day living - people die all the time.

jaatasya hi dhruvo mrtyurdhruvam janmamrtasya cha
tasmaadaparihaaryerthe na tvam shochitumarhasi

For certain is death for the born, and certain is birth for the dead; therefore, over the inevitable thou shouldst not grieve. Gita 2 verse 27

A beautiful argument: "You say you would die and the others would die. Did you ever consider the truth concerning death - that everything that is born must die? So, what are you worried about?" Is there any sense - let alone wisdom - in resisting the inevitable? You can fight against something which you can avoid, but do you mean to say that by doing something or not doing something, you are going to live forever? No. When you see that this is something inevitable, worry and anxiety leave you. Perhaps you want to live long. If anxiety leaves you, perhaps you will live long, but by being terribly anxious to live long, you may kill yourself overnight!

I will give you a slightly different interpretation of the realization of the Truth. The orthodox interpretation of this expression 'realization of the Truth' is that you must come face to face with the Infinite, the Immortal, the Eternal etc ... But here I think there is a much simpler realization of Truth. This body has come into being and has become this. It has a date of birth, and what has been created must come to an end; what was born must die. To face this truth of the inevitability of death is realization of Truth. You do not have to worry yourself what is Truth. It may not be true that there is an Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Omniscient, Eternal and Immortal Atman - but the inevitability of death is true. It is possible for me to face this truth without wincing, without avoiding it.

There is a beautiful saying in Tamil - one of the Indian languages. "If you are prepared to die, you can walk through the Indian Ocean, and I guarantee that it would not reach to more than your knees!" If you are prepared to die! You are so bold, so courageous, you could walk into the sea - nothing in the world daunts you.

I remember what Swami Sivananda said once. A retired school master had come from South India to live in the Ashram. South India is fairly warm and

tropical, so he was not used to the Himalayan winter, which is fairly cold. In those days we were poor, there were no facilities for hot water - we created our own hot water for bathing by lying in the sun on the hot sand at about 11 am, warming ourselves up, then jumping into the cold water! This old man of about fifty-five was really frightened, and even right in the beginning of the winter season he came up to Swami Sivananda, folded his palms and said, "I think I'll go back home". Swami Sivananda asked him why. "I think this cold weather does not suit me, I may fall ill. It might take me a long time to acclimatize myself to the winter here". Swami Sivananda said, "Huh! Be prepared to die, you will be acclimatized immediately". I remember it, even now. Be prepared to die - you will be acclimatized immediately. That is it! When people say, "Realise the Truth and the Truth shall make you free" - this is it! It is not some hazy, funny, woolly, misty truth that you and I discover by looking between the eyebrows for about six years. Ah, no. See the Truth and the Truth immediately frees you. What am I afraid of? Death. It is inevitable. When there is the realization of Truth, there and then I am freed. That Truth makes me free.

Jaatasya hi dhruvo mrtyuh - 'Everyone that is born must die'. So what are we worried about now? But why today? Why not today? You will be doing a great service. If I collapsed and died now, all those loaves of bread and pints of milk that I would have consumed are available for others - others who want to live. What is wrong with that?

Where is this Truth and how does one face it? You say, "If I engage myself in this war, I will die and the others will die". Ah, the others will die - that is a serious proposition. Do I know what it means when I say the others will die? I do not know. Maybe they want to die! When a man is suffering from cancer or tuberculosis or leprosy maybe he wants to die. How do I know what goes on in him? How do I know what kind of pain he is suffering now? I do not know at all. The only place where I can really touch this truth of life, suffering and death, is in me. If you come and tell me, "I am hungry, I want to eat, I want some food" I cannot possibly enter into you and experience that hunger, I can only experience my own hunger.

You know, we often use the expression 'Get into his shoes'. If someone has left his shoes, and you are without shoes, you can certainly get into his and walk away. That is the only way in which people can get into other peoples' shoes. If you think you can get into my shoes, you are only thinking you understand my problem, you do not understand it. Why am I saying this so emphatically? For instance, I have lost my job; my friend says, "Oh, do not worry, Swami, you will find another - after all, you are not married, you do not have a big family, you do not have responsibilities. What are you worried about?" Now he is able to step into my shoes and give me advice and counsel. But when a year later his boss gives him three months notice (he has not lost his job yet),

what happens to him? Oh, the whole world turns upside down, the heavens seem to be crashing on his head.

This has happened to most of us. When we are called upon to counsel, to advise other people, we are so wise, so mature, so beautiful - marvelous! When the same thing happens to us, we collapse. This shows it is impossible for you to step into my shoes - do not bluff. You can share my joys, perhaps - especially if I am going to throw a party, but otherwise it is not possible. When you think you are able to do that, you become arrogant, vain and proud, pretending that you can offer advice.

So, if you want to know what hunger means, you can only touch it in yourself. You will not know what pain or fear means unless you have experienced it within yourself. You may not experience the type of fear that I have, but you know what fear means; you may not have experienced the type of pain that someone else suffers from, but you have experienced pain. You cannot know what fear of death means in another person, but you know what it means in you, to you. Face it there.

Jaatasya hi dhruvo mrtyuh. Death is inevitable.

What is inevitable cannot be stopped - that is what inevitable means - and therefore it is silly and stupid to resist, to fight and battle against that which is inevitable. What gives the inevitable such power? Why does it create this fear in me? Because I am afraid of it. Death does not jump on my shoulders and threaten me. The fear does not come from death or disease but from me - the fear arises in me. And what is this fear? This fear is merely a resistance, a fighting, a rejection of truth. All rejection of truth must generate fear and suffering.

The opposite of rejection of truth is not acceptance of truth. People often say, "Alright. I accept". Oh, no, you are not accepting - you are rejecting, you are fighting. You do not have to accept the truth. It is night now - you do not have to accept it, you see it. You neither reject it nor accept it; you become aware of it, you realise it. If you have been rejecting it or struggling to accept it, in both cases there is a division, some part of you has shut itself to this truth. Open up and then this becomes totally real to you. That is realization. Jaatasya hi dhruvo mrtyuh. Unless and until we clearly see the fact of life - which includes what we have called death, the fear will not go. It is neither in the acceptance nor in the rejection - we are not anticipating nor wishing for it, we merely see this as the inevitable truth. So that, when I see that death is inevitable, I am not anxious to die. What for? Why must I go on calling upon the inevitable? We would all be crazy people if we jump on the roof and say, "Oh sun, please come up!" You can go on chanting until tomorrow morning, the sun will certainly come up - not as a result of your prayer, but it is time for the sun to

come up. It is not necessary for me to go looking for death, praying for death; nor is it wise on my part to reject it. So I do not welcome it, I do not fight or fear it; I neither accept it nor reject it. None of these things. I merely see that it is there.

When I see the total picture of life, which includes this thing called death, I am no longer afraid. And what is extremely important in this context is that fear of death, whether it is my dying or others dying, does not confound my behavior. I am not confused, and I do not bring it in as a cover-up argument, "Oh, I might die on account of this," or, "Others might die on account of this". That is not the issue at all.

The seeing of the truth of the inevitability of death leads us to the questions: Who am I? What am I? What am I here for? What is life? What is this world? How am I supposed to live? All these questions come up for answer once the camouflage is removed. The camouflage here is the beautiful declaration: "I should not fight - this war is evil because I will die and the others will die". Krishna merely says, "Jaatasya hi dhruvo mrtyub - That which was born must die", and, "Dhruvam janmamrtasya che - Though they who die will inevitably be born again".

What does it mean? It may mean all this theory of reincarnation etc., but this you see in nature. It may be a bit difficult for you and me to realise this as a fact of our existence, but quite apart from the theory of reincarnation and transmigration etc., you see it in nature. A tree grows - there is a fruit or seed and the seed falls down; the tree comes up again - so that species has never been destroyed. In the same way, even before a father grows old, one living cell from his organism is taken over and made into another human being; so that the offspring is a continuation of the father - the son or the daughter is a continuation of the parents. So it is literally true that you have in you the living cell of Adam and Eve. You do not need any metaphysics for this. It is literally and biologically true that the father and mother before they die, take out of themselves a cell and make a living being out of it. So immortality is there right in front of us - we do not have to meditate and go into a trance condition and see all these souls floating around. Soul may be nothing more than a cell, the intelligence in a cell. Immortality is a fact. Maybe we are talking about heredity, and not in the sense of the reincarnation theory - that I, was not born of my parents, I was born of myself and the parents only gave me the body. I do not know. Why bother about all that? The fact of immortality is there right in front of us. "That which was born must die, and that which dies is born again". Nothing in the world is ever really and truly destroyed. Why are you bothered about it?

When the mind is thus freed from these petty notions and ideas, then the major problem of life jumps up in front of us.

Avyaktaadini bhutaani vyaktamadhyaani bhaarata avyakta nidhanaanyeva
tatra kaa paridevanaa

Beings are unmanifested in their beginning, manifested in their middle state, O Arjuna, and unmanifested again in their end. What is there to grieve about.
- Gita 2 verse 28.

You do not know what you were before you were born, and you do not know what you will be after you die. It is another beautiful commonsense argument. These two, from our present point of view, are major factors of our life. I have been here for only fifty two years; before I was born I must have lived somewhere - either as a cell somewhere or as a dog, a monkey, a donkey - I do not know what it was. I existed before I was born and will continue to exist for ages and ages after I die; yet why am I so terribly concerned with this short period of time that I am supposed to be here? I do not know that I or others are going to be killed - it is only an assumption; but when I confront that assumption with another point of view - which maybe is true, then there is light. Just as when positive and negative are brought together, there is flow of energy and light. When your confusion meets with light, when the positive thinking meets with the negative thinking; there is a spark. That meeting is called Yoga.

Vaasaamsi jirnaani yathaa vihaaya navaani grhnaati naroparaani tathaa
shariraani vihaaya jirneenanyaani samyaati namaani dehi.

Just as a man casts off worn out clothes and puts on new ones, so also the embodied Self casts off worn out bodies and enters others which are new. -
Gita 2 verse 22.

Here again, having pointed out that what you call death is inevitable, why worry about it? Why do you bring that in as a serious argument? Krishna almost suggests it may be good. It is not only something inevitable, it may even be better! Most of these people who are standing on the battlefield are aged people, and if you ask them they will tell you how many illnesses they have - diabetes, lumbago, rheumatism and a million other ailments. If you tell them, "It is an old body, drop it here, you will get a new one", probably they would appreciate it. The dress is torn - leave it - you will get a new one. It is only because we do not realise that a new life awaits us on the other side of what is called death, that we are afraid of it, we wish to resist it, to postpone it. If I know that I have a better job awaiting somewhere else, I resign this just now. I may not even wait to be thrown out.

I do not know how to look and I do not even know that there is a truth other than what I know. What I know is what I think - my own ideas, my notions,

my philosophy - and I am so comfortably established in it that I neither want nor dare to look beyond my own ideas, my own limited field; and when something grander is presented to me, I am afraid.

A great political leader in India, when he was fighting for Indian independence, used a beautiful expression. He said, "A bird which has got accustomed to the cage would not want to be free". It does not know a life other than a cage life. It does not know how to soar and fly in the infinite sky, free - because here in the cage somebody would usually drop a few grains of food every morning. He said that the bird would be afraid of this freedom and would rush back into the cage. That is our problem.

Why does this problem exist? Because, number one, I do not know that there is a Truth beyond this cage. Number two, I do not know how to look. The art of looking at the Truth and thus freeing oneself from this conditioning to which we have become accustomed, is called Yoga.

Last week we discussed how Truth - when it is correctly understood - liberates us from fear, anxiety, delusion, love and hate, all of which are based on some wrong notion or other. That is the meaning of Truth. If I know that death is inevitable, I am no longer afraid; if I know that life continues - regardless of whether it is in this body or elsewhere, I am fearless.

Just this morning I was reading the "Yoga Vasishta" . In it Vasishta asks a very simple question: "Do you think that the world is eternal and that your husband and your children are going to be with you forever - that they are all real, and the relationship is real?" Obviously there are only two answers - yes, or no. Either you think that the world is real, you are real, and your relationship with your wife and family are all real - and if that is what you believe, what are you worried about? Or, if you think the whole thing is unreal, an illusion, a jugglery of the mind and so on, then again there is no worry. When does one worry? Only when one does not know. When there is knowledge of Truth, one must be immediately and instantly freed from delusion, fear, grief, sorrow and attachment - because all these things are born of ignorance. The moment ignorance goes away, the whole lot goes away - it is finished, once and for all. You do not get it back again, unless you again fall into the trap of ignorance.

What is life? What is the truth concerning life? I know that this body had an origin and therefore it will have an end. I know that it is made of material substances, and just as material substances are subject to decay, this will also decay. When you see labels 'unbreakable glass' or 'perennial' flower, remember these things just do not exist. In some of our scriptures the gods in heaven are described as enjoying 'temporary immortality' - if it is temporary, how is it immortality? Nothing is immortal here; if a thing has had an origin, it must have an end. You and I will live for seventy, eighty or one hundred years; a tortoise can live for two or three hundred years; some of those trees in your timber country have probably lived there for hundreds of years, and we saw a stone dog in Albany which has probably been there for about twenty thousand years. But, everything that has a beginning must have an end, and everything that has been put together must eventually fall apart - today, tomorrow, fifty years, one hundred years; hence - that is totally immaterial.

The realization of this gives you, immediately and instantly, a two-fold freedom. You do not wish against it - it frees you therefore from desire. I do not desire that this body should be as young now as it was thirty or forty years ago. I do not wish against this nature, so desire drops away, and equally this thing called resistance - with all its retinue of anxiety, fear, worry etc. - also drops away. I realise that truth is truth. Knowing what this vase is made of glass, it is brittle, it will break when I place it down - do so a little carefully. If

it was made of metal, I might have dropped it from a height. So, knowing that this is perishable, knowing its real nature, you are careful, cautious and wise - but not frightened, and you do not wish against it. This is the whole secret of wisdom. One who knows the truth lives wisely, and therefore is free from fear, anxiety, grief and sorrow.

What is the nature of this self? Who am I? What am I? What is this world? And if there is a God, what is that God? What is the relationship between me and God?

When I ask myself "Who am I, what am I?", I see that the first thing that I really know to be myself is the body - whether it is true or false, I do not know. The first thing that hits my eye when I use the word 'Lionel' is the body; then maybe out of curiosity or wisdom or a spirit of inquiry, I ask "What is this? I saw him ten years ago - what has happened to him in the meantime? Twenty, thirty years ago he probably was like that young boy. How did he get to this?" Then I realise that what is called the flesh - this physical body, is really made of the food we eat. So it is not true to say that this body is the son of my parents. It is not! It is absurd.

There is a book called the 'Essene Gospel of Peace' where the whole teaching of Jesus is given in a very different light. There Jesus addresses God as Father Mother, and he says, "I am born of this Father-Mother - the Father being the sun, the Mother being the earth", and then the meanings of all these expressions are changed - the bread and the wine and so on - the whole concept is changed. I am not born of the parents, but this body is born of the earth, food. It goes on growing bigger and bigger and then it shrinks and shrinks and then eventually it seems to disappear.

There was a great saint in India called Pattinattar. One day he was cremating the body of his own mother; and as the body was burning he looked at it and sang a very beautiful song describing the whole biography of a person, right from conception to cremation. The whole song (which is fairly long) concludes, and he folds his palms and prays to the Lord: "This woman is dead and now there is not even a handful of ashes - that is all the body which I called mother; and I, who am in this body, think 'this is I - I am this body, and all my pleasures, misery, ambitions and activities are centered in this' - what a fool I am, if this is all. Please save me from this ignorance". I read the story as a little boy and I also saw the film of it, and for a long time I used to think 'a handful of ashes' was a figure of speech until one day I visited a crematorium and was told that that is quite true - after cremation there is barely a handful of ashes. Then

I realized that we are nothing but water - we are actually swimming, even now. There is this cosmic ocean, and we are all swimming - maybe one or two cells are real in this body.

So when I look at that I realise that the body comes and goes. it is not 'I' but something else. And yet, if someone comes and hits me, it is unmistakable - I feel the pain. The body is made of food - bananas - and if I hit myself I feel the pain; but if I hit a banana, the banana does not feel pain. So there is some kind of mystery here. When I say, "What am I? What am I made of?" there is no straight-forward answer.

I also see that there is some relationship between the world outside and the body. The body has come out of the earth, and returns to it - there is a cycle which is kept up constantly. So we are all recycled cabbages, and the cabbages are all re-cycled Swamis! You may not have an opportunity to bury me, but if it does happen and some kind of roses or something are grown on top, when you look at that you think "This fellow was Swami some time ago". It is all recycling. We think we have invented this 'recycling' five years ago, but it has been going on from eternity. There is a certain correspondence between the earth and the body; but as I said, when the banana is beaten, it does not weep or wail - at least to my hearing; but when the Swami-banana is beaten, it is painful. So there is something more in this.

Krishna in the Gita gives a simple but elevating description of what 'I' am.

bhumiraaponalo vaayuh kham mana buddhireva cha ahamkaara itiyam me
bhinnaa prakrtirastadhaa apareyamitastvanyaam prakrtim viddhi meparaam
jivabhutaam mahaabaaho yayedam dhaaryate jagat - Gita 7 Verses 4 and 5
Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intellect and egoism - thus is My Nature
divided eight-fold. This is the inferior Nature, O mighty-armed Arjuna; know
thou as different from it, My higher Nature, the very life-element by which
this world is upheld.

You are made of the same substance as the universe. And what are you made of? Bhumir - earth element; apah - water; analah - fire; vayu - air; and you exist in space and therefore there is space in you and outside you. Mano buddhir eva cha - you have a mind. Maybe that cabbage also has a mind; my mind and the mind of the cabbage function on different planes and therefore I am not able to understand its feelings, and it is not able to understand mine. Mano buddhir eva cha - there is an intelligence that is able to say that this is a man and this is a woman. Sometimes people stretch this definition of what is called buddhi to include also discriminating judgments, like "He is a good man", and "He is not a good man". I do not know if this is true. Buddhi tells you which is which - this is a male, this is a female. Whether it tells you a lot

more than that or whether it is a matter of perversion, that is up to each one of us to decide.

In addition there is an ego-sense - ahamkara. How and where it arises is still one of the greatest mysteries. Each one has to discover this for oneself. How do I know I am? Do you know the famous Nasrudin story? It seems he went into a shop and asked the shopkeeper; "Do you know me?" The shopkeeper said, "Yes". Replied Nasrudin, 'How do you know it is me?' Exactly! It is a big question. How do I know it is me? What tells me I am sitting here? The Yoga Vasishtha also gives us some dreadful soul-awakening examples - some drunkards and schizophrenics also sometimes have a feeling that they are other than what they are. Maybe they are right - how do I know that I am right and they are wrong? So how and from where this ego sense arises, each one has to discover for himself.

Krishna says, "All these eight are the secondary nature of God". What is the primary nature of God? God being Infinite Consciousness or Infinite Consciousness being God. There is a superior or primary nature, and that is consciousness of the highest purest type - unmodified consciousness. This unmodified consciousness also exists in us as the living soul. What is soul? When you repeat the words soul and cell, they appear to be very close to each other. If you can visualize yourself standing somewhere in outer space heading towards Mars in a capsule, you see thousands and thousands of stars. I believe millions of stars exist in known space. If you can visualize all these millions of stars and yourself millions of miles from earth, you would not even see a thing here. You would not know where Perth was. The whole earth would look like a mustard seed; so where is Perth? That is one aspect.

The other aspect is another interesting phenomenon which I saw in the Planetarium in Johannesburg. Someone was explaining to us some of these constellations. By merely drawing a line from one star to another, he produced the figure of a lion - the constellation called Leo. He produced the head of a goat - the constellation called Capricorn. If this is possible, I just close my eyes and visualize an enormous number of stars - billions of them - and maybe it is true that this colossal number of stars, when they are all put together, have some kind of form, like the statue of Venkatesa you see there. Maybe that is God! Maybe that is God; and maybe all these stars are really and truly cells in the body of God. Maybe. It raises my consciousness far beyond this puny little human consciousness, and enables me to feel that all this is nothing. This room and all of us sitting here look large and formidable only because we are sitting so close. Even if I am flying in a Boeing, this room would already not exist. If I am having the cosmic vision that Krishna showed Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita, probably what you call the soul is but a cell in the body of God.

This knowledge - if it becomes knowledge and not just a matter of belief - immediately frees us from anxiety and fear, frees us from self-aggrandizement and the foolish idea that I am a tremendously big man, the most important thing in this world, and everything must revolve around me. If the whole earth is going to be like a mustard seed - just one cell in this Cosmic Being, what am I? I as an individual independent personality means nothing, absolutely nothing. But yet, I am part of this cosmic being; and since I am part of it, I am non-different from it, just as there are billions of cells in this body, each one functioning apparently independently, but in truth interdependently. I can speak and yet there are millions of cells in my body, very busy digesting my tea, purifying and circulating the blood and so on, without my knowledge. Though independent, they are not totally independent of me; if I collapse and die all of the cells are dead - they cannot say, "OK, we digested your food even without your asking us to - well, you can get out, but we will stay here". They cannot! When I go, the whole lot goes.

So, there is a certain type of semi-independent inter-relationship between the cells and what you call 'you', an interdependent relationship. The cells are dependent upon you, and you are dependent upon the cells. It is a sort of inter-dependent relationship where there is semi-freedom on both sides. I am free, I am not worried about my digestion now, as long as it functions well; but once it starts striking work, I become intensely aware of only my digestion!

In the same way it is possible to see that just as there are billions of cells in this body, there are billions of cells in the Cosmic Body of God, and I am one of those cells. Being one of those cells, I am a soul, independent within limits; just as the cells of my body are independent within limits - which means they have a semi-independent status. Even so, what I call soul is a cell in the body of God.

So now we have some sort of an idea of what 'I' is, what the world is and what God is. Between I and the world there is a very intimate relationship, there is only an arbitrary division - the only division being that the mind says that 'this is my body', and 'this is my carpet'. It means the same thing. We are treading on fairly dangerous ground. You say that this is my body and this is my carpet and this is my room, and basically and fundamentally the three are the same - you will immediately see why! If you hit my body, I am hurt. If you smash this wall, am I hurt or not hurt? I am hurt if I think that this is the wall of my house, that I climbed up and painted it - if you merely throw something and mark the paintwork, I am hurt. To the extent that I feel that this carpet is mine - I cut it, I laid it - I am hurt when you trample it and bring dirt on it. To the extent that I feel this is mine I am hurt, it does not matter what it is. There may be a difference in degree - but there is a difference in degree in my own body! If someone cuts my hair, I am grateful; if someone cuts off my ear, I

may not say, 'Thank you'; and if someone cuts my throat, I do not survive to say so! So, you see, there is a difference of degree even in the injury that can be sustained in this body.

When my hair is cut, I am pleased, but if someone forcibly cuts the hair of a young man who likes it long, he is hurt - not physically, but psychologically. So that I am hurt to the extent I think I am.

To the extent that I think that 'this is me' and 'this is mine', I am disturbed. If all my idea about myself extends only to this body, I am not hurt whatever happens to this carpet. If somehow I extend my mind, my concept of myself, to cover the carpet, I am hurt there also. If I extend my consciousness to cover Australia - my country, whatever happens to it, I am also, affected. Therefore it is very clear - it is pure and simple commonsense to see that there is no real difference between the world and me. The difference is made by the mind, and the non-difference is also made by the mind. So the world and I are one - totally one - we are not different at all.

If I can visualize this whole universe as Cosmic Consciousness, Infinite Consciousness, then what I call my soul is a cell in this infinite body of God, or Cosmic Consciousness. When I realise this, there is absolute, total freedom. Nothing can ever destroy the truth and therefore there is no cause for sorrow. If I am foolishly thinking that I am this or that, this is mine or that is mine, the foolish idea will get a knock sooner or later, and the sooner it gets a knock, the better!

You know, sometimes people say, "Swami, I am thoroughly disillusioned". I tell them that that is a marvellous word - 'disillusionment'. And, you know, we use the word as if it is a tragedy - it is not, it is a wonderful thing! To suffer from illusion is a bad thing, a real tragedy; and if you are disillusioned concerning somebody, it is a wonderful thing to happen. If we are hugging an illusion that this world is eternal, that I am eternal, I am so and so and you are so and so - which is certainly an illusion, then the sooner it goes the better. One does not grieve for the death of illusion, and the reality is never going to disappear. One who knows this is freed from foolishness, from anxiety, from sorrow.

VI

The fundamental question that is discussed by Krishna is not 'to do or not to do' - that cannot be the question. As a matter of fact, Krishna clears that right in the beginning of the Bhagavad Gita.

na hi kascit ksanam api jaatu tisthaty akarmakrt kaaryate hy avashah karma sarvah praktijair gunaih

Verily none can ever remain for even a moment without performing action; for everyone is made to act helplessly indeed by the qualities born of Nature. - Gita 3 Verse 5

Not even for a single moment can you be inactive. The expression 'I am doing nothing' is absurd. You cannot do a thing called nothing! If I am lying down and doing nothing, I am doing - I am lying down, that is also an action. If I am sleeping, or dead, that is also an action. It is not possible to do nothing - action takes place, action goes on. So it is not 'to do or not to do' nor even 'what must I do or what must I not do' - though in one place in the Gita this problem is presented in rather a puzzling way:

akarmanash cha boddhavyam gahanaa karmano gatih

Hard to understand is the nature (path) of action. - Gita 4 Verse 17.

Krishna says, "You must know what to do, and you must know what not to do, because action is an extremely puzzling thing". We pretend we know what to do and what not to do - but that is not so. Therefore: it is not 'to do or not to do', it is not 'what must I do and what must I not do'. It goes much deeper than that - do I do anything at all? That is the question. Am 'I' doing anything? Is there an ego sense, independent of the cosmic whole, that does something? If you have this egotistic notion: 'I am doing this', you are wrong; if you entertain the other egotistic notion: 'I won't do this', then again you are wrong.

prakrteh kriyamaanaani gunaih karmaani sarvasah ahamkaaravimudhaatmaakartaham iti manyate

All actions are wrought in all cases by the qualities of Nature only. He whose mind is deluded by egoism thinks; 'I am the doer'. - Gita 3 Verse 27.

When the eyes are open, they see, when the ears are open they hear; what have I got to do with it, or, what has 'I' got to do with it? I am alive, awake, and my eyes are open - if with open eyes I cannot stop seeing you, then the act of seeing does not need a thing called 'I'. Prakrteh kriyamaanaanigunaih karmaani sarvasah - your eyes are seeing all the time; ahamkaaravimudhaatmaakartaham iti manyate - and the foolish man thinks 'I am seeing', whereas the eyes alone see.

This can be multiplied to cover every aspect of our life. Life lives, not I; mind thinks, not I; speech happens, not I. Right. Then we know the other extreme - 'God does everything, OK., let it happen, I won't do anything.' I won't do anything?

yad ahamkaram aashrityanyotsya iti manyase mithyaisa vyasaayas te praktis tvaam niyoksyati

If, filled with egoism, thou thinkest: 'I will not fight', vain is this, thy resolve; Nature will compel thee. - Gita 18, Verse 59.

"If you egotistically believe that you can stop doing something, you are a fool," he says, "that same nature will make you do it". So it is not a question of 'to do or not to do', or 'what must I do and what must I not do', but there is the fundamental question: 'Is there an ego sense involved in this action, and is that ego sense a real independent entity, or not?'

Unfortunately we have never for a single moment inquired along these lines, into this basic fundamental truth. Is there an ego sense involved in this work? The work happens, but is 'I' doing it? Is there an 'I' that does it, or does it happen? If it happens, what is this I? What is this ego sense? How does it come into this action?

We discussed the other day how Krishna described the whole universe as being composed of the eight factors: bhumir aponalo vayuh kham mano buddhir eva cha ahamkaara. The body is composed of earth, water, fire and air; it exists in space, it has got a mind that thinks, an intelligence that seems to designate some actions as pleasant and others as not so pleasant - and therefore some as desirable and others as not so desirable, and there seems to be a co-ordinating cohesive principle that holds all these things together. You may call it the ego sense - it is only arbitrary I. This ego sense is nothing more than the nucleus in an atom, one of the factors involved in existence. It is another sense - it is also part of this creation, of this nature. It may be the co-ordinator of other senses, but not the doer of actions. And there is this living soul which may be nothing more than a cell. There is a cell or a molecule, in that there is a core, and right in the center of the core there is a nucleus - which is perhaps comparable to the ego sense - and that's all!

In this Cosmic Being, action takes place, motion is continually - just as movement takes place in space, and which you call the air, just as motion takes place in the sea, which you call the waves, the ripples and the eddies. Even so, action, motion takes place in this Infinite Being. How is it that I feel 'I' am doing? How does this ego sense arise as an independent entity? No one doubts or questions the existence of a thing called the ego sense - ahamkaara. Aham is I-am. 'I-am' is there, but is this 'I-am' something independent of the

totality? That is the question. Is each cell in my body part of the totality or is it something which has a will of its own? So that, if I hang myself and die, the hand still continues to function! It will not, because it is totally dependent on the totality, it constitutes one indivisible element in this totality.

I have a funny way of describing what is known as individuality - it is indivisible duality. For instance, we often say, 'my body is covered with skin', as if the skin is not part of my body! It is also part of the body! It is a figure of speech. Therefore, when I say, 'I am sitting here', it is not as though this 'I', the ego sense, is a separate, completely independent entity capable of sitting here or getting away, but it is part of the totality. Even that expression 'part of the totality' is defective. You cannot call something a part unless the part can part from the whole; and since the part cannot part from the totality, it is not even a part - it is the totality. If you can visualize a circle, every point in that circle is the circle, because the moment you rub out one little point, there is no circle. Every point on that circle, no matter how minute it may be, constitutes the circle. So that the 'I-am' is an integral part of this totality. Without it, the totality will cease to be the totality, and without the totality, this 'I-am' has no being at all.

And therefore, in an enigmatic declaration, Krishna declares:

aham aatmaa gudaakesha sarvabhutaashayasthitah aham aadishcha
madhyam cha bhutaanaam anta eva cha

I am the Self, O Arjuna, seated in the hearts of all beings; I am the beginning, the middle, and also the end of all beings. - Gita 10 Verse 20.

'I am the self of all beings'. It is not as though Krishna, the historic personality, is sitting in the hearts of all of us. It may not even be that godhead is hidden in the hearts of all; but there is in the heart of everyone the feeling 'I-am'. That feeling is not contradicted or negated. It is not necessary to get rid of it; in fact you cannot do it. Who is it that gets rid of whom? The broom sweeps itself away? No! I cannot get rid of myself. Therefore, even this ego sense cannot really be got rid of. When Yogis and mystics speak of the negation of the ego sense, they are not speaking in terms of annihilating their ego sense, but of realizing that it is not independent of, but an integral part of this totality.

How has this division arisen? How does this ego sense come to feel that 'I' is different, distinct, independent of the totality; that I am different from you, and therefore superior or inferior to you? It is that that causes all this trouble. God does not cause any trouble to us at all. The world does not cause any trouble to us at all. Even the ego sense as such does not cause any trouble. It is the ego sense thinking: 'I am different from you, I am separate from you' - and then the next step is: 'I am different from you - I am superior or inferior

to you' that causes the trouble. How does that arise? And can that be overcome?

Therefore, when the Yogi talks of Self-negation, he is not hoping to be rid of the self forever, but it is really another way of expressing what has also been described as self-surrender. Self-surrender does not mean 'I am such a wonderful person, God, and therefore

I surrender myself to you and I hope you appreciate what a wonderful thing I am doing. I am such a nice person. Won't you become richer, more glorious, more illumined, more enlightened if I join your camp?' That is absurd.

Even this expression 'self-surrender' only means there is a division. This division has been created (God knows how), and I wish to abolish this division. Abolishing this division does not even mean that one has to recognize the division as an existential reality. If the division is real, it cannot be abandoned, abolished; if that shadow there is real, nothing in the world will remove it - because that is the definition of reality. That shadow merely appears to be, so that the moment the light is turned on, the shadow disappears. Only an appearance can be dispelled, not the substance. And therefore, conversely, that which is removable, which can vanish, is not a substance, but only a shadow.

The division between you and me is only in thinking, it is not real. The same food has gone into those two mouths, and the mouths themselves are the product of the food eaten some time ago; and the two of us have been living together for years, eating from the same bowl - what is it that thinks: 'I am separate and different from him?' What is it that thinks? The thinking thinks. The difference or separation is not real, but apparent.

The division has arisen. How it arose is extremely difficult to discover for certainty. If we understand that it is only apparent and not real, then any questions concerning it are already defective! We cannot assume that it is real, and then ask how it has come to be. It only appears to be real, and yet it is capable of polluting every aspect of our being. An example of this is provided by some of our scriptures. For instance, in the Yoga Vasishta it is said that though a nightmare is unreal, the perspiration and the screaming that it produces is real. You cannot say that the robber that I dreamed of was unreal and therefore the scream that I gave was also unreal! No. The robber was unreal, but the screaming was real. Even so, this unreal division has been able to pollute our mind and emotions with feelings of separation which have entered into every aspect and department of our life, creating pleasure and pain, honor and dishonor, happiness and unhappiness, friends and enemies; and, therefore, our diverse actions which produce their own consequences and results.

In order to see the division for what it is - an unreal shadow, Krishna suggests: "Take a good look at every aspect of your personality, your life and activity, and ensure that there are no divisive influences there."

The abolition of this assumed, imaginary division, is called Yoga. This Yoga is beautifully described by Krishna in a verse that it almost literally repeated twice in the scripture:

manmanaa bhava madbhakto madyaaji maam namaskuru maan evai 'syasi
yuktvai 'vam aatmaanam matparaayanah

Fix thy mind on Me; be devoted to Me; sacrifice unto Me; bow down to Me; having thus united thy whole self to Me, taking Me as the supreme goal, thou shalt come unto Me. - Gita 9 Verse 34.

Manmanaa is a very difficult term to translate. Mana is mind. Manmanaa - let the whole mind become God, become Total Existence, so there is no division in the mind; not one little thought of "I am different and separate from you, I am superior or inferior to you." Let the mind not think in terms of 'I' and 'you', but only in terms of totality, of oneness. "Be devoted to Me, the Omnipresence, the Totality" means that there should not arise in your heart a single feeling that expresses this division - such as "I love So and So, I hate So and So, I like this, I do not like that". When such thoughts and feelings arise, in your heart, they reveal that it has been polluted with this apparent division. Manmanaa bhava madbhakto madyaaji maam namaskuru - let the mind become God.

Why arrogate to yourself the feeling "I am doing this"? Why am I doing this? Because I want to achieve something. I am doing this in order to achieve something else. There is a division there. I am doing this in order to achieve something which he is also after, and therefore I am his competitor, his rival. Thoughts of rivalry, of one-up-man-ship are rubbish, being the effects of pollution. Krishna says: "Get over this - do everything for My sake," - madyaaji maam. As an illustration of this he gives us a very beautiful picture, which is one of the loveliest verses in the Gita:

yatah pravrttir bhutaanaam yena sarvam idam tatam svakarmanaa tam
abyarchya siddhim vindati maanavah

He from whom all beings have evolved and by whom all this is pervaded - worshipping Him with his own action, man attains perfection. - Gita 18 Verse 46.

Krishna is talking to Arjuna: "Arjuna, everybody wants to attain perfection in this world, and very often we think that perfection is extremely difficult to attain. It is not, it is easy. If God is omnipresent, God-realization is there all the time! You and I are not going to make God real somehow or other. If God

is omnipresent, there is no problem in attaining perfection - you are perfect already. There is only this shadow of imperfection which seems to cover the perfection. Remove it." And in order to enable us to translate this into action, Krishna gives us a beautiful picture: yatah pravrttir bhutaanaam yena sarvam idam tatam - Arjuna, do you know where God is? Everywhere. All things in the universe have had their origin in God." He does not use the word God, but 'Tam' - He or It. The Origin of all creation is also omnipresent. It pervades and permeates everything. If I am working, doing something in this world, it is directed towards somebody. If I am sitting and talking here, all this is directed towards you - you are the group I am serving now, with these words. Yena servem idam tatam - Krishna seems to tell me "Treat all these people as but manifestations of this God." If God is omnipresent, He is present here, as all of you.

Some of you watched the ceremonial worship of Venkateswara a few moments ago. With each 'namah', Judy was offering a flower - svakarmanaa tam abhyarchya siddhim vindati maanavaah - and now the same worship is extended. You are the manifestation of God who is omnipresent all the time, and this action of speaking here is a flower, which the speaker, who is none other than God's own manifestation, offers at your feet. What is the power that is sitting here? God's own energy. What is the consciousness that is sitting here? God's own consciousness, or the Omnipresent Infinite Consciousness; and this atom, cell or soul in this Infinite Consciousness offers these words in worshipfulness, in adoration at the feet of the omnipresent God, seated in the hearts of all of you. If this attitude is adopted, you are free, you are perfect already. There is no perfection to be attained outside of life, outside of here and now. Here and now, if that shadow of ignorance disappears, then there is no imperfection at all - maam eva 'syasi yuktvai 'vam aatmaanam matparaayanah.

Thus if your whole life is oriented towards this infinite Consciousness, you are already there; you are liberated here and now; free, here and now - freed from ignorance, shadow and delusion - not from doing something or not doing something. That is all. The freedom is from foolishness - not from activity, not from living, not from life itself.

sarvadharmaan parithajya maam ekam sharanam vraja aham tvaa
sarvapaapebhyo moksayisyaami maa shucha

Abandoning all dharmas, take refuge in Me alone; I will liberate thee from all sins; grieve not. - Gita 18 Verse 66.

This is the final teaching in the Bhagavad Gita. It has been variously translated, but we shall re-translate it to suit the trend of the discussion so far. 'Abandon all dharma' is the literal translation. It has also been interpreted to mean: 'Forget all your religious denominations and merge in God'. May be,

may not be. I am not trying to contradict any translation, but we may be allowed to look at it from a different point of view. Dharma also means the inherent nature of any object or factor in creation. For instance, the dharma of water is that it is liquid, cool, it quenches thirst. Coming to the human personality, the dharma of the eye is to see, the dharma of the tongue is to speak and to taste, the dharma of the ear is to hear. But there is an ego sense which arrogates to itself the functions of all these things - I see, I speak, I hear. Abandon all these senseless stupid notions that you are the one who does something, or the one who refrains from doing something. Maam ekam sharanam vraja - let your whole being flow towards this Infinite Consciousness. Maam ekam sharanam means, to take refuge, to surrender yourself to.

Aham tvaa sarvapaapebhyo moksayisyaami maa shuchah. "I will free you and liberate you from all sins, do not fear", says Krishna here. What is a sin? Sin is nothing more than the acceptance of the division as reality. When do we commit what is called a crime or a sin? When do I injure you? Only when I feel I am separate and different from you, that my interests lie elsewhere - my happiness versus your happiness, my prosperity versus your prosperity. When this division is abolished, when my whole being flows in tune with and towards this Infinite Consciousness, then there is no sin.

Do not ask irrelevant questions. "Can such a person do what he likes?" Such a person will not do what he likes - there is nothing he likes, there is nothing at all he likes as distinct from something that he does not like. He is the Infinite Consciousness. He is that one dot in the circle that makes the whole.

Aham tvaa sarvapaapebhyo moksayisyaami maa shucha - as a matter of fact, that is my feeling while contemplating the teaching of Jesus "Come unto Me, I will save you from all sins". If you accept Jesus Christ, if you surrender yourself, all your sins are forgiven, etc. If you are able to accept Christ with all your heart, with all your being, then there is no sin. You are one with the Total Being, with the Infinite Consciousness.

This statue you see here is of Venkateswara, a reincarnation of Krishna (I won't go into details now). One of the verses in praise of Venkateswara is 'paarthaaya tatsadrisasaarathinaa tvayaiva yau darshitau svacharanau sharanam vrajeti bhooyopi mahyamiha tau karadarshitau te, sreevenkatesacharanau sharanam prapadye.

Here the devotee says: I surrender myself to Lord Venkateswara who, as Krishna, commanded Arjuna: Come and surrender yourself to Me at My Feet. Once again you have come into our midst as Venkateswara, and once again you point to Your Feet reminding me to surrender myself to You. Now, I take refuge at Your Feet.

If you look very closely at the statue, you will see that; whereas the right hand points to the feet as if to say "Come unto Me, surrender yourself to Me", the left hand is held at thigh level. There is a legend that if you surrender yourself to God He will save you from all troubles, as promised by Krishna, but please do not expect Him to take all your headaches away. That is, as long as there is a body, the problems connected with the body cannot be overcome or avoided completely. So do not say, "I have surrendered myself to God. He is supposed to make me free of hunger and thirst, make me immortal, omniscient". That is stupid.

There is a certain element of unhappiness inherent in life - some sorrow, some pain. You cannot avoid it. There is hunger, thirst, sleep - but, when the mind gets involved in this I begin to think, "Hunger is all right, but why should I suffer from hunger; disease is all right, pain is all right - there are mosquito's and bugs and all sorts of viruses and so on - everyone else can suffer, but why must I suffer?" It is when I begin to think along these lines that the suffering which is bearable almost becomes unbearable; the pain that is slight is terribly aggravated. "Why me, why not somebody else?"

So here Venkateswara seems to say, " If you surrender yourself to God, He will save you from more suffering and more sorrow than is inevitably inherent in life, in embodiment". That cannot be avoided. The very desire to avoid it is greater pain. What is pain, after all? What is painful? That which I do not like, that which I resist and push away is painful. Life has its own little pinpricks, they are natural. The pains of living are there; they cannot be completely taken away, even by God - they are inherent in life. Apart from these, you will be completely freed from all psychological, mental and emotional disturbances which cause havoc in our life.

sarvadarman parityajya maam ekam sharanam vraja aham tvaam
sarvapaapebhyo moksayisyami maa shucham