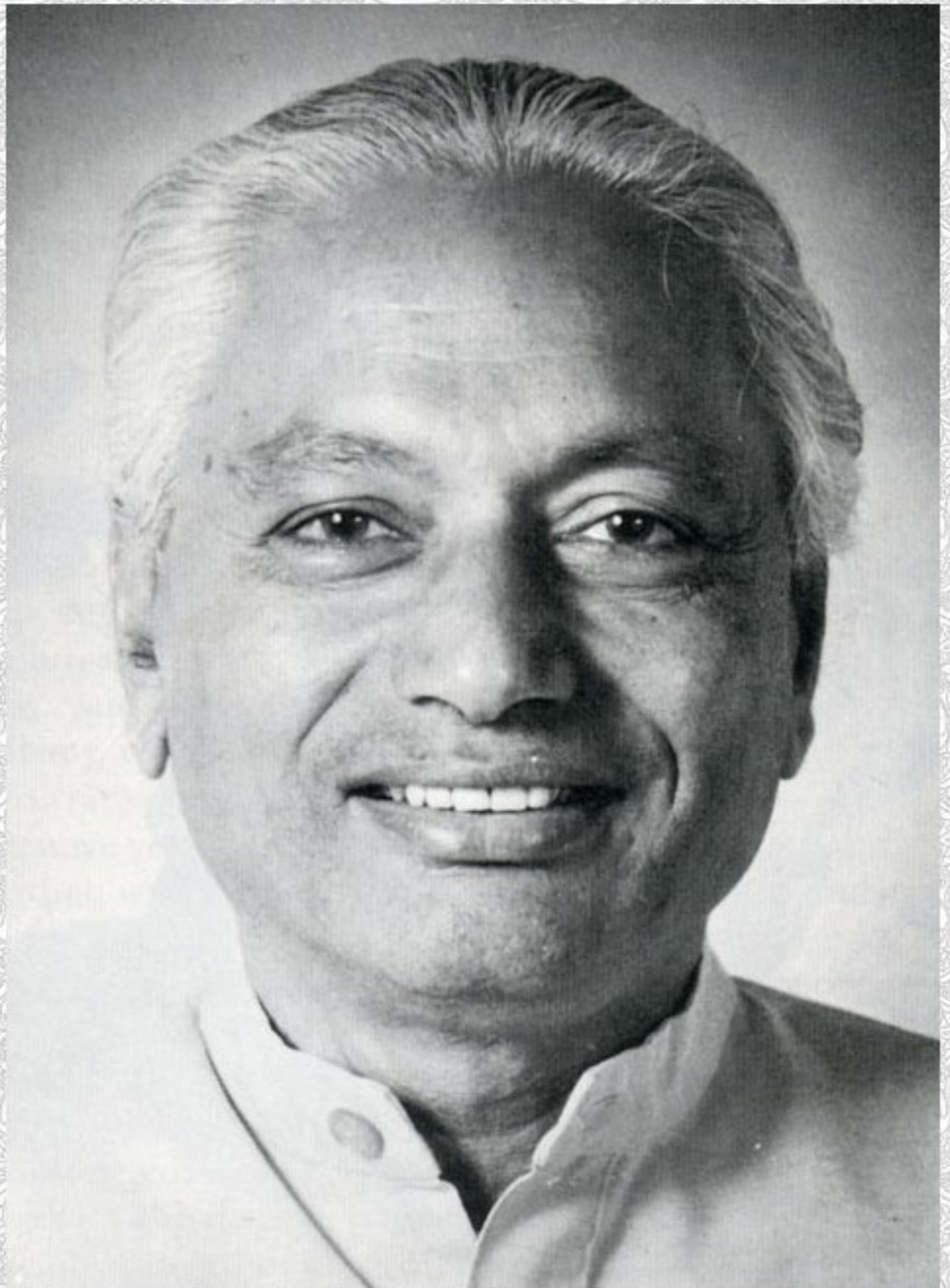




What is Natural Happens

talks on the 4th chapter
of the Bhagavad Gita

Swami Venkatesananda



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I

This is a beautiful chapter which contains a concise description of the essence of the spiritual truth, as also of the methods of reaching it. It is only after trying out some methods to translate the spiritual truth in our own daily life, finding some difficulties and trying various ways of getting out of those difficulties, that it is possible for us to realise that no method or technique is really necessary, and that the discovery of the Truth is not the end-product of any practice. But we should not start on the premise that there is no technique or method and that the Truth alone exists - then of course we lie down and go to sleep! We go to sleep as a fool, we wake up as a fool, we live as a fool. The other attitude of merely adopting a technique is also risky. Whatever we do, hoping that the technique will somehow lead us to the Truth, we get caught in the technique. We are so busy doing that there is no time, energy or inclination to wonder why we are doing all this.

I used to wonder at the extraordinary phenomenon of two dogs quarreling over a piece of meat and, barking, they go away, forgetting the meat. This is true in our case also. Very often we start doing something and the doing becomes so important that we forget why we started it!

Mere blind action is labor. The Bhagavatham uses a most appropriate description of such action even if it is called righteous by the people, and even if it is productive of social welfare or common good or is approved by the orthodoxy - "Srama eva udahritah" -

"If you go on doing the most glorious religious or social action without devotion to God, your life is a real waste". On the other hand, one also has to realise that Truth has to be discovered and the discovery means some kind of movement. Why is it seen as an action? Because life involves action, living itself involves action.

Is it possible for you, while living, while functioning, while being engaged in activities in this world, to discover the Truth and to keep it in sharp focus? If you see it very clearly and cleverly, then you see that action and knowledge are co-existent, two sides of the same coin, and therefore the two together create a feeling, or almost a delusion, of one depending on the other.

There is a beautiful proverbial question in Tamil. In Orthodox religious ceremonies in Brahmin houses, during the feast partaken by Brahmins, they did not use metal cups and tumblers. Glass and porcelain were also out of question. Instead they very cleverly made cups with a leaf, usually banana leaf, stitched. The cup is called "drona", and it does not have a proper base. It is only the ghee that maintained the shape of that cup, made it stand up and sustained it.

The question is: what sustains what - does the ghee sustain the cup, or does the cup sustain the ghee? Without the cup, the ghee cannot be there, and without the ghee, the cup cannot be there either. You can translate it in our own idiom: does the man drive the car, or the car drive the man? Without you, the car would not move; without the car you could not move. The two together move and, depending upon the angle from which you are looking, the car is taking you, or you are taking the car. Both statements could be quite right - but neither is really true. Does action lead you to knowledge, enlightenment, or does knowledge guide your action? The two together - I must have enlightenment in order to guide me in my life, and I must live in such a way that I might reach enlightenment - a kind of cause and effect relationship which does not exist.

This chapter gives both the ghee and the leaf cup! Beautiful exercises are suggested and also the meaning of this life, which is Jnana. How to see the two as one without necessarily denying the existence of one in favour of the other? That is the important thing. Hence this chapter is sometimes known as Jnana Yoga and sometimes as Jnana Karma Sanyasa Yoga. "Sanyasa" means "placing very well"; it does not necessarily mean becoming a swami! A swami is supposed to be able to place this knowledge in such a way that every action is enlightened action.

What is the characteristic of one who has discovered this light in life? Does he sprout wings or does he grow horns or does he physically or psychologically or in other ways distinguish himself from others all around him? No, not necessarily. If this Truth is discovered, you are never again subject to delusion.

All of you know the story of the Bhagavad Gita. Arjuna was deluded; Krishna dispelled that delusion. Similarly, you are behaving like a fool now, that foolishness will go; you are ignorant now, that ignorance will go. The actions will remain exactly as they were before but the delusion goes away, the illusion goes away, the false understanding or misunderstanding is removed. When the misunderstanding is removed, Truth remains Truth. Do not try to guess what Truth is before you remove the misunderstanding, because that is the misunderstanding. Guessing the nature of Truth before one has actually discovered it will make you misunderstand it. If for this discovery you have to adopt some technique or method, do so. Life being action, activity, motion, the life devoted or dedicated to the discovery of Truth will necessarily be flavored by that dedication and will follow a certain course of action which suggests a method.

In India, when it rains during the monsoons, the whole place is filled with green grass, everything grows. What used to be a pathway, a footpath, is completely gone. And then, as people walk from this place to that place, a

path is formed. People do not walk in order to make that footpath. Nobody does that. People go from point A to point B, that is all; but that movement from A to B makes a path. It is possible for one person to make a path. What is needed is dedication, the direction. You want to get away from the state of ignorance, the state of foolishness, the state of confusion, the state of delusion. You are awakened and you proceed towards enlightenment. That movement itself - because life is movement - seems to cut a path and that becomes a path, a method, a technique to you. Can that path be also adopted by someone else? Possibly, if his destination is exactly the same as your destination - which is very doubtful. And if his destination is your destination, then it is not your path that he is following - he is following his own path. He is following your path only if he does not know what the destination is, and merely walks along your footsteps. Then, if between your walking and his walking another rain has fallen, and somehow grass has grown, he would miss his path completely and go somewhere else. That is the danger.

You cannot possibly walk the same path as another person. It has to be your own. If you are dedicated to the discovery of the Truth, your life will lay the path which you will walk. The only thing in common between you and the other person is total dedication to the discovery of the Truth. You know what the discovery of the Truth means when that delusion, that foolishness, that ignorance, which had been haunting you and confusing you throughout this life, is dispelled.

The chapter begins with an interesting statement 'imam vivasvate yogam proktavan aham avyayam vivasvan man ave praha manur iksvakave' bravit (IV.I) - this yoga I taught to Vivasvan - the Sun. What is this yoga? It is the Yoga described in the third chapter: that there is a natural state of being and therefore life that is absolutely natural (if you must use the theological expression as God willed it).

There is a reciprocal, a cyclic natural progression or natural movement which nobody can arrest. Life is natural. Life came into being without you, and life will come to an end without you. What do we mean by God's Will? Merely what is other than what you think is your will. Why were you born? You do not know. If you had been given the choice, you would have said, 'No, I do not want to be born'. Now that we are here, probably most of us would like to go on living forever. Life is a bit of a nuisance, but somehow we can manage; after all, if this pattern is no good, we change into another pattern - a sort of 'trial and error'. You know what 'trial and error' means? You try and commit an error: try again, and commit another error! It does not say 'try and stop erring'.

Nobody wants to die and yet everybody dies. It is interesting. You do not want to be born, still you are born. You do not want to die, still you die. So there is

something in nature which seems to take no notice of our puny little will. That is called natural. That which is natural is totally independent of our will or our choice.

Life is characterized by change. Change is inherent in all motion, in all movement. If there is no change, there is no movement. That in which there is no movement is changeless, but when we come to life, change is the only unchanging truth concerning it.

Does this change also bring with it what you call pain and pleasure, what you call good and evil? What makes night dreadful and day blissful? What makes something painful and something else pleasant, pleasurable? It is not in life; it is not in the experience itself. In a life that is absolutely natural all these changes might still take place, without raising the feeling 'this is pleasure, this is pain.' Even to the greatest of sages the world continues to be the world that is you and me, and the day continues to be composed of half daytime and half nighttime. Without canceling this, can you extricate yourself from the confusion that one thing is desirable and the other is undesirable, one thing is good and the other is evil, one thing is pain and the other is pleasure?

This confusion is not in nature. Where is it? In your mind. Arjuna specifically asks that question in the third chapter - *istan bhogan hi vo deva dasyante yajnabhavitah* (III.12) - sacrifice this notion that arises in your mind - this is pleasure, this is pain; this is good, this is evil and you will find the '*istan bhogan hivo deva dasyante*'. As soon as you have sacrificed your own opinions, your own notions, your own labels, that which is natural will continue to happen. Orthodox commentary says that if you perform all these yajnas, havans, etc. the gods will be pleased and give you what you want: rain, food, etc. But according to another point of view, 'deva' may not necessarily mean some kind of angel sitting in heaven, but the angels or divine beings that are woven into your personality, into your body. For instance, when you say that the Sun-God, Surya, presides over your eyesight, it does not mean that a miniature sun is stuck in your eyeball. The faculty of sight itself is something divine; and if you are able to get rid of or sacrifice, the foolish ideas and thoughts that arise in your mind, and open your eyes, seeing takes place without any difficulty.

And if the eyes alight on something beautiful, there is the delight which is inexpressible. The eyes see, the tongue tastes, totally regardless of your wishes and your aversions, your likes and dislikes. So do not run after pleasure - it is built into you. Let the eyes enjoy themselves, let the ears enjoy themselves, let those devas enjoy themselves. If you abandon your false ego-sense, then whatever is natural to you will happen. The natural pleasure or delight will be experienced without any yoga practice. Simply let nature take its own course.

What is it that prevents this, and what is called evil in this world? Arjuna asks a specific question and Krishna says : kama esa krodha esa rajoguna samudbhavah - (III.37)

In your own mind you desire something, and in your own mind, you hate something. These two become your enemies. These two interfere with the natural cause of events and create what nature has not produced at all - pain and pleasure. There is no pain and pleasure, no good or evil in nature. These things are created by a mysterious force - your mind, which creates what is called the desirable and what is called the undesirable. Why is something desirable? Because you desire it. Why do you desire it? Because it is desirable. Which was first? Did this become good before you thought it was good or did it become good because you thought it was good? Is there a cause and effect relationship here at all? Of course you think he is a good man and then you bow down. Which is the cause? Which is the effect? Has your thought that he is a good man made him a good man, or was it because he was good that you thought he was a good man? One does not know. There is a foolish connection between these - which is called superimposition.

Once again, the mind is capable of entertaining thoughts. It is its own natural function. Let it go on entertaining thoughts. You must listen very carefully in order to understand the joke. There is nothing unnatural in this, except the connection. You look at a beautiful face and you say, "Ah, lovely face!" The face is there and when the eyes are open, they see the face. When the eyes see the face, the mind raises the thought, "That's a beautiful face" and the thought comes to an end.

But something registers that thought, links it with that face, makes it desirable. Even if there was a pleasure, it was momentary and it's gone. Something makes it desirable, which means you desire it again. If you can snap that, you are free. The man who says that this is a beautiful face and he would like to see it again is fooling himself. The man who says that because this face is not attractive he is going to consider it as an ugly face and not look at it again is also fooling himself. Instead of getting into this mess, can what is natural happen without leaving a trace behind, without leaving a longing behind? Such life is free. Such a life is enlightened.

"Why do you run after pleasures?", asks Krishna. "Pleasure is inherent in life. enjoy it." If your hand happens to touch a flame, the finger burns and is immediately drawn away. One minute later, that finger becomes cold. Why? Because it reacted to the flame and as soon as that contact was removed, it returned to its natural state. But when it comes to the mind - the mind touches something, experiences something, and designates it - 'this is pleasure, I want

it again', or 'this is pain, I want to avoid it'. This is not in nature. It is not true, it is not real. It is that which binds, it is that which makes us foolish.

"I taught this Yoga to the Sun." (IV. 1). What does the sun do? It shines without intending to shine. There is no desire, no motivation, no aversion in the sun to shine. It is' natural - and what is natural happens. The sun draws water up and causes rain. And the same sun may produce a forest fire somewhere else - not because the sun is in love with the water or is angry with that forest. There is no love, there is no hate. There is nothing desirable, there is nothing undesirable. Everything is as it is. The life that is lived in that light becomes enlightened living.

II

Enlightened living is not something unusual, strange, unnatural - called supernatural. It is the most natural life, not just what is called "living in tune with nature", but life as it is meant to be. What is unnatural in this is that I want it to be otherwise. Can life be freed from "I want it to be otherwise" or "I am not sure whether I am meant to do this or to do that"? Am I doing what I am meant to do or must I do something else? When that doubt arises in you, then there is something unnatural. Doubt is not natural, doubt is not part of nature. If you watch the trees in your garden - that is probably the message that they give you - they seem to have no doubt at all. When the flower blossoms, it does not stand there and think: "Must I open up this way or must I open up the other way round?" There is no doubt at all. The flowers seem to blossom so naturally and so beautifully. But in our case we are haunted by this doubt - "Must I do this? Must I do that?", and many of us or most of us spend a whole lifetime trying to figure out, trying to decide.

A friend of mine used to quite frequently quote the proverb: "Look before you leap". So he must weigh all the pros and cons and consequences and so on. I used to tell him: "Look if you want to, and look again. But, for heaven's sake, leap some time or other - because before you decide whether to leap this side or that side or whether to leap or not to leap, you may find it is too late. Then you won't have to leap at all, somebody will push you".

So this doubt is not part of nature. How do I know? By observing nature. When the rose blooms, it has its own color, its own perfume. When the mango blooms, it has its own flower, its own fragrance. Can our life also be like that? In that life there is jnana, there is natural and therefore supreme intelligence, supreme consciousness. When doubt enters our life, it seems to interfere with the natural flow of life because we are hesitating, we are halting and therefore interfering with the natural flow of life. Whereas nature flows constantly, time cannot be altered. You cannot stop time and say, "Well, wait a moment, I will find out whether I must do this or that today." It is gone! Today is gone, tomorrow is coming.

In nature everything seems to flow, there is constant motion. When doubt enters, it seems to disturb this natural and constant flow by foolishly endeavoring to halt it. There is halting, there is indecision, there is vacillation - vacillation in the sense that we take one step forward, three steps backward, another step forward, four steps backward. That is another funny game we are fond of playing and then we blame somebody else for all our failures.

In order to illustrate this perhaps, or maybe to bring home another fact, Krishna opens the fourth chapter by saying: *imam vivasvate yogam proktavan aham avyayam* - this is not something new, it is eternal. What is natural is

eternal, permanent. If it is your nature to be hot-tempered, you will be hot-tempered at least twenty four hours of the day and even in your sleep. Are you hot-tempered in your sleep also? No, but because you are born a man or a woman - which is natural, you are a man or a woman twenty four hours of the day. So what is natural is constant, eternal, unchanging.

If there is an aberration like anger, greed, jealousy or fear, one has to enquire and see if this is your nature or if this is also born of a doubt, or of another extraneous factor interfering in the natural flow of life. If fear is natural to you, you must be afraid of everything, everybody.

In that natural life there may be what is built into the physical universe: *indriyasye 'ndriyasya 'rthe ragadvesau, vyavasthitau (III.34)* - attachment and aversion for the objects of the senses abide in the senses. You touch something soft, the hand wants to rest there; you touch something very cold or very hot, the hand immediately pulls away. There is some kind of interaction between several things in this world. Water in a big quantity puts out fire, water in a small quantity evaporates when it touches fire. All these interactions seem to be part of nature; but when the water puts out the fire, it does not do so because it hates fire, nor does the fire disappear because it is afraid of water. These are natural. Even so, in our own life we may observe these phenomena in our interaction with others, not because we hate one another or we love one another or we are afraid of one another, but because it is something natural. In order to illustrate all these, and perhaps also to suggest what might have been a sheer historical fact, Krishna opened the chapter saying: I taught this yoga to Vivasvan - the sun.

This yoga of natural, spontaneous living, a life which is characterized completely and totally by spontaneous action - spontaneous in the sense of non motivated action, was taught to the sun. What does this mean? If you observe the sun, you are observing all the tenets of this essential yoga of natural living. It is not because the sun is shining that I must also shine. What does the sun do? Does it do anything at all? We are terribly keen on doing We are great actors and doers of actions. You look at the sun; is it doing something? It shines. Does it want to shine? If it does not want to shine, why does it not disappear? Does it behave equally towards all people, all beings on earth? Yes and No. It shines equally upon all, but the effect of its shining is different with different people. I like sun-bathing, it is delightful; but some people get burnt - not the fault of the sun nor your fault! The sun burns, your skin burns. If you do not want it, better avoid it. So the sun shines without intending to shine and without being afraid to shine, neither saying, "I want to shine" nor saying "I do not want to shine and I am forced to shine."

I have a friend in Madras who used to say, "Duty-bound I must do so and so". If you feel duty bound, do not do it. Duty should not bind you, duty should

free you. The only duty that binds you is the duty that you pay at the airport. That you are bound to pay, or else they will sue you. No duty should bind you. When you are saying 'duty-bound', you are not happy, you are miserable.

The sun shines because ... there is no because! Can our life also be like that? I live, I shine, I work, I function, and I participate in all the aspects of this life without a because arising. This is the first lesson.

Does the sun shine equally upon all? Yes - which means that it has no partiality, but in doing so, is there a motivation? - my friend, my enemy?

You know the famous doctrines "Love your enemy as you love your friend", and "Love your neighbour as you love yourself". Does the sun do so? Does the sun make a distinction? If you do so, you have already made a distinction and divided the world into two camps: my friends and my enemies. Then you are motivated by some kind of twisted logic and a desire to win the admiration of someone that you know. "So-and-So is my enemy and still I love him." If you think he is your enemy, you do not love him! The moment the thought "You are my enemy" arises in you, the love has gone and the rest of it is hypocrisy.

So you can shine like the sun because there is no because, and shine equally upon all because there is no because. You cannot help it, you cannot even stop to consider whether this shining light makes people happy or unhappy. It is a very tough job. In that, where are you looking? In yourself, into your own heart. When you shine because there is no because, and when you shine equally upon all because there is no because - which means you cannot help doing it, there is no motivations at all. I did not use that expression earlier because when you say, "I cannot help it" there is a suggestion that you want to do otherwise, but when there is no motivation the word "because" does not arise at all.

Vitaragabhayakrodha - (IV-10) - these three are completely and totally absent in you: raga - a desire, a wish, a craving, an attachment; bhaya - fear; and krodhah - hate. When these three are totally absent, your life is enlightened living. There is no reason why you should do something, there is no reason why you should do the opposite, there is no reason why you should not do anything, and there is no reason why you should be afraid of not doing it. When all these things are taken into consideration, you realise that all that this involves is an unwinking, unblinking observation of oneself, knowing that the only thing that disturbs the equilibrium here, that seems to cloud this inner light, is yourself - yourself being motivated by or composed of fear, love and hate.

Such an enlightened life is itself a great blessing. In such a life there is delight, joy, bliss - very natural joy, natural delight. When the eyes see a nice scene,

there is delight; when your ears hear nice sounds, there is delight, naturally, without your wanting it and without your wanting to avoid what is painful. What is painful your body will naturally avoid, you do not have to wish to avoid it.

When you watch a young mother feeding her little infant, you learn the most beautiful lesson from that infant. It is the most beautiful sight if you keep your eyes open and mind shut. The mother is feeding and the infant is probably hungry. Spoonful after spoonful seems to go in without any hindrance, without any problem. And then when the infant is satisfied the extra spoonful that is poured into the mouth dribbles out of the corners of the mouth without the infant wanting to do it or not wanting to do it.

Freed from fear, love and hate, your body and your mind will naturally reject what is painful to them. It is something which amazes me every time I think of it; we are eating lots and lots of food, a lot more than we ever need. When a hair comes into your throat, everything comes to a stop, the reverse action takes place, and the whole thing comes out. What a fantastic mechanism it is! Left to itself, the tongue refuses to allow it.

This is something which may be contrary to all the religious teaching - "Left to itself, your body does not want pain, does not want to suffer". It is some crazy idea that we introduce into our own mind that creates a martyr complex. Nature does not want you to suffer. Why do I say so? Look at what happens to a person involved in a motor accident. The moment he is knocked and thrown out he becomes unconscious. When what is called illness gets hold of the body, there seems to be some suffering which is probably redressing of the balance, and when that state is reached, you become unconscious, you enter into what is called 'coma'. Observing all these, you see that nature does not want you to suffer, and if the body is allowed to live a natural life, there is no suffering at all. Suffering is almost always caused by reflex action being kept out of life. Therefore in enlightened living there is a perpetual delight without fear, without love, without hate. One avoids what is painful and there is constant delight.

Moment to moment there is delight, there is joy but then I isolate one experience, keep it as memory, and crave for it. This craving becomes painful. Otherwise life is full of delight.

What is funny is that very often some people are also like Arjuna in this context. "Wait a moment", says Arjuna, "you said you taught this yoga to the sun; but the sun was born long before you, you are only fifty years old". Whenever a beautiful philosophical principle is being discussed, we are not there. Suddenly, instead of entering into the spirit of the philosophical theme that is being discussed, the mind goes off at a tangent, gets hold of a silly little

idea or something else. This is a very common failing in most people. Such people also find it very difficult to meditate because meditation also needs undistracted attention attention which is not diverted by some secondary and superficial things that may happen.

Can I sustain one train of thought, one trend of thought, and take it to its own logical conclusion - where logic comes to a conclusion, and then take a leap beyond that? Instead of taking it right through to its own conclusion, I am diverted by other silly considerations. Instead of absorbing the message, Arjuna goes off at a tangent. It is totally irrelevant to the main theme, and yet Krishna being Krishna, He does not want to dismiss the question. He takes it up and while endeavouring to answer, returns to his theme. That is the most beautiful thing in the fourth chapter. "How do I know that you taught this yoga to the sun?", asks Arjuna.

Bahuni me vyatitani janmani tava ca'rjuna tany aham veda sarvani na tvam vettha paramtapa - (IV. 5) - Many births of mine have passed as well as of thine, O Arjuna. I know them all but thou knowest not".

Luckily Arjuna does not question that!

Then Krishna gives a couple of verses which suggest what has come to be regarded as a dogma in Sanatana Dharma. In the Gita, whenever the first person pronoun "I" is used, it is good to remember that it refers to the spiritual Truth or Reality rather than to Mr Krishna.

yada-yada hi dharmasya glanir bhavati bharata abhyutthanam adharmasya tada'tmanam srjamyaham - (IV.7) - Whenever there is a decline of righteousness, O Arjuna, and the rise of unrighteousness, then I manifest Myself. That is: when the Truth, the Reality, the spiritual essence, which is the Cosmic Intelligence, makes itself manifest, whenever a certain balance is disturbed, whenever Dharma - the force, the energy, the power that holds things together, that sustains the universe, that sustains life - is disturbed. Dharma is not merely righteous action or what is considered wrong, but the power that sustains and preserves the universe. When it is disturbed, then the divine incarnates in order to restore the balance. The Reality or Brahman is also defined as "sarnam" - equilibrium. A state of perfect equilibrium is God and this state of equilibrium can never be really and truly disturbed.

You cannot dig somewhere without piling up somewhere else. You cannot build a house without digging a hole. Nature is always in a state of balance; and when forces threaten to disturb this balance, there is a tremendous manifestation of the Divine in order to restore this balance.

If you bear this in mind you may probably understand what is officially known as 'avatara' - Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad etc.,. But you may also understand that what you call pain is also God. Your headache and violent colic pain may also be God. You did something which disturbed the equilibrium of the body, and the intelligence in the body sprang into action and manifested itself very strongly in order to restore the balance. That strong action is interpreted by the pleasure-loving mind as pain, whereas in truth it is a manifestation of God. Therefore the Yogi who is constantly aware of the Divine play is really not affected by what others call pain and suffering. He knows that this is a natural consequence. He knows also that in that natural life there may be situations which may be interpreted by others as pain, but not by him. There can be a threat to the natural balance or equilibrium in the world, but the balance can never be really upset - glanir bhavati bharata. 'In the world' means your body and also the cosmos. Then there is a divine manifestation: janma karma ca me divyam evam yo vetti tattvatah - (IV.9) - "So I manifest Myself not because I want to but because it is natural". That is how Krishna brings the original theme back without getting lost. Nature is in a state of balance all the time and the very threat to the disturbance of the equilibrium seems to call for the redressing divine intervention. "And there again, I am completely impartial, motiveless."

na mam karmani limpanti na me karmaphale spraha" - (IV.14) - "Actions do not taint Me, nor have I a desire for the fruit of actions." These are words used by Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, and they have a dual application. It might refer to Krishna Himself "Though I am doing all this, none of these things taint me. He who knows that, knows what God is" or it may refer to you and to me. While being engaged in all the activities in this world, we should realise that when there is heat the body perspires. "I" am not perspiring. When it is cold, the body shivers - "I" am not shivering. You pinch the infant, it cries; you tickle its sides, it laughs. It is your mind that interprets the whole thing, saying that the child is happy when I tickle it, the child suffers pain when I pinch it. Nothing at all. There is a pinch and there is a cry, there is a tickling and there is a laughter. These two go together, those two go together!

iti mam yo, bhi janati karmabhir na sa badhyate - (IV.4) - "One who knows these is not bound." Krishna has answered the question and also brought back the original discussion of what natural life, enlightened life is.

III

The theme that is mainly discussed in the Gita is how to live a natural life - which is something that neither the mind nor the ego should determine. In that natural life the ego is absent. In plants, in trees there is no doubt; each flower knows exactly how to blossom, how many petals to have, what colour it should have, and there is no selfish activity, not even an intentional action. When you talk of motivated action, people usually qualify it by saying that what is wrong is only the selfish motive - the unselfish motive is all right. When the intention itself is absent, then there is no anxiety and there is no tension. "Tension" is part of "intention", is it not?

If truth is truth, what does it matter whether it is ancient or modern? "How can you have declared the Truth ten centuries ago?", asks Arjuna. Is the truth declared ten centuries ago valid today? Such discussions are irreverent, irrelevant, sidetracking and silly! Krishna however, very patiently, answers Arjuna's question and brings in what is considered as the "avatara vada". I think it is good to remember that the word "avatara" is not mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita in this context - "yada - yada hi dharmasya glanir bhavati." Dharma may not only mean what you and I, or the ancients, or they who are coming after, or they who rule the nations of the world, determine as righteous action.

What is righteousness? What is unrighteousness? These questions can never be conclusively answered by anybody. This problem has been discussed from the dawn of creation till today, and will probably go on for a long time - to come without anybody conclusively answering it. Dharma has also another meaning; in Buddhist scriptures especially, the word 'dharma' is used exclusively in this sense: dharma is what makes a flower a flower as distinct from what makes a cloth a cloth. Why is wind wind, and why is water water? The answer to that question is dharma. The essential characteristic of each object is its dharma. That is easy and simple to understand. This is a boy and that is a girl; there is no "and therefore"!

There are different substances with different dharmas or characteristics , and these different substances co-exist in this universe. This co-existence involves constant inter-action, and such inter-action is bound to bring about some disturbance somewhere, each disturbance being immediately followed by a balancing action. There is a disturbance and immediately there is a balancing influence. It is hot - your skin begins to perspire at once; it is cold - your body begins to shiver at once. That must be very clearly seen.

Nature is in a state of balance basically and fundamentally, and that Nature is composed of diverse substances with diverse characteristics. When these diverse substances and diverse characteristics come into contact - not

necessarily collision - with one another, they inevitably influence one another. Thus it is possible that a disturbance in the nature of these substances takes place, but nature does not allow this disturbance to go out of hand. Nature immediately brings about some restoration of the balance. If one can see that quite clearly, that is God.

Yada-yada hi dharmasya glanir bhavati bharata abhyutthanam adharmasya tadatmanam srjamyaham - Whenever there is a decline of righteousness, O Arjuna, and the rise of unrighteousness, then I manifest Myself. - IV.7

When the nature of a certain substance is disturbed and a non-characteristic begins to manifest its ego, then this knowledge is immediately released, and some power is released in order to restore the balance. If that is accepted, then we are all "avatara" - everyone sitting here is an avatara - incarnation of God, because this happens in our life everyday. Eat too much and there is dyspepsia - that intelligence or life-force in you which brought about this indigestion is divine. Not you, not me, because it is immediately clear that that dyspepsia is surely beyond the "me". If it was within the "me", you would have stopped the indigestion! Why must you have the indigestion? It is not in your control, it is beyond, beyond your reach.

Nature is composed of night and day, which form one day. In the same way, in what we call Jiva or the Divine there is Jnana - knowledge and Ajnana - ignorance. These two forces are present in all. In each substance there is something which is stable, which does not alter, and something which can be influenced and pulled. It is because of the presence of this duality that a disturbance is possible. You can place a ton of sweets in front of Swami Sivananda's statue or even in His mouth, nothing will happen. You can pour oceans of water on His head, it does not catch cold. Why? Because in the statue the possibility of a disturbance does not exist. In each substance in general there is a stable element - the core, which is unchanging, and it also contains the potentiality of a change. This body has a stable element called life and also an unstable element called health - but life, as long as it exists, is able to overcome that ill-health and bring back health.

There is a very enigmatic expression towards the end of the fourth chapter: hrtstham samsayam there is no doubt in your heart. The same statement comes elsewhere in the Gita:

Jyotiram api taj jyota tamsah param ucyate jnanam jneyam jnanagamyam hrdis sarvasya dhisthitam - That, the light of all lights, is said to be beyond darkness, knowledge the knowable and the goal of knowledge, seated in the hearts of all." (XIII.17)

If the supreme light dwells in your heart, how does darkness also dwell in your heart? These two together make you, unfortunately. Side by side with the supreme light, there is also this doubt that dwells in your heart. With the help of that light remove the darkness. But you will not be able to do it entirely as long as you are alive, because as long as we are in this place of life, the only thing that is possible is enlightened living, not just enlightenment. You have to live, and live an enlightened life. You have to see that what you call a day is also composed of a night. So do not suddenly jump on your own shoulder. That is a bit difficult. Instead, see the whole thing and see also that these two forces - light and darkness, exist in each one of us and there is a constant tug-of-war between the two.

Nature, in a state of balance, maintains a certain tension, and that is life, in the sense of livingness. If that tension was not there, you would collapse like a rag doll. Even the sitting posture involves a certain tension; even in what you call Savasana, relaxation, there is tension; if one muscle relaxes, the other one becomes tense. If it does not, then you cannot exist as a body. So between this light and darkness which co-exist in your heart, there is a certain amount of tension. When that tension is in a state of balance, then there is an absence of tension. This you can experience while you are sitting there. If you rock yourself and come to that point where the body is in a state of perfect equilibrium - in other words, if you have been able to find your own center of gravity, then the body feels extremely light. These two forces of light and darkness coexist in your heart; but they exist in such a way that they do not cause a problem or a disturbance in your life. For instance, in breathing, the doctors tell us that some nerves give you an impulse to expand the lungs and another set of nerves commands you to exhale. They are obviously doing contrary jobs at the same time, but you are not even aware of it, though this contrary function goes on all the time in the body. But when one of these two impulses becomes weak, you are finished, you gasp for breath. When these two, which on the surface appear to be working against each other, are in a state of balance, then there is ease - there is no disease, no problem.

In the same way, in Nature, when all these substances with different characteristics are in their natural state, there is tension, but without destroying one another. When you stretch a rubber band and the pull in one direction is greater than the pull in the other direction, there is an increase in tension and there is a disturbance in the balance. The Divine manifests itself in such a situation in order to restore the balance - restore in the sense that the original tension is restored. It is not as though you can go to sleep, You cannot, you do not. Life cannot go to sleep! Life goes on; and in that continuing life there is the restoration of balance all the time. That which becomes more powerful and therefore capable of bringing about a destructive influence upon the weaker one, is called adharma. It is that what disturbs the balance.

What is evil in this world? Evil is that which is more powerful, dominating, enslaving - something which wants to dominate something else - and this disturbs the balance. Anything that wants to dominate, that becomes powerful, strong, at once becomes evil. I believe it was Lord Acton who said, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." It seems he made another statement: "All great men have invariably been wicked." Otherwise you cannot become a great man! As soon as you become a great man, you want to command others, dominate them either physically, financially, politically, economically, intellectually, or even spiritually. The spirit of domination is evil, and the spirit of domination invariably tries to influence another. To influence another is to violate your dharma and even that of the other person. When you try to alter an other's dharma, you use the usual formula that "You are a fool and I am a wise man" and, "Is it not right on any part to bring light to you, save you, enlighten you, help you, redeem you" and all that. But in fact it is a power game, it is domination and it is disturbance of dharma.

When you stretch a rubber band between your fingers, no one except that rubber band knows in which direction the pull is greater. So I do not know whether, in talking to you, in preaching to you, I am trying to influence you or I am violating this dharma. Only the rubber band knows or that divine intelligence that dwells in that rubber band knows, otherwise all crooks have always rationalised all their actions saying, "I am doing it for your own good". Towards the end of the Bhagavatam, Krishna - who is supposed to have incarnated here in order to destroy wickedness, was about to leave the world. It seems He looked around and found that wickedness was still there in the form of his own people. Nobody except Himself could deal with them because they were utterly convinced that they were good people since they belonged to Krishna's family and to Krishna's race. Even though, on the face of it they were His people, they had become powerful and therefore they had become vicious. He decided to destroy them before He left. "At least for once let me make a clean sweep of all dirt, even the dirt created by me, supported by me, protected by me. Of course it is said that very soon after Krishna left, adharma had started again.

This pull, this tug of war between any two forces, between any two dharmas - i. e. between your nature and my nature, is there constantly. There is a constant tug of war; and unless I am constantly vigilant and sensitive, it is not easy for me to know when this delicate balance in our relationship is disturbed. The moment it is disturbed, the dharma is disturbed. It may be I am right, it may be you are right, it may be I am wrong, it may be you are wrong, it may be I am trying to save you, it may be you are trying to save me, but it is an extremely delicate thing to know. It is a continuous, unending process. Therefore, if one gets into it and tries to understand the whole

phenomenon, the thing called manifestation of God is constant. "Sambhavami yuge" may mean "at every juncture, whenever this contact and influence takes place in you, in me, in our society, in our community, in the world."

Why have I avoided calling it a conflict and merely said "contact and influence"? In nature there may be no conflict at all. There are different natures with different characteristics; they come together and the balance is disturbed. The disturbed balance is restored again through the influence of the divine, and it goes on and on. In it, what seems to be absent is the intention or the attachment. Hope is not there and anticipation is not there either. When the tree yields fruits and the fruits ripen on the branches, they do not hope to be eaten by you. When the fruits become very heavy, they fall down without intending to do so, without hope, without fear, without expecting something else to happen. So, in nature, the goal is completely absent. That is one of the fundamental messages of the Gita, one of the fundamental teachings of Krishna. The goal-oriented life is unnatural. Therefore these three are absent in a natural life - first the intention or the motivation, second the feeling "I am the doer of this action" and third the feeling "because I want to achieve that". These three are absent in nature, though action is constant, life is constant, motion is constant.

In the disturbance of the equilibrium, as well as in the restoration of the equilibrium - which are both actions, who are the actors? That is not easy to answer and therefore Krishna says: Karmano hy api boddhavyam boddhavyam ca vikarmanah akarmanas ca boddhavyam gahana karmano gatih (IV-17) - "For verily, the true nature of action should be known, as also of forbidden action, and of inaction hard it is to understand the course of action."

Here we do not talk about Karma in the sense of "fate" because one does not know. For example, when she comes and calls me a fool and I flare up, my equilibrium is disturbed though I may be usually very calm and gentle. Is this also part of nature? Since the potentiality of the disturbance exists in nature, then may blame God for my fault. You and I cannot possibly arrive at any decent understanding of this problem.

Karmany akarma yah pasyed akarmani ca karma yah sa buddhiman manusyesu sa yuktah krtsnakarmakrt - (IV-18) - "He who seeth inaction in action and action in inaction, he is wise among men; he is a Yogi and the performer of all actions."

What you think is action may not be so and what you think is non-action may be the real action. Do not try to understand this at all when there is tension and the equilibrium is disturbed. When the equilibrium is disturbed, the intelligence that becomes aware of this disturbed equilibrium restores the

equilibrium in less than a second if your attention is not directed towards the forces that disturbed the equilibrium, but towards the equilibrium itself. If the attention is focused on the equilibrium, then the disturbance does not last. However such disturbance still continues to arise in your life because life is life, but the equilibrium is restored in a split second and that is called "avatara".

Bahavo jnana tapasa puta madbhavam agatah - (IV.10) - "Purified by the fire of knowledge - many have attained to My being."

Is this possible? Yes, definitely. How is it possible? By "jnana tapasa" - not by jumping up and down, but by this intense inner awareness being directed all the time at the equilibrium itself. "Nirdosham hi samam brahma" - that which is constant in you, that which is permanent in you, that which is eternal in you, that unchanging element is God. Side by side with that there is also this potentiality of being disturbed. Let your attention be on this unchanging 'samam' - equilibrium. What is called "jnana tapas" - the austerity of wisdom, is all-purifying. It purifies all the disturbances that take place in your life because it is the light in which the shadow play is enlightened. It is a funny thing to watch. If you and I are talking here and light shines there, our shadows fall on the wall. What is the cause of the shadow? As long as you and I are sitting here and that light shines there and this wall is here, there will be a shadow on the wall. Get this completely in your mind and switch this light on. The shadow disappears. Does it? It is still there but it is not seen.

As long as life lasts, this swinging between balance and imbalance, tension and non-tension, light and darkness, and so on might go on and on but, in the light of this inner intelligence, that shadow play is not seen, it still goes on but the inner light being aware of this play, in a manner of speaking, cancels it. One who understands this is constantly freed from doubt and also from intention, from attachment to the action or the feeling 'I do this', and from longing for the results of the action.

IV

While trying to understand what natural living means, we discover that in nature everything is in a state of balance - that is, there is some fluidity or livingness in it. Otherwise it becomes static life or the existence of energy implies motion, movement, activity, action. If there is no action at all, then there is no energy. Such a static state of affairs does not exist in Nature. Even in what is called inert matter something is happening, maybe at a rate that is different; for instance, from the rate at which this fan is rotating. If you see something revolving even much faster than this, you do not notice motion at all! It looks utterly static. So our senses are unable to grasp outside a certain range. The eyes see only certain rays of the spectrum; beyond that the eyes cannot see. The ears can hear only a certain range of audible sounds; beyond that (which may mean above or below) they are inaudible. Everything is in motion, all life is motion and paradoxically (paradoxically in the sense that is not possible to communicate it, to teach it or to be taught), in all this motion there is a state of absolute equilibrium or balance. How is this balance maintained? By a fantastic trick - the basic law of electro-magnetism. Unlike poles attract each other. By keeping two unlike poles together, we have built a force of attraction. That is how the entire universe seems to have been built.

It is possible for this orderly motion, while being in a state of motion, to be momentarily disturbed and that momentary disturbance is remedied by immediate balancing counter action, remedial action. This is Nature. This is what you see in your life. If you misuse your foot, that foot hurts you; if you sit too much in the sun, then you are forced to sit for a longer time in the shade. It is the remedial action that is called illness; it is the remedial action that is called sleep or fatigue, life, death. That is fairly clear to us when we look at our own physical life without getting worked up. Certain features of even the physical life are not quite within our comprehension, because we are able to look at only a certain period of time - fifty years or so. Life is not restricted to these fifty years - it extends beyond, before and after. So one who is able to appreciate this is also able to appreciate the beauty of this natural state of equilibrium. To take one small sample from life - you eat something hot today and you suffer the consequences for two or three days. It is not suffering, it is merely balancing. I can see this in a small way because my brain, my mind is incapable of wider vision. Similarly all that I have regarded as pain, suffering or illness is nothing but a certain balancing of the natural state of balance which is Nature. One cannot prove it nor disprove it. Similarly again it is possible to see that what are known as natural calamities may also be some kind of balancing action on a more cosmic level. Earthquakes, famines, volcanoes may also be related in some way to some kind of balancing in Nature. I may not like it; that is up us.

When one sees the beauty of this balancing in nature one begins to wonder. "Does it happen mechanically or is there an intelligence behind it. There seems to be an intelligence behind it and that intelligence seems to be superior to our intelligence, because it is able to remedy our stupidity. So two things become vaguely clear - that this remedial balancing action goes on all the time, and that, as a substratum for all this, there is a tremendous intelligence. When these two are seen, then the sources of real action is seen.

Karmany akarma yah pasyed akarmani ca karma yah - (IV.18). Suddenly there is a vision of action springing where I thought there was no action. Karmany akarma yah pasyed - the thing that you and I took for granted as the doer of our actions - the "I", seems to be non-existent. "I did this". "I" could have never done that. No, it is impossible! The action itself sprang from somewhere else. The "I" which superficially appeared to be the doer of these actions is seen to be non-existent, and therefore non-active. But to that which was beyond the understanding of the mind or the ego-sense all actions belong. That is the real doer of all actions. The "I" is non-existent - sariram kevalam karma kurvan napnoti kilbisam (IV.21) - doing mere bodily action.

There is energy in the body - let that energy work itself out. Let the body work, because there is no possibility of preventing the body from working. The body is working, and if there is a mind in it, that is also working, if there is energy in it, that is also working. What is action in it is the ego-sense or feeling that "I" am doing this, that "my" eyes are seeing, "my" ears are hearing, "I" am thinking, "I" am breathing, "I" am alive, "I" am giving in charity, "I" am serving, "I" love - all these are false. '

The question then may be asked: "When I become aware that somehow or other, from somewhere or other, for some reason or other, the ego-sense springs up and says, "I" hear, "I" see, "I" feel, "I" am happy, "I" am unhappy - what do I do? All that has been suggested by our religious and spiritual traditions as methods to deal with this problem of the ego, is called yoga. Yoga does not deal with self or God, but it deals with the obstruction, the obstacles - the obstructions to the vision of God, the obstacles to this natural living.

The world or the creation takes no notice at all of our private desires. You may not want the sun to shine - you can build a small cave and hide yourself in it, but the sun will continue to shine. You cannot stop it from shining. The world has not been created to satisfy your cravings or to avoid what you do not like. Your own private longings and cravings and aversions have no relevance at all in relation to creation. And yet these obstacles - these thoughts and feelings - arise, "I see", "I hear", "I breathe"; as if you can continue to breathe when the last breath has left and the next one does not want to come! You can do what you like, you can do any kind of pranayama you like, but nothing will happen.

What experiences pleasure? What experiences pain? When your body gets hot, perspiration comes - not because you are unhappy on account of the heat. Similarly, where do private desires and aversions and fears come from? Where does attachment come from? When the river flows it flows, spreading moisture around. It happens naturally. It just flows. In Nature desires, aversions, fears are absent. It is these that really interfere with the natural flow of our life and introduce pleasure, pain, appointment, disappointment, hope, despair. The art of dealing with these is called Yoga. In a way, you can say Yoga leads to self-realisation - not as the end-product of the practice of yoga, but when the yoga practice removes these obstacles, the self which is always there, is realised - which means is seen as the sole reality.

When we say the obstacles are removed, what do we mean? Is there a thing other than the self which has to be removed? If you accept that there is a thing other than the self and it is to be removed, where are you going to place it? If there is something other than the self - like for instance the shadow of the hand - and you want to remove it, can you pick it up and put it somewhere else? Not possible. How are you going to remove the shadow and where are you going to place it? That is absurd. What are these obstacles? Are they real obstacles or devils floating around? Evil forces are mentioned as if they are real entities. If evil forces were real entities, they would be with you for the rest of your life. You cannot get rid of them - they will haunt you. When you think you have got rid of them, they come back to you. When you do not want to see the shadow, you shine your flashlight upon it and by a mysterious process you have converted that shadow into light. Pleasurable experiences, painful experiences, sickness - even life and death - cannot be literally and bodily removed, because they are like a shadow. But when the light of self-realisation - or the light of understanding of the knowledge that the self alone is real - is flashed on them, they become light. That is what is called sacrifice is made sacred. That which I, in my state of ignorance, regarded as something evil, has suddenly made sacred. The same thing is there, the same actions go on but they are sacrificed. I do not know how this word "sacrifice" came to mean "cutting the throat" of an animal or even cutting a banana. "I sacrifice my life" means that everything that I do in this life has suddenly been transformed, made into something sacred. Yoga is sacrifice in that sense.

There is a lovely word used not only in the Bhagavad Gita but in many other scriptures - that is "yajna". "Jna" is also set in the other word "jnana". Yajna leads to jnana. So the vital part of this yajna or sacrifice is jnana or understanding. An action becomes yajna or sacred only when there is this jnana, this understanding. If the understanding is not there, that very action becomes stupid and binding. Action in itself is neither good nor bad, neither pleasant nor unpleasant; it is completely neutral. If light shines on this spot, that which appeared to be a shadow instantly becomes enlightened,

illuminated. Nothing came, nothing went. The hand is still there, the wall is still there, the shadow did not go anywhere but it has been sacrificed, made sacred, That which appears to be dark and devilish suddenly becomes luminous light. That is incidentally the meaning of the word "nirvana". "Nirvana" literally means 'blowing out'. When a candle is burning, and you blow it, does it go away somewhere? No. What happened to that flame? It is still there. That which I saw is not seen any more but what there was still exists. You can see that even more clearly in the case of the shadow of your hand on the wall. When you flash a light there, nothing goes out. So what harm is there if I declare emphatically that that shadow has been enlightened?

Into every action, prosaic action, I bring the light of knowledge. How does it happen? That is described in this chapter very beautifully and in the few verses we are given what later has come to mean several branches of Yoga. The first verse is very beautiful and contains the essence of the practice of the whole concept of sacrifice.

Brahmarpanam brahma havir brahmagnau brahmana hutam Brahmai 'va
tena gantavyam brahmakarmasamadhipna - (IV.24)

"Brahman is the oblation. Brahman is the clarified butter. By Brahman is the oblation poured into the fire - Brahman. Brahman verily shall be reached by him who always sees Brahman in action."

To describe this, Krishna has used the items of a ritual which you all have seen, the fire worship. In that there is a fire, the articles to be poured into the fire and the person who performs this ritual. Using these, Krishna gives us a picture of our whole life of our daily actions. Can you visualize who does the action? This action is also done by the Cosmic Being, Brahman. To whom is the action directed? To the Cosmic Being. What is the energy that is moving in this action? What is the nature of the action, what is the content of the action? What is the action made of? What is the speech made of? What are the words made of? What is the energy that emits the sound made of? How is this sound re-interpreted within me, converted into words, into thoughts and concepts, into understanding, knowledge, enlightenment? How am I able to understand the words spoken? How am I able to speak these words? That is the action. What is the content of this? Again the same energy. Cosmic Energy. Cosmic energy in motion from one point of cosmic consciousness to another point of cosmic consciousness, both the points being arbitrary. Who fixes what points? Every action springs from the same source, from this Cosmic Being. The stupid mind asks 'why'? One must be able to see and to realise that there may be no "why". What is why? There are so many things I experience everyday. I do not ask "why" at all. But one has to see this - the doer of the action, apparently the "me", is also one point in this Cosmic Being. In other words,

action is natural here; whatever goes on does so without any regard to what you would like or I would like, what you would not like or I would not like.

Brahnai'va tena gantavyam brahmakarma samadhina - One who is able to act in this spirit constantly lives in this spirit, and therefore his individuality is not lost, but sacrificed. That individuality which was frightening, which was the source of all unhappiness, pain, sorrow and suffering - that itself is made sacred and therefore there is no longer any pain, any suffering.

Daivam eva'pare yajnam yoginah paryupasate Brahmagnav apare yajnam yajnenai 'yo' pajuhvati - (IV.25)

"Some Yogis perform sacrifice to the Gods. Others offer as sacrifice Yajna in the fire of Brahman.

There are others who regard Jesus Christ or Adonai or Durga, etc as God. Instead of using the word Brahman here, you may use "deva' or God, but the thing is still the same. One may not wish to lift oneself up into the Absolute, but one may want to adore a personalised deity, but even that is essentially the same sacrifice.

Srotradini'ndriyany anya samyamagnisu juhvati - (IV.26)

"Some again offer hearing and other senses as sacrifice in the fire of restraint."

There are some who do not want to have to do anything with this world. They close themselves and do not want to hear anything or see anything. They live in a state of absolute self-control - samyama. If they realise that there is this a fire of self-control burning in them, and they can turn the hearing within and direct it towards the inner fire of self-control, even they are performing exactly the same type of sacrifice.

Sabdadin visayan anya indriyagnisu juhvati (IV.26)

Is self-control so important then? But a man who enjoys external noise and sound, is able to visualise what a marvelous instrument the sense of hearing is; then this faculty of hearing, being also part of the cosmic being and cosmic consciousness, is able to absorb that sound. When you adopt this attitude, that sound is made sacred, sacrificed. A sound that was disturbing a moment ago suddenly becomes non-disturbing now because it has also been touched by the sacrificial spirit. In both cases there is sacrifice. One sacrifices the external sound altogether, cuts it out so that internally the fire of self-control burns bright; the other one expands, includes even the external sound in the sacrifice, so that everything is made sacred.

Atmasamyamayogagnav juhvati jnanadipite - (IV.27)

Dravyayajnas tapoyajna yogayajnas tatha pare Svadhyayajnanayajnas ca yatayah samsitavratah - (IV.28)

"Others again sacrifice all the functions of the senses and those of the breath in the fire of the Yoga of self-restraint kindled by knowledge" (27)

"Others again offer wealth, austerity and Yoga as sacrifice, while the ascetics of self-restraint and rigid vows offer study of scriptures and knowledge as sacrifice." (28)

All kinds of sacrifices are indulged in by wise people. You may use certain material substances - they are material only so long as your ignorance regard them as material. The moment you realise that a flower is something beautiful which nature has given and which I cannot make, then it becomes sacred. I can make all objects sacred, all substances sacred and at the same time I may engage myself in great austerities, spiritual practices and yoga practices , so that I can also be made sacred or sacrificed.

There is also another beautiful verse later on: Apara niyataharah pranam pranesu juhvati - (IV.30)

"Others who regulate their diet offer life-breaths in life-breaths."

I may adopt these two attitudes towards physical enjoyment - eating for example. I may renounce food, in which case I feed prana with prana. I think it is also medically correct that, at a certain step of fasting, your own reservoir of protein is consumed. When you see that you realise that till the end of your life, till the last minute of your life you are eating something - if not outside food, inside food. When you are eating, you are eating outside food . When you are not eating at all and starving, you are eating what you have eaten before, you are chewing the cud. So one who eats vegetables and fruits and so on, sacrifices that outside thing into the inner fire; and one who does not eat and fasts even unto death, sacrifices the very flesh of his own body.

Thus, in and through all these practices, our whole life is sacrificed, our whole life becomes sacred.

The sole obstacle to a pure and natural life is the feeling called "I" or the ego-sense; we do not what it is, a feeling or a thought or a notion or a concept or a shadow of ignorance. If it is not there, life is natural. It seems to be non-existent and therefore unnatural - it is not something which exists and which is described as being unnatural - and yet one does not know why or how or what it is; it seems to exist. One cannot deny its seeming existence nor can one assert or affirm its real existence. Like the shadow, one can neither deny that the shadow is seen nor can one get the shadow and give it to you. Therefore all kinds of expressions are used - "It is Maya", "Is is of the nature of Sat-Asat," "It partakes of the reality and of the unreality." This is absurd. What is it that is both real and unreal? In other words, "I do not know!" When you look at the shadow, it seems to be there, and if someone says, "Why do you not pick it up and throw it away?", you discover it is not there.

The ego-sense seems to interfere with this natural life. All the various ways in which those who are called Yogis overcome or have endeavored to overcome this shadow of ego-sense are called Yoga, and they are also called Yajna in this chapter. It is very interesting to bear in mind that what are described as Yoga in other chapters, are themselves described as Yajna in this chapter. Therefore the vital aspect of Yoga is the spirit of Yajna, the spirit of sacrifice, the spirit in which the Truth is seen the spirit in which life becomes natural. Wherever the ego-sense seems to function, in whichever aspect of our life or personality, it has to be sacrificed; that is, that aspect of our personality, that faculty, that function, that work, that action, that department of our life has to be turned into something sacred, sacrificed.

Seeing happens. There is no "I" to see at all. The eyes see. The ego-sense that arises and says "I see" is a shadow. It can neither be accepted as true nor can it be rejected as untrue; but it can be made sacred so that instantly the light of realisation arises that seeing is natural to all living beings.

Jivendriy amanoyukttam bbokte tyahur manisinah.

When these three - jiva, livingness (not necessarily of the individual); manas, mind, intelligence; and indriya, the sense of eye-sight, come together, there is experience. When that livingness is associated with the intelligence called mind and a particular sense function called eyesight, that very action becomes sacred - something which one can experience if one is serious about it.

You look at something, it looks attractive to you; you look at something else, it repels you. "I hate the the sight of this" springs directly from the "I" which is the subject of the whole sentence. "I" hate - and if the "I" were not there at all? .. "I" seems to be a shadow which is neither real nor unreal. If from that

sentence and therefore from the notion which has given rise to the expression of that sentence, the "I", the subject, is dropped, the whole thing becomes instantly sacred and therefore sacrificed. "I" am doing pranayama - and as long as that "I" is there, there is tension, there is an unnatural tension. If that "I" is not there, prana is poured into apana, apana is poured into prana. This is called pranayama. "I" am not doing this at all. "I" is not there to do any of these. Then that becomes sacred. "I" am fasting in order that I may attain Moksha. There is fasting, there is starvation, there is hunger, there is craving and all the rest of it. Then suddenly you see a dead body which does not seem to be eating anything at all, which does not complain, which has no problem. The ego-sense is not there. Even when you are fasting, when you are really starving and therefore scheduled to die of starvation, you fall into a coma, you are not starving at all, you are not complaining, you are sleeping and you do not complain. That is where the livingness is somehow not connected with the intelligence and with the sense-organ, so that the moment the connection is lost, there is no starvation. Even now there is no starvation, except this connection. This connection is the shadow which is neither true nor untrue. When this truth is seen, it is seen that it is this connection between these three - jiven driyamanas - that seems to experience and express. Then the light shines on the shadow and the shadow is illumined. It is a funny expression, but I hope it makes things clear. To sacrifice is to make sacred and darkness is made sacred by being illumined. It is a great thing, grand, fantastic! When this darkness is illumined, it disappears; that is its way, not my problem. That is the problem of the ego-sense, of darkness, of the shadow; it is not my problem. With the best of intentions, I only try to illumine it. That's all.

When it becomes sacred, its darkness or its shadowness disappears. Nothing that exists goes away and therefore sacrifice is completely different from what you and I have been taught it is. Sacrifice is not merely cutting the throat of some animal, sacrifice is not even throwing something into the fire; it is when the sanctity or the holiness of something which has always been holy is restored into it. The darkness is not even dispelled, it is illumined. We use the expression "darkness is dispelled" because you see the darkness and then you shine the light on it and it is gone. It is not gone. It is enlightened, Marvelous! So, fasting can be a yajna, because the fire of hunger is burning and food is thrown into that fire; that means I do not eat at all, it is hunger that eats. Incidentally, when hunger eats, there is no indigestion at all. That is why people who are hungry hardly ever suffer; they can digest even the germs and the viruses, and that is why in both Ayurveda and Nature Cure they prescribe fasting as a sort of panacea. In sanskrit there is an expression: "langhanam paramoshadam" - the greatest of curative agents or medicines is fasting. If you are fasting and the life-force is destined to continue, it becomes so keen that it digests even poison. Even fasting can be a sacrifice, eating can be a

sacrifice, everything in our life can be a sacrifice, which means everything can be transformed into something sacred.

Evam bhuvirdha yajna vitata brahmano mukhe karmajan viddhi tan sarvan
evam jnatva vimoksyase - (IV.32)

"Thus, manifold sacrifices are spread out before Brahman; know them all as born of action and thus knowing, thou shalt be liberated."

Here is a riddle. Here is a puzzle. Do you mean to say that I do not do any of those things? Who does? You make it sound as though it is jnana that important and not action, it is jnana that makes yajna, wisdom.

We assume that just because I am sitting and talking here, there is a person who is sitting and talking here and "I am speaking." That seems to be absolutely true. "I am doing pranayama", "I am seeing." It seems to be absolutely true. How can it be otherwise. And therefore we are led through a fairly circuitous route that "I am seeing things." "I regard myself as an instrument in the hands of God." "I am a human being," "I am the crown of creation," - all that. That is 98,99, not 99.99 per cent of philosophy has this "I" as the central piece - "I" exists. Do not disturb that. Keeping that "I", that ego-sense intact, that is one per cent; well modify it a little bit here and there, so another 1 % is also added. Then we have all kinds of philosophy: "I serve you", "I see God in you", "You see God in me", "I see God in myself", "I see God in heaven", all kinds of speculation. Marvelous! That stupid little tree which has no idea of what God is, or what "I" or the Vedas are, grows beautifully; it does not seem to have any problems at all. It does not know what dharma or adharma mean. It has no adharma. It is dharma itself. That tree is dharma. It does not have to go and learn dharma from a swami.

All philosophy keeps this "I" intact and weaves something around. When we go to someone for counsel, the question "what must I be?" sounds absurd, because "I am what I am." "How can I be other than what I am". Therefore the question that we ask is "What must I do?" The moment the word 'do' is expressed, the "I" seems to be inevitable to it. "What must I do?"

It is the only question that comes to our and we seek advice of anybody, whenever we look for "upadesa" - instruction, from anybody. "What must I do?" And now, you are trying to tell me that "I" does not exist at all. If "I" does not exist, what can "I" do? And in order that I may realise that "I" does not exist, what must "I" do? Fantastic! In order that I may realise that the "I" does not exist, what must I do? However, Krishna says here: "Yes, you are right. You are one hundred per cent right." People do all sorts of things in order to realise that "I does not exist.

Evam bahuvidha yajna vitata brahmano mukhe - (IV.32)

Such acts, sacrifices, such Yogas, are countless, and they have all been practiced.

That is one remarkable feature in the Bhagavad Gita. Even a crook is accorded a place of honour - after all you must be intelligent enough to have been such a lovely crook. Krishna says: "What a brilliant crook you are". He is very clever. There he has performed a miracle. Almost without your knowledge, he has introduced another word. You have been called crook by everybody. He is the first person to say, to modify, "You are a clever man to have been such a crook;" So this crookedness is gone, the cleverness has come in Good. Now you are not meditating upon the crook any more, you are meditating upon his cleverness. The whole direction is changed - without condemning, without saying that you are a sinner, you are a rascal, you are an idiot, you are this, you are that, and making you live in that soup, he takes you out and he says: "You
"You have been burnt alive, roasted alive, but still you are there, you are marvelous, you taste nice ..."

Somewhere some nicety is added, some holiness is added, some cleverness is added, some intelligence is pointed out. It is the same in regard to bhakti also - caturvidha bbajante mam - all sorts of people come to Me, even sick people come to Me, even crooks come to Me, all of them are good because after all they come to Me. Is that not good? When a bad man is told that he is the best among the bad men, he tries to be best. A little change in direction has been effected. That's enough. In this way so many paths have been laid by people themselves - karmajan viddhi tan sarvan - the action is inherent in all this, there is nothing called inaction, there is a thing called non-action.

There was another expression in the previous chapter - na hi kascit ksanam api jatu tisthaty akar makrt (III.5) - even for a single moment you cannot remain idle, because the whole universe is vibrant all the time. So do not try to be idle. Trying to be idle is trying to do something other than what you are supposed to do. Trying to do something is not succeeding in it, because you cannot do it. However much your husband tries to take the job of becoming pregnant, he can only try - he will never succeed! What is inherent in Nature can never be bluffed. Nature is never bluffed. So, since the whole of nature is active, you who are part of Nature can never be inactive. You can try to define Nature - it is only a trial but no success. Nature goes on. You even see yourself as a foolish instrument in its hands. It is inevitable. But while doing karma, see where the "I", the ego-sense arises. That karma itself has to be sanctified, sacrificed and then it becomes sacred.

Evam jnatva vimoksyase - when this understanding arises, there is liberation. When the foolish thing that thought "I am talking here" is dispelled or enlightened, illumined, talking goes on but there is no anxiety. There is

instant liberation. Does the talker then say, "Well, I don't care"? No, No. That's an other "I". When the talker therefore does not assume "I talking" or "I don't care" or "I don't speak" or "I will speak" or "I will continue to speak" or "I am speaking for your enlightenment, for your salvation", etc. - when the "I" is completely kept away from all these, then talking is natural. In that there is neither a doubt nor a desire nor an attachment. Immediately you are liberated.

Api ced asi papebhyah sarvebhyah papakrttamah sarvam jnanaplavenai've
vrijnam samtariyasi yathai' dhamsi samiddho' gnir bhasmasat kurute' rjuna
jnanagnih sarvakarmani bhasmasat kurute tatha (IV.36-37)

"Even if thou art the most sinful of all sinners, yet thou shalt verily cross all sins by the raft of knowledge".

Very often these verses are slightly misinterpreted, again keeping the "I" intact. Will this little knowledge do? "I am talking" and, when the attention inquires into the nature of this "I", the ego-sense discovers it is not there. This attention, however, should not have its own ego-pole. If "I" am observing myself, it is a fantastically great game. "I" am observing myself. What it means, I do not know; if you understand it, God bless you. "I" am speaking - where is that "I" that speaks, where is the "I" that listens, that hears all these? When that question arises, the question shines without a questioner. The next step is: there is observation without an observer. A bit of a attention seems to float without necessarily having a source, a little bit of such an attention can destroy the entire pile of ignorance.

Yathai' dhamsi samiddho' gnir bhasmasat kurute' rjuna - (VI.37)

"As the blazing fire reduces fuel to ashes ...

Translated in a medium which is easily comprehensible to you: you fill a whole go-down with cotton, perhaps soaked in a little bit of gasoline or petrol. An unintentional spark of firewood is able to reduce the whole thing to ashes. The cotton does not say, "Oh, my God, I am so big, you are so little. I kick you out." No, that little spark is enough. This is not quite what we understand normally by the formula "Who am I". It is not a matter of sitting here and saying, "Who am I?" It is probably not "Who am I" but "Who is I" or "What is I?". It is an attention without a polarization. It is an observation without the observer. It is quest which has neither a subject nor even an object, a quest without a motivation, a destiny without a destination, a life without a source and an object that that inquiry, that quest destroys.

Jnanagnih sarvakarmani bhasmasat kurute tatha - (IV.37)

"So does the fire of knowledge reduce all actions to ashes."

Clever! Krishna or whoever uttered this must have been a great lawyer and diplomat. The usual translation is that "all actions are destroyed." Actions cannot not be destroyed. They have all kinds of orthodox interpretations of it; "all your karma are burnt" - which means your past karma, your future karma, your agami karma, your prarabdha karma, your sanchita karma - all are burnt. I do not know if all these are necessary here. All actions are instantly sacrificed, sanctified - bhasmasat, i.e. they are not destroyed, annihilated or made into nothing - but the whole thing has been made sacred, sanctified. The vague illustration or example given is what happens to that pile of cotton. The whole pile is reduced to ashes - ashes you can put on your forehead. Shankar Bhagavan bears ashes on his forehead. Why is it so? Because it is the remnant of sacrifice. When the whole thing has been turned sacred, your whole life turns sacred, and that life is divine life.

In that there is no sin. It is impossible to talk or think of sin in connection with this yajna. What is it that transformed the whole thing? Jnana. And therefore Krishna suggests that there are all kinds of yajnas - dravyayajna, yogayajna, tapoyajna, swadhyayajna, janayajna.

But - Sreyan dravyamayad yajnaj jnanayajnah paramtapa" - (IV.33)
"Superior is wisdom sacrifice to the sacrifice with objects ...

You go on doing your actions stupidly, foolishly. All right, no harm! Do not disturb anybody's faith and belief. Do not worry about what the others are doing. If the other man is doing some action, some social or community service, let him go ahead. If somebody is doing some Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, worship of God, worship of devotees, let him go ahead. Do not drop anything. Even in that you can introduce the spirit of yajna, you can bring home to that person that by doing some Hatha Yoga, for instance, he is not going to become fat or lean or get rid of his asthma or hay fever, but he is sacrificing, he is making his whole body sacred. That man then has a nice idea. He is transforming his whole physical body into something sacred. "Ah, I see, I am going to become sacred; I am going to be enlightened ... !" The "I" is still there. The fellow keeps it. "I" am going to be enlightened, "I" am going to be liberated! One day or the other he will come to this: if I am going to be liberated, let me see where this "I" is, so it can be liberated. In his own time, he discovers it is not there You do not have to bother about it.

But Krishna merely drops one little seed again: sreyam dravyamayad yajnaj jnanayajnah paramtapa - even if you do all this mechanically, without realising the spirit, even then it is good, you are doing something good. But try this, this is also good. It is not necessarily a comparative degree, it is something independent. You are doing that. Wonderful! Why do you not do this? This is also wonderful. Jnana Yoga is usually translated and understood

in the sense that jnana yajna is better than mere mechanical or material yajna.

Once this spirit of yajna, of sacrifice, of making, transforming, transmuting our whole life into something sacred is cultivated, then life at once becomes natural and blissful.

VI

Life being movement of energy and therefore motion, the universe is full of action. Nothing is static in this universe. There is constant movement and constant change within this universe. This means that, taken as a totality, there is no change, but within that totality there seems to be relative change. The change is always related to another. This change is inevitable. To arrest that change, to arrest that movement of energy is stupid, foolish, ignorant.

What is it that wants to arrest that change or movement? The 'I', the "me", the "ego". The ego sense merely wants to arrest that movement. Can it or can it not? Is it good or evil? It is the ego -sense that desires to arrest that movement and it is the ego-sense that invents or discovers or imagines a purpose in that movement, that wants to find the reason why rain falls. The rain does not rise, why should rain fall? What is the reason? What is the purpose? Why must it have a purpose? What is it that does so? The ego-sense. What is it that therefore wants to set up a goal for itself and tries to achieve it? Also the ego-sense.

Ye yatha mam prapadyante tams tathai' va bhajamy aham mama vartma' nuvartante manusyah partha sarvasah - (IV.II)

"In whatever way men approach Me, even so do I go to them, My path do men tread in all ways, O Arjuna".

It is a beautiful verse. Depending upon your intelligence, your wish, your aspiration - which are based upon your own ego-sense, you can derive any meaning from it.

In whatever manner people approach Me, I return their compliments in the same coin. It may or may not mean what it is usually taken to mean. Often this is cited in defense of prayer - that if you are poor and you pray to God: "Please, God, let this poverty be taken away from me," God will take the poverty away. He may not! "ye yatha mam prapadyante" - Why are you praying to me? Because I am poor. So be it. Why are you praying? Because of my poverty. So be it. That may be another meaning. And therefore I am not surprised at all if some time the prayer for removing some trouble I have, is not heard. The trouble continues to be. "ye yatha mam prapadyante tams tathai' va bhajamy aham" - I pay others in the same coin.

"mama vartma' nuvartante manusyah partha sarvasah" - the whole universe being indwelt by God as consciousness, as intelligence, and the whole universe being sustained by the movement of energy - that is also part of His own consciousness or shakti. Whatever is happening happens by God's will only. That is probably the meaning of the second line. You have no choice, you have no business at all in this world to wish for or to resist.

Why do these people entertain all these desires? That is the question. First, we ask: "Why does God do all this? Having come to a standstill there, we ask, "Why do we desire them?" If everything is done by God's will, why do people want to push or pull?

Kanksantah karmanam siddhim yajanta iha devatah ksipram hi manuse loke siddhir bhavati karmaja - (IV.12)

"Those who long for success in action in this world sacrifice to (worship) the gods because success is quickly attained by men through (such) action."

In sanskrit "manipravalam" is the mixing of two languages during a conversation. You do a lot of this in Mauritius - you mix a lot of Hindi and Creole. Creole and English, Creole and French, etc. Viewing the sloka, the verse, it is obviously sanskrit. But if you view it as "manipravalam" , you get a different meaning - "ksipram hi man use loke siddhir bhavati", in this universe, in this world, siddhi or perfection or attainment of an object which one has set up for oneself to achieve is easy, is easily attained. "karmaja" is not sanskrit, it is Urdu or Hindi. "maja karo" meaning so enjoy yourself. "In this world all siddhis are easily attained; so enjoy yourself" That is what one of the Swamis in the Ashram used to say half-earnestly, half humorously. In sanskrit it means "in this world which is sustained by the energy of the divine, cosmic energy, every action, bear its fruit very quickly". Your actions bear fruit very quickly and therefore here is something which I can see and therefore I desire. My actions follow my desires. and when the desires are sown, the appropriate reaction comes up and I see it as a result of my ambition, of my action. It is very simple and beautiful.

For instance, you think smoking is very pleasant, a delightful thing. You have decided already smoking is pleasant. So you buy yourself a cigarette and smoke and the effect of that smoke is what you hoped it would be. The immediate effect is produced at once. How is it produced? Because your intelligence has predetermined what it is going to be and the intelligence that assumed that this is going to be pleasant seems to create that pleasurable sensation within you and you attribute that to the cigarette.

When I indulge in some action, the result of it seems to be easily attained. We indulge in all kinds of activity - "kanksantah karmanam siddhim". We indulge in other forms of sacrifice, of treating one's whole life as holy, sacred, divine, not that fundamental sacrifice which converts or transforms the whole life into divine life, not that sacrifice which illumines the darkness of ignorance and the light of truth upon the shadow of ego-sense. Why do we do we do so? Because those sacrifices, those actions seem to produce their own results very quickly. For instance, pranayama practices. Once you practice pranayama you feel uplifted, you experience great peace of mind, tranquility. Even fasting can

be done as sacrifice. When you undergo a fast, the body feels fine, feels on top of the world. Why do I indulge in these sacrifices? Because the result immediately seen.

"kanksantah karmanam siddhim yajanta iha devatah".

"devatah" here may not only mean gods and goddesses, but even the gods enshrined in the various faculties and senses of the body. I worship them, I adore them, I please them, I displease them - I do what I like, knowing that the results of those practices can be easily pursued, easily attained here and now. But of course the wise man is not attached to any of these:

Gatasangasya muktasya jnanavasthitacetasa yajnyacaratah karma
aamagram praviliyate - (IV.23)

"To one who is devoid of attachment, who is liberated, whose mind is established in knowledge, who works for the sake of sacrifice, the whole action is dissolved."

If you see that the movement of energy is inevitable here and that the whole universe is vibrant with some cosmic consciousness or cosmic intelligence, then one thing that is immediately seen to be absent is the ego-sense. When that ego sense is not there, this movement of energy and the consequent actions do not leave the least trace anywhere. When air moves it does not leave a trace anywhere. That is why we burn camphor in the puja. When camphor is burned, it does not leave a trace at all. The whole thing is converted into fire - "gatasangasya muktasya",

It is not as though this "sanga" or attachment is real and I have to get rid of it. I have to see that in Nature which is free of ego-sense, there is no attachment at all. The shadow only seems to fall on the wall. You must see that as the truth. You cannot think it is there and by some kind of yoga practice you must remove it. If you try to remove that shadow from the wall, you will fail! That shadow is not there. You must realise that the shadow is just not there. Of course, you are seeing it. That is because you are seeing it! You can go on seeing it if you like and you can go on trying to remove it for all your lifetime if you like. One has to see the shadow is shadow and it is not on the wall. I can hold my hand and the shadow falls on my hand and not on the wall.

So the movement of energy is there. The cosmic being or the cosmic consciousness in which all these actions take place is also there. But what is absent is an ego-sense which seems to assume "I am the doer of this action," and the inevitable next question arises: "Why am I doing this?" We are questioning all the time "Why does God create the world; why does the rain fall; why does the sun shine?", and therefore another question arises: "Why am I doing this?" Because you want to gain something, not realising that the very

moment you are saying, 'I am doing this", the attachment has already been created and the longing for something or other has already been created. Now we are entering into very dangerous ground.

Once the false idea has arisen that you are doing this, it is inevitable that there must be some motivation within you. Why are you doing this? You may be doing this for a fee, for a material reward, you may be doing this for a psychological satisfaction, you may be doing this in order to earn a place in heaven, or you may even think that through this you are going to attain Moksha, liberation - not knowing that even that is a motivation, and that is also a glue which makes these actions stick. So once the shadow is cast on the wall, you are asked to look at it and admire the glory of the Lord. Okay! All right! But what are you admiring? The glory of the Lord which manifests itself as the shadow which falls on the wall? Almost never. The whole thing is a humbug. So, one day or other, when there is a cloud and the shadow disappears, you are going to regret it. Why not?

Why then are we taught to regard the whole world as God and all our actions as offerings unto the Lord? Because that again is a yajna - a part of yajna, a sample. Why do we indulge in that? Why do we do the puja? That half an hour's puja is definitely not going to take me to heaven. It is absurd. Ten minutes of headstand per day is not going to lead me to enlightenment. Absurd because of what happens during the twenty three hours and fifty minutes ... ! Unless the whole life is transformed into divine life, it is still useless. But, why do we indulge in this? Because we can see the result immediately and while seeing it, if we are alert all the time, it is possible at one stage to suddenly realise this truth: with me the world goes on, and without me it goes on better. That is because the me does not exist at all.

With the hope one day that the inner intelligence would arrive at this truth, all those little sacrifices, yoga practices, and techniques, were invented and given. You go on doing this, and one day you will surprise yourself by arriving at this truth: Ah! I thought there was a shadow here on the wall. It is not there. Even so I thought this is my wife, that is my son, that is my house. It is not so anymore. My God! Maybe the whole thing is imagination ...

VII

evam jnatva krtam purvair api mumuksubhiih kuru karmaiva tasmad tvam
purvaih purvataram krtam - (IV.15)

"Having known this, the ancient seekers after freedom also performed action;
therefore do thou also perform action as did the ancients in days of yore."

When thus there is no attachment and no motivation, then the ego-sense drops away and motivation also drops away. Does it mean that one would become inert, lazy? No. Because what holds back, what says, "I won't do", is also the same ego-sense. The ego sense says, "I am the doer" and when it pretends to understand the truth concerning life, it says, "I won't do". "All actions are tainted by motivation, so I will not act" - that is another action which is also tainted by the other motivation of restraint, which is as good or as bad as the other.

It is like somebody saying, "I want to do charity to go to heaven", and another man saying, "My God, doing charity with the motivation of going to heaven is bad. So I won't do any charity". That is equally bad. Can you drop this and can you drop that and let the money go to hell? That is the correct attitude. You do not go to heaven and the money also does not go to heaven, Why not? What is wrong with that?

The rishis and sages were very nice clever people. That is why they invented the "Havan" ceremony and called it "yajna". It has nothing whatsoever to do with yajna according to the Bhagavad Gita interpretation, because out of yajna, jnana must come, and pouring ghee into the fire does not seem to fan your jnana. There was a practice, a technique, a symbolism invented; you are able to pour your ghee and your "havan samagrih" into the fire. The best of grains were supposed to be offered; ghee was first class ghee. Why must I offer ghee? (I also thought that one of the reasons why the brahmins were supposed to offer yajna was to keep them slim. If you pour ghee in yourself, you grow fat. If you want to pour, pour it into the fire, you won't at least grow fat!)

The mind must some day ask, "I am pouring this ghee into the fire. What does this give me in return? Nothing. Ashes. Why is the ghee poured there?" It was because they thought that you might argue in this manner within yourself that they invented the "havan". The same ghee that is poured into this body makes the body fat but one day this body also is going to be cremated. What is happening to the ghee right now is going to happen to this ghee (body) a little later. Ghee goes inside the body, inside the fire. That which enters the fire just now is reduced to ashes right now. That which goes into this body is going to become ashes a little later. If nothing comes out of that fire, nothing comes out of this body either. Why should you not drop the

body-idea right now? What is the difference? Why should you cling to this body and feel "This is me, this is my body, I must make it live"? Can you drop this body-idea as you are dropping this bit of ghee into the fire? The havan technique is a very beautiful thing if one understands it.

Then they invented heaven. If you do havan every day, you will go to heaven. So the original idea is lost. Then they used something else. Whenever they went on a pilgrimage, especially to Haridwar, Rishikesh and so on, people usually dropped a coin - maybe ten cents or maybe one rupee - into the river. People have criticized that also. Why do you throw that into the river? Why don't you give it to some poor people? There also the idea seems to have been 'just as you are throwing the coin into the river, can your actions also be totally non-motivated?' When you are doing charity to a poor man, you think, "Poor thing, he will have at least something to eat tonight!" And there is a satisfaction within you; but when eventually you drop this body, do you have any motivation at all? Do you say, "I want to drop this body in order that a couple of wolves may eat it? No. You have no idea. The body is dropped, just like that. Can you also do that from moment to moment? Like dropping a rupee into the Ganges, like pouring ghee into the fire? Can you also drop everything and reduce every action to ashes?

You will do that only when you discover that the ego which motivates this action and which looks for a reward, does not exist. That pure action takes place not because "I" want, not because "I" do not want.

Kuru karmaiva tasmāt tvam purvaih purvataram krtam.

It is in this manner the ancient rishis worked. "You also work like that", says Krishna. Do not worry your poor head, "Must I do that? Must I do this?" Enquire into this shadow: "Does 'I' exist?" So the question is not "Must I do this or Must I not do this", but "Does this 'I' which says 'I do' exist?" If that is seen to be non-existent, your problem is solved. Then what is called 'God's will' will prevail.

What are the characteristics of a person who has reached this understanding?

yasya sarve sarnarambhah kamasamkalpavarjitah jnanagnidagdhakarmanam tam ahuh panditam budhah - (IV.19)

"He whose undertakings are all devoid of desires and selfish purposes, and whose actions have been burnt by the fire of knowledge - him the wise call a sage."

Actions will go on, actions will not stop. You - when it is said you, it is your business to find out who you are - will still be made to do something or other every moment, but if the ego-sense is not there, the shadow of the ego-sense

does not arise in your consciousness - again what your consciousness means is your problem, not the author's. You will have to find out. If that shadow of the ego-sense does not arise and yet the action, the movement of energy has to continue in that consciousness, the attention that is focused upon what appeared to be the ego-sense discovers that along with the disappearance of the ego-sense, desire and motivation have also gone. kamasamkal pavarjitah - There is no desire, there is no motivation, but action goes on. All the actions have been purified in the fire of self-knowledge. A person in whom this has taken place is called a 'pandita' - not a 'pandit'.

Shankaracharya has also defined it in that way in his Bhagavad Gita commentary: "atmajnana visaya panda" - 'panda' means self-knowledge. He who has this self-knowledge is a pandita.

tyaktva karnaphalasangam nityatrpto nirasrayah karmany abhipravrtto'pi
nat va kimcit karoti sah - (IV.20)

"Having abandoned attachment to the fruits of actions, ever content,
depending on nothing, he does not do anything though engaged in activity.

When the self-glue has gone - self-glue is what we call the ego-sense - I am doing this in order to gain that, you are forever satisfied. What is the cause of your disappointment? Your expectation, If there is no expectation there is no disappointment. Why is there this restlessness within oneself, this dissatisfaction? Because there is a craving for satisfaction of a particular kind, a particular type of satisfaction. If that specific desire for a specific satisfaction is not there, there is no dissatisfaction either; there is perpetual satisfaction, 'Nirasrayah' - one does not lean on anything at all because the "I" not there. It is when the 'I', the ego-sense, is there that it leans on something, it depends on something. It is the ego sense that says 'I am a brahmin'; it is the ego-sense that says 'I am a swami, I am a sannyasi'. If that ego-sense is not there at all, there is no depending, no identity, no identification-tag. Only when there is an identification, when there is an ego-sense, when here is 'I', you want to know to whom you belong. I am not a dog belonging to anything or anybody hereafter. You look at a tag and say, 'Oho! I am a sannyasin!' Is it a dog's collar? When the ego sense is lost, the dog does not need any collar any more, it belongs to nobody or everybody; and if there is no destination, you never get into a wrong road, you never lose your way! Only when there is a destination must you go a certain way. When you have no destination and go for a walk, all roads are the same. Not all roads lead to Rome - that usually means all roads lead to roaming - but all roads are all right for me, all roads are exactly the same. There is no destination. To one who has no destination, there is no destiny either. Even though he may appear in the eyes of the ignorant to be engaged in activity, he does nothing. Arjuna really asked a completely different question. Arjuna asked about Krishna's own previous incarnations, Krishna's own status as an avatara.

Krishna says, "I am not tainted by Karma, nor are you". I am not tainted by action, I do not do anything at all.

"Na mam karmani limpanti na me karmaphale sprha - (IV.14)

I am not tainted at all by all these actions because there is no glue, there is no ego-sense in me. And in the same way, if you can reach the state where there is no ego-sense in you, when the glue has been melted away by the fire of jnana, you will also be like me. You are also not bound!

nirasir yatacittatma tyaktasarvaparigrahah sariram kevalam karma kurvan na 'pnoti kilbisam - (IV.21)

"Without hope and with the mind and the self controlled, having abandoned all greed, doing mere bodily action, he incurs no sin."

It is a very beautiful verse: "nirasir yatacittama" completely and totally devoid of desire and hope. 'Asha' means both desire and hope. Please remember that you may not have a great longing or craving or desire, but you may hope something nice might happen, That is the bondage. Is one who is free from desire and hope and all motivations, an automaton? No, be careful. It is not difficult for one to cheat oneself because as the body continues to live, apparently as an individual, the movement of energy in that space of consciousness is also there. In an ignorant state, the movement of energy in this particular field of consciousness was regarded as an individual. Now there is a very clear understanding that "I" does not exist, and therefore "I am liberated"! My God! How does that come ... ?

The one that says, 'I am liberated' is also capable of falling into another error, saying, "I am So-and-So ... " "Yatacittatma" - be careful, be free of hope, of cravings and desires, but do not abandon attention, vigilance. As long as the body lasts and as long as there is this movement of energy in that particular field of consciousness, there is also the risk of the same ignorance arising again in a moment of heedlessness.

"tyaktasarvaparigrahah" - and once again this discipline is emphasized - be free, be free. Independence or freedom is not something to be achieved. That independence is something which is there constantly. "Sariram kevalam karma" - and when that attention or vigilance is vigilantly watchful to ensure that the ego-sense does not rise again, then the energy continues to move, the body continues to function without a confusion arising again.

yadrchalabhasamtusto dvandvatito vimatsarah - (IV.22)

"Content with what comes to him without effort, free from the pairs of opposites and envy .. "

This is a formula which occurs quite frequently in the Bhagavad Gita: "yadrchalabhasamtusto" - when one has reached this point where the body functions by its own built-in energy, freed of cravings and hope, that person is satisfied with whatever he gets effortlessly. But why do we call him a person? So far as he is concerned, he does not even exist as a personality, as an ego, as an individual, but we see him as such. This is a very famous formula in the Yoga Vasistha: Whatever you get effortlessly, enjoy, suffer, "pravaha pratitam". Behave as if you have slipped into a running stream. What do you do? Nothing. If there is something that comes and stops you, you stop; if it pushes you, you go. He does not complain, he does not explain. He does not say, "I am very happy today" which means "I was unhappy yesterday" or "I will be unhappy tomorrow". And one who has no goal at all, he does not attain anything, he does not achieve anything. There is no goal, there is no reaching the goal; there is no success in his case and there is no failure either. Success exists for him only in the sense that there is a successive passage or progression of time; success in the sense that one comes after the other. Successive moments come one after the other and therefore it is a question of perpetual success! You take an examination, that is done today, and the result comes tomorrow; that is success, that which succeeds. Tomorrow succeeds today, which means tomorrow is the successor of today. So tomorrow, whatever happens is success and if they say you have failed, that's success too because it comes after the exams. Whatever happens after a certain event is success.

"samah siddhav asidhau ca krtva'pi na nibadhyate" - (IV.22)
"even-minded in success and failure; though acting, he is not bound". '

One who has discovered the non-existence of the ego-sense as the actor in this drama here, behaves in this manner and therefore he is not bound at all.

VIII

The yoga of non-volitional action in which the entire life is treated as a sacrifice, and therefore the whole life, is sanctified, has been linked to "yathai dhamsi samiddho 'gnir bhasmasat kurute'rjuna" - (IV.37) - fire reducing a heap of firewood to ashes. When one understands that, it becomes clear that the truth of this teaching cannot be learned and then applied to our life. The teaching itself has to be contemplated, meditated upon, so that it is thoroughly assimilated, it becomes part of us, we become part of It or It becomes itself the living truth. It may be that even the expression in the Bible that the word was made flesh was used in that sense. I hear the words "yajna, "sacrifice", "divine life", "holiness"; this is like the fire which instantly sanctifies all aspects of my life. Here there is no distinction made at all between a religious action and a non-religious action, a religious life and a secular life, not even what is known as right action or wrong action. All actions are instantly consumed by this fire, sacrificed into this fire, made sacred by this fire,

jnanagnih sarvakarmani bhasmasat kurute tatha " - (IV.37)
So does the fire of knowledge reduce all actions to ashes.

It is not as though one does something and then goes and offers that action to God or whatever. It is so that it later becomes something holy or sacred or divine. The burning of the fire, the consuming of the firewood and the raising of the ashes are all simultaneous, not one after another. It is not as though you burn the firewood now and collect the ashes six years later. As the fire burns, the firewood is reduced to ashes. Therefore one cannot apply this teaching to one's life. The teaching has to be assimilated, the teaching has to be there and "I" or "me" has to be in the teaching. Not the teaching in me, but the 'I' in the teaching itself has to be made flesh. Then naturally whatever action springs is enlightened action. Therefore it is rather tricky to pretend to have understood all this teaching and then to go about saying "I want to apply this teaching to my life". That is where most of us find it difficult, that is where most of us fail.

Kayena manasa buddhya kevalair indriyair api yoginah karma kurvanti sangam tyaktva' tmasu ddhaye - (V.II)

"The Yogis, having abandoned attachment, perform actions only with the body, mind, intellect and even by the senses, for the purification of the self".

The yogis work as everybody else works. He does not even start wondering whether this action is righteous or non-righteous action. In the case of the Yogi, everything functions just as in your case. The action springs purely from the body, mind and intelligence. What is absent here is the 'I'. The 'I' is composed of likes and dislikes, 'kama' and 'krodha' - 'I love to do this' and 'I

hate to do that'. When the ego-sense is absent, the 'I' is absent, the 'me' is absent, the thing that leaves your consciousness or understanding is 'kama' and 'krodha', love and hate. That does not mean that action has stopped, nor does it mean that your mind is deadened, made insensitive, insensible. Even your senses function. That which says, "I do not want to do this because my tradition, my community, my religion, considers this to be unrighteous" is also within the sphere of likes and dislikes. So, virtue, when it springs from 'I love to do this' or 'I want to acquire a good name' or 'I want to go to heaven' is already limited. A limited virtue is vice. Can that be totally removed along with hate and love, and therefore the ego-sense? In order that we may not bluff ourselves, the knowledge of sacrifice, the knowledge of sacredness, the knowledge of sanctity, jnana, the word is acquired, received, assimilated. It is as if that word, that truth, has itself become this flesh. The 'I' is not there. Instead the truth has become this flesh, this body, this mind, this Buddhi. That is called spontaneous action.

When that word, when that truth acts through your body, mind and everything, the only word that is wrong here is 'your'; it is not even your body, it belongs to the earth. When that divinity expresses itself constantly through all that, that is spontaneous action, not unthinking action. Unthinking action is brute action, blind action. What is absent in spontaneous action is calculation, but it is not to be confused with blind instinctual action.

In spontaneous action the whole personality is illumined by wisdom. The whole life is consumed, is enlightened by this wisdom. The whole life is a sacrifice unto this wisdom, and so the word had become flesh. The yogis work with their body, mind, and intelligence - but without the ego-sense and the consequent "ragadvesha", likes and dislikes. This is what I saw in the life of my own Guru, Swami Sivananda. It is not possible, as I said earlier, to learn this and to apply it elsewhere; but it is possible for this truth to act, to live. One has to see that truth living in someone. Such a life was Swami Sivananda's. He never had to go and consult somebody, "Is this right or wrong?", because in the light of this truth, wrong action does not happen at all. No wrong action ever happens because wrong action springs from love and hate, likes and dislikes.

When these are not there, there are no wrong actions at all. The body, mind, and intelligence, being saturated with holiness, nothing unholy can ever spring from that life. This one has to see. If in Swami Sivananda's life, there were puzzling situations, we simply had to stand in wonderment. Then, as the events unfolded themselves, one could see: "My God, what a marvelous person He is!" Our admiration of him was afterwards, it came after the event. But He did not consider whether we were going to admire Him or not, and whether, therefore, to do or desist from doing. No. In His case, the action was spontaneous, not calculated, not motivated by loss or gain or fear or vanity.

Nothing. There was the truth and the truth was completely, totally assimilated; and the manifestation of the truth, the assimilation of the truth, the sacrifice of His life unto this truth and the resultant enlightenment were all together - not one after the other, not sequential. Therefore He was absolutely fearless and glorious.

One should study the lives of these great saints and not trying to imitate, nor to apply this truth. One should assimilate, one should enter one's whole life into this truth. Then by the Grace of God, that truth or holiness, that spirit of sacrifice itself becomes one's life.

IX

There is one concept in the fourth chapter of the Gita which needs a deeper understanding, probably with the help of the Yoga sutras. It is the concept of 'akarma'.

Karman hy api boddhavyam boddhavyam ca vikarmanah akarmanas ca boddhavyam gahana karmano gatih - (IV.17) .

"For verily the true nature of action should be known, as also of forbidden action and of inaction. Hard it is to understand the course of action", Krishna says in this chapter. You must know what is karma, what is to be done. You must know what is vikarma, what is forbidden. What to do and what not to do, you must know. But what is 'akarma' - non-action?

Krishna himself had said earlier on: Na hi kascit ksanam api jatu tisthaty akarmakrt - (III.5)

Not even for one single moment can a person remain doing nothing - or, you cannot do non-action.

So what 'must' you do? One cannot remain doing non-action because 'doing' means action. Whether you are doing something or refraining or restraining from doing something, both these are actions. One is a movement in one direction, the other a movement in another direction. In both there is a movement and in both there is a real movement in both directions. In the case, let's say of an ordinary action: "I am going somewhere", it means "I am leaving this place and going there". When you leave this place and go there, part of you is here, part of you is going. Your memory is still here, your thoughts are still here, your heart is still here. You are leaving something behind. You are attached to this place and you are stretching, pulling yourself away from here to there. This is action. "No, I won't do this" means the mind starts from there and comes here - which again means there is an attachment there, and you are pulling it from there to here. That's another action.

What apparently looks like restraint is another action. This is the usual karma we know. To one action we give the name karma or activity, the other action we give the name vikarma or forbidden activity. But there is a third thing called akarma. What is akarma? When you have already said that there is nothing called doing non-action, what is akarma then? Akarma also has to be understood, known, not done. You can never do it. All that you do is either action in one direction or action in another direction. '

Only if you understand the beauty of non-action is there total freedom from all actions, all activities - total surrender. How does total surrender happen? This total surrender has to happen, it is not something which you can do or not do, doing and not doing being two movements.

Movement, when it is related to personality, is an extension and this extension must cause tension. You can never extend yourself without causing tension. When you are sleeping alone, fast asleep, the personality is not extended at all, you even do not know that this body exists, and therefore there is no tension. The moment you wake up and realise that there is a body, there is already a tension. It is because of the tension that the body is able to live, otherwise it won't live. You practise savasana - relaxation. You are told "Relax!" "Relax!". It's not possible for the whole body to be relaxed, you will disintegrate. In order to let my arm relax, the relaxation of the biceps must be correctly matched with the tension of the triceps. If these two are exactly matched, there is relaxation.

Life being motion, movement, that movement cannot be arrested, cannot be canceled. Keeping that movement you must discover or understand what is called non-action. Is there non-action, or are you bound by this action, driven by this action? In order to understand that, it is necessary to understand the springs of action. Where does action spring from? Action does not proceed or spring from the body, but it springs from thought. Every action springs from the mind, the thought.

In order to understand action as well as non action, we will forget this vikarma for the present. What is action? What is non-action? If you understand the springs of action, it is possible for you to understand how this action itself can be viewed as non-action, can be realised to be non-action. And for that we go to the Yoga sutras. It is described along with dharana, dhyana, samadhi. Now you must enter into the spirit of it. You sit down to meditate or concentrate or practise Yoga. The first thing you notice is that there is restless movement of thought. Restless movement means that there is no order even in that movement, it does not seem to move in one direction. How do you restrain this restless movement of thought? Not by introducing an other thing called restraint.

Let yourself go, no restraint at all. Let the mind think of all that it likes to think. Then you tell yourself, "No! I am not going to think of anything". But how does one deal with distraction without introducing another element called restraint which therefore makes it worse? You have got ten distractive thoughts and you introduce an eleventh called restraint, and immediately the word restraint is used - you are going to think of a swami or a Yogi or somebody standing on his head, or someone sitting in transcendental meditation. You have restrained nothing. You have introduced other thoughts into it - a yogi sitting in meditation. etc. So the mind runs for five seconds here, five seconds there, and five seconds to the thought of restraint which is associated inevitably with the person called a yogi or a swami or whatever it is. This does not work.

Patanjali suggests a very simple method. It is simplicity itself if it is properly understood and approached. He asks you to try to see in this a procession of thoughts. The mind does not leave you and go away, the mind creates images, thought after thought within itself. When you are sitting with closed eyes on the terrace, trying to meditate, the mind does not go to your house or go to the market, but it creates all those things within itself. Sitting here, suddenly you think of your child. The child has been created in the mind. Right. That's quite simple. A few seconds or minutes later, that stops and something else comes, another picture takes over. That is, the mind creates another thought form. Patanjali says: "Can you become aware of the exact moment when one of these images subsides and the next one arises?" This thing is happening within you, so it must be possible for you, just out of curiosity, to recognize it. Now the mind has destroyed the house thought, and the temple thought comes, the temple thought has subsided, the next one, the cinema thought, has arisen. Can you become like this, aware of the moment of one thought coming to an end and the next one coming up? If you can become intensely aware of that - the coming to an end of one thought and the arising of another, you have discovered a fantastic truth. That is, if you can live in the middle, when the previous thought has set and the next has not arisen, if you can live in that moment which is called sandhya, then there is restraint.

Everybody is worried about the sandhya meditation at dawn. and dusk, etc ... There seems to be this tremendous passion to exalt or glorify the meeting point. Here is another meeting point, the meeting point where one thought subsided and the other arises. If you know that meeting point and sustain the concentration there, you know how to restrain a thought. There is still movement. When you are thinking, the movement of thought is there; when you are restraining, you are pulling the whole thing back. When you are being distracted, there is an externalized movement of energy, and when you restrain, there is an inward pulling of the same energy. There is still some movement. One who practices this is able to control his mind, the control being another movement, another suppression.

"nirodha parinamah tasya prasantavahita samskarat" - Patanjali Yoga Sutras (III.9-10) "When this becomes habitual, the restraint becomes habitual." Restraint means you are becoming aware of the fact that your mind is distracted. If your mind is never distracted, there is no need for restraint. A dead body does not do pranayama because the breath is not moving. When the breath is not moving, where is the need to restrain it, where is the need to control it, where is the need to stop it? The very fact that you are practicing restraint shows that there is a movement of prana in one direction and therefore there is a need for pulling it back. When there is habitual restraint, it becomes easy to control the mind. But it is still not yoga, not akarma, because one moment the mental energy moves in one direction, you are

pulling it back, it collapses; and a few minutes later it moves in yet another direction, you pull it back, it collapses. So though you have learned not to be carried away by those distractions, there is still this tension.

From there on there is one more step, samadhi parinamah, where the attention does not flow in various directions, but in only one direction - inwards. You are no longer interested in thinking of your house, of your children, of your family, of your work or something else, but you are thinking about thought itself - and there is a constant flow. There is still a flow; it is in a single direction and therefore there is not too much of a waste of energy. When the mind flows in a single direction, psychic energy is not wasted, but conserved. That is what is called "brahmacharya" - moving straight in one direction - but it is still non action because there is the movement within, and movement within suggests that you are pulling it from there to here.

I am looking at her and naturally there is a thought that this is a young lady. Then you pull the whole movement into yourself. You do not want to look at her, you want to look at your own mind. You do not want to look outside, you want to look within. There is still a movement, a mental action, and there is still, however slight it may be, an effort. Therefore all restraint, any restraint, means tension. I am not suggesting that therefore non-restraint is good. No. You must learn to restrain yourself and make restraint habitual. There is peace of mind when the restraint has become habitual. When there are too many distractions and therefore too many restraints in all directions, there is a tremendous loss of energy. When the restraint is only in one direction, which means the mind is distracted in only one direction, and the restraint is therefore also directed towards that direction and distraction, there is not much loss of energy, and meditation becomes easy and simple "samadhi parinamah". Good. But even there, there is meditation, even there, there is a little effort. It is not a great waste of energy but still there is some action. You have to struggle again.

Therefore even this "samadhi parinamah" itself is considered one more step. Beyond that is what is called "ekagrata parinamah" - complete and total surrender. How does that happen? When the two forces are absolutely equal, the pull in one direction and the restraint in the other direction are absolutely equally balanced, then there is non-action. It is not immobility. It is absolutely balanced, and therefore there is a sense of weightlessness - as in aerospace research. When the gravity is exactly matched by the velocity - pushing it out - there is absolute weightlessness. It does not mean that that object has lost its solidity or substantiality, it is still there, it is still a heavy substance. Your mind begins to question, "What is weight?" The body is heavy only because you are defying that force of gravity. This is the movement and there is another type of movement. Both these are movements. But there is another force called the udana, prana which pulls you up, and if that force is

exactly equal to the force of gravity, then your body becomes absolutely and totally weightless. In the movement of that body there is no loss of effort, no loss of energy. That is called non-action. When there is tension and the pull is exactly the same in both directions, when every bit of it is pulled in both directions, there is total non-action. That is the middle path.

The middle path is where the center has been found. The center is not an arbitrary thing called here and there or God or heaven or whatever it is. If you pull an elastic band you will realise where the center is. The center is everywhere. The center is where the two impulses meet, one pulling it towards the East and the other pulling it towards the West. Where does the pull towards the East and the pull towards the West begin? Everywhere. Right from there, right from here. And because the pull in both directions is exactly the same, there is total non-action. Not a single molecule is distracted, it is steady. When the mind has achieved that, when the mind is not distracted at all - not because there is no distraction, but because there the counter force is exactly the same - then there is non-action.

This non-action does not mean that you do not do anything. "Do not do" is a doing, a pulling back that means the force of restraint is greater than the force of movement, the force of action is greater. It is not good if we go on doing what we like and let the force of action be greater than the force of restraint. When the force of action and the force of restraint are absolutely equal, then there is non-action in that action - *akarmani ca karma yah sa budhiman manusyesu (IV.18)* - All actions take place completely, totally weightless, because there is no doership - "I do this", and there is no feeling 'I am restraining myself from doing this'. There is neither a doing nor a restraint. That is what is called meditation.

One who has reached that state - '*ekagrata parinamah*' - is forever rooted in meditation and established in samadhi. He does what has to be done and not what he likes. He does what has to be done, but not as a soulless being. We are often entertained by the simile of the dry leaf. If you watch a dry leaf fall, it does not fall as though it does not have weight at all. It has got a weight, and in a manner of speaking, it offers resistance to the wind. That is why it moves. When the dry leaf is falling, even that dry leaf has got its weight; it is being pulled down but it is not inwardly motivated in its movement. It does not say, "Well, I do not want to fall here, I would like to fall there". If you feel that, then you become tense. You want that and you are being driven there. But even the dry leaf, as it floats in air, has got its own weight. Its weight and the momentum of the wind are equal to each other, and therefore it is able to float down to its destination or wherever it has to fall.

Can the mind be trained in such a manner that in it the force of action and the force of restraint are completely balanced so that one does not take

precedence over the other. Then the mind is calm. That is the middle path. And that is what is called non-action in the Gita. It is probably not easy to explain or even to understand it. One has to experience it by going through these three stages. (1) watch the distractions and in the course of watching the distractions, watch for the sandhya, for the junction. One thought has subsided, the next one is coming up. What was there in between? (2) Even the curious questioning "what is there in between" will enable you to experience a span of suspension for just a few seconds till the next one rises; till the next distraction distracts you. That itself becomes a restraint. When this restraint becomes habitual, it is useful. You are still distracted but there is an inner experience of peace. (3) When, however, the distractions are not haphazard but there is a single distraction and therefore a single restraint, there is 'samadhi'. You are completely absorbed, immersed in that one distraction and one restraint. As you go on watching this play, when the two forces of thought and restraint become absolutely balanced, there is a cessation of effort, and from there on life moves in a single direction. Single direction does not mean that you keep going in the way you are going, but you go without wishing it were otherwise. The dry leaf wafted by the wind does not think "I wish I could still hang on the tree! All right, I surrender myself!" Oh no! It does not say so. "All right, I surrender myself", means you would have loved to do something else but you have no power to do that, so you will let yourself go. That is also a haphazard movement or a movement in which the restraint and the thought are not absolutely balanced. In samadhi there is no regret, there is no excitement, there is no craving. Such a life is a life of non-action.

Om Tat Sat