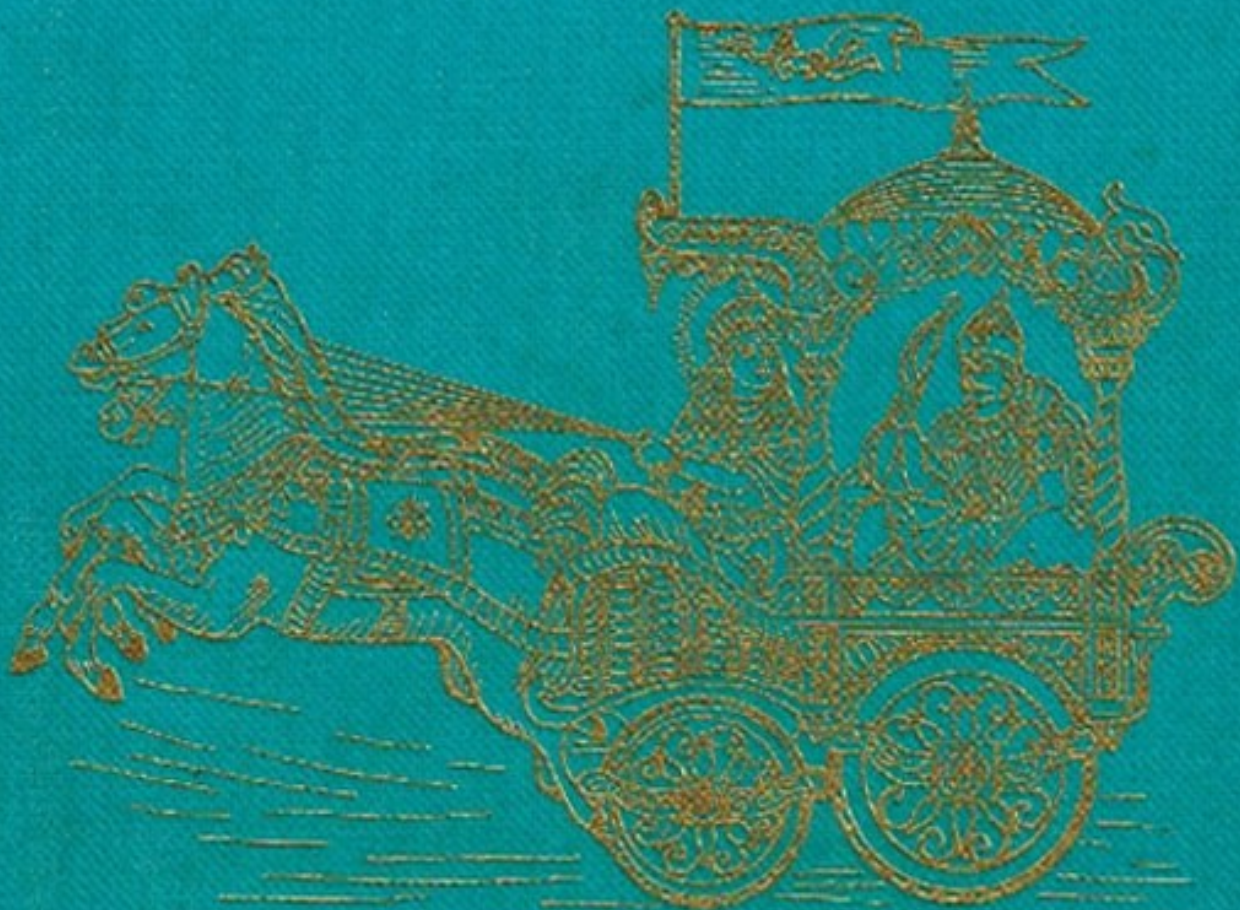
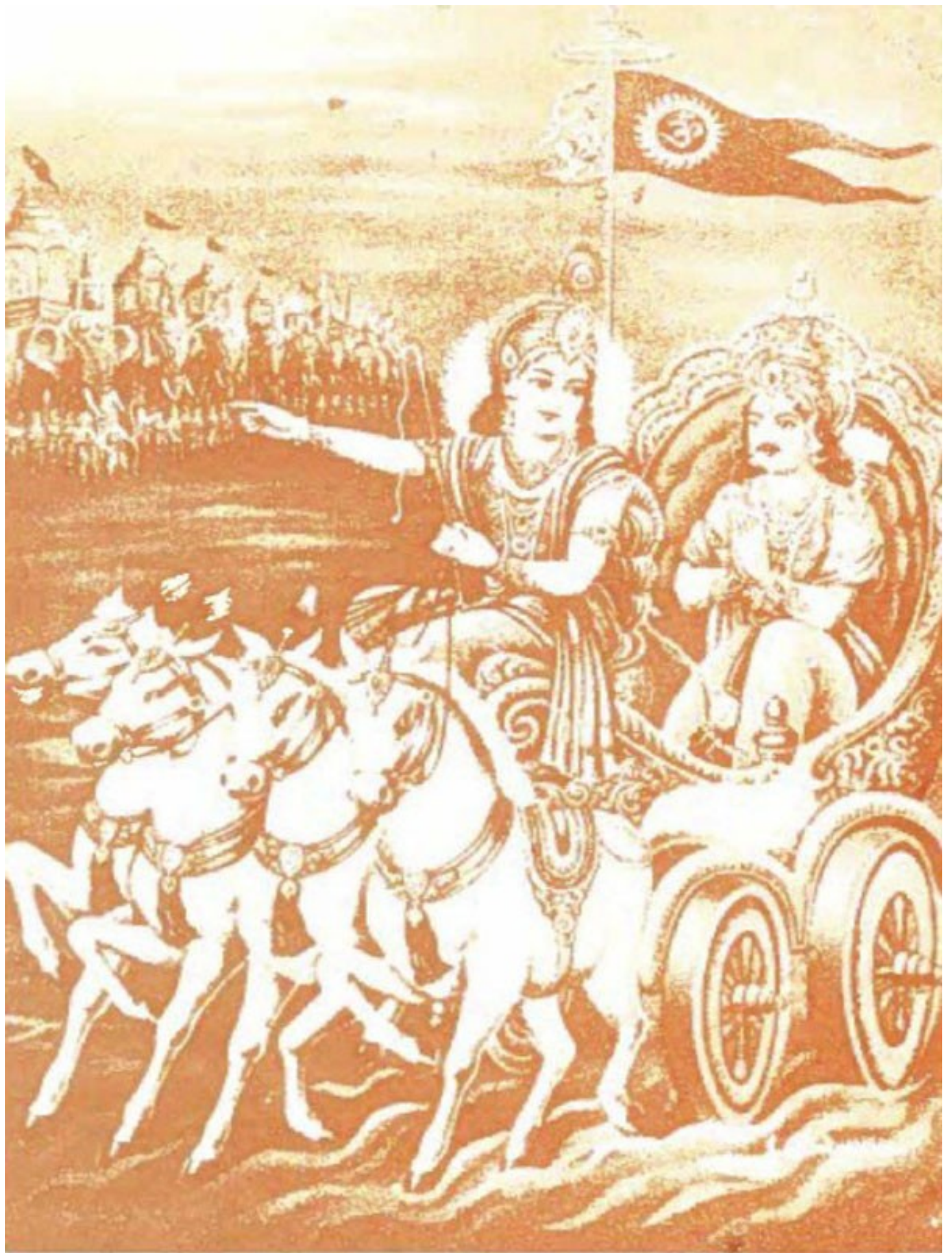
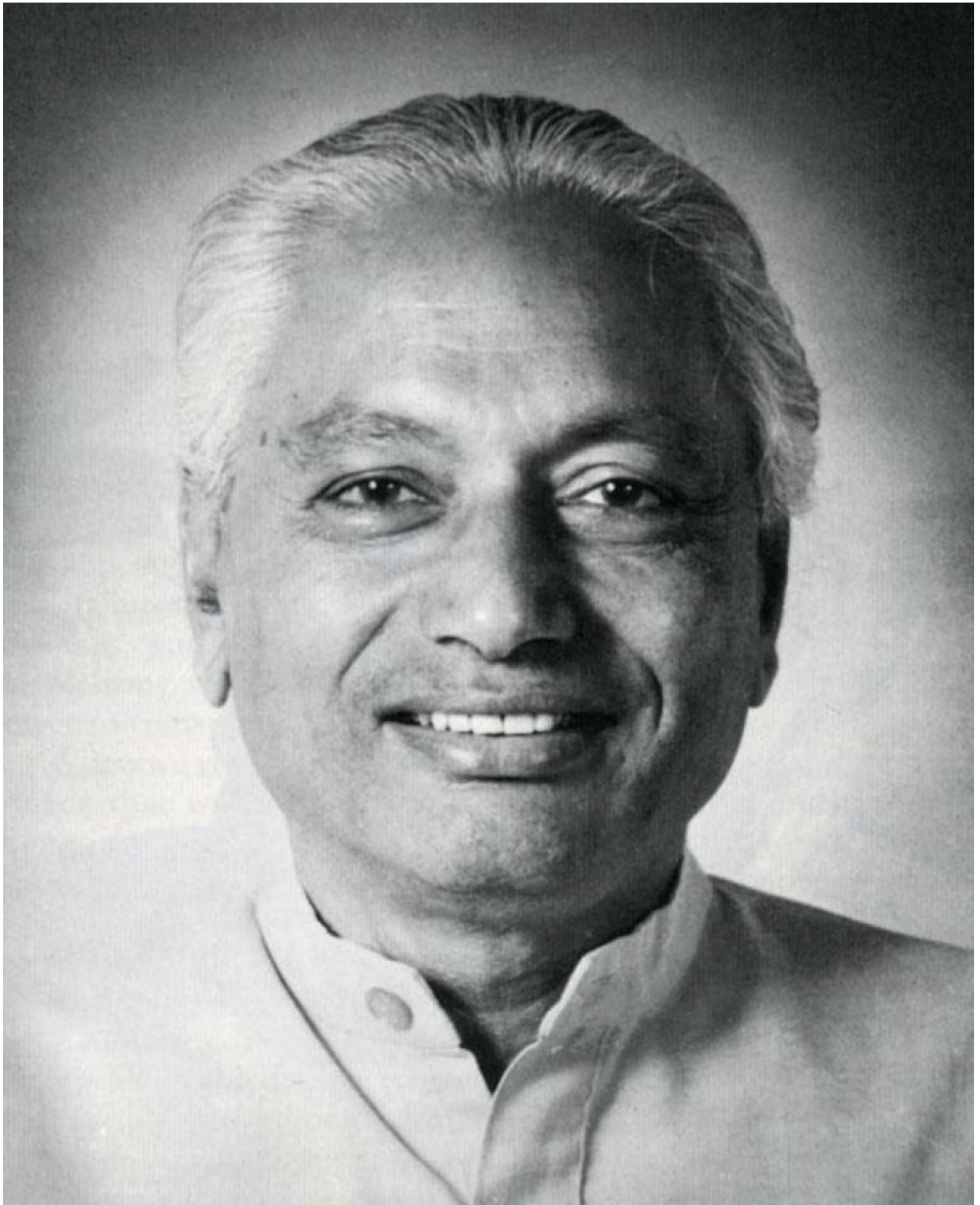


THE SONG OF GOD

(Bhagavad Gita)







The Song of God

Swami Venkatesananda

Chiltern Yoga Trust, Cape Province, South Africa,
4th edition, revised, enlarged, 1984
ISBN: 062007583

Introduction

- 1 - Visada Yoga - The Yoga of the Distress of Arjuna
- 2 - Sankhya Yoga - The Yoga of Self-Knowledge
- 3 - Karma Yoga - The Yoga of Action
- 4 - Karma Jnana Sanyasa Yoga - The Yoga of Wisdom
- 5 - Karma Vairagya Sanyasa Yoga - The Yoga of Renunciation and Action
- 6 - Abhyasa Dhyana Yoga - The Yoga of Meditation
- 7 - Jnana Vijnana Yoga - The Yoga of Wisdom and Realisation
- 8 - Aksara Brahma Yoga - The Yoga of the Imperishable Brahman
- 9 - Raja Vidya Yoga - The Yoga of the Kingly Science and Sovereign Secret
- 10 - Vibhuti Vistara Yoga - The Yoga of the Divine Glories
- 11 - Visvarupa Darsana Yoga - The Yoga of the Vision of the Cosmic Form
- 12 - Bhakti Yoga - The Yoga of Devotion
- 13 - Ksetra Vibhaga Yoga - The Yoga of Knowledge of the Field and the Knower of the Field
- 14 - Gunatraya Vibhaga Yoga - The Yoga of the Three Gunas
- 15 - Purusottama Vibhaga Yoga - The Yoga of the Supreme Spirit
- 16 - Daivasura Vibhaga Yoga - The Yoga of the Divine and Demonic Gunas
- 17 - Sraddhatraya Vibhaga Yoga - The Yoga of Division of Threefold Faith
- 18 - Moksa Sanyasa Yoga - The Yoga of Liberation and Renunciation

Worshipful offering at the Feet of Gurudev Swami Sivananda

It has always bordered to the miraculous. Gurudev blessed Me and sent Me overseas in 1961, and I have been asked to speak, speak, and speak to all sorts of audiences in several countries. Before I stand up on the platform, and after I get down from it, I have always been sceptical of My worthiness to be there. But I have always experienced an inner transformation the moment I offer the prayer to the Guru - Gurudev took over. It was He who spoke, and I have always been the first listener.

I am nothing. It is Gurudev who has carried on His own mission - that it has been through this particular instrument is a blessing upon it. In the proces, the instrument itself has been chastened, purified, and in spite of its unworthiness, glorified. But, no one should ever forget that all glory, all praise, should be offered to Gurudev.

May this light shine forever in our hearts.

Swami Venkatesananda

Preface

The Bhagavad Gita - Song of God - has captured the imagination of thinking men and women all over the world. It has been translated into many languages and has among its devotees people belonging to many religions and nationalities.

The uniqueness of the gospel of the Bhagavad Gita lies in the fact that its follower need not belong to a particular formal religion or sect. "Each man devoted to his own duty attains perfection", declared the Prophet of Cosmic Vision, Sri Krishna, who continues to explain succinctly how this perfection is attained. "He from whom all beings have evolved and by whom all this is pervaded - worshipping Him with due performance of his own duty, man attains perfection."

Here, then, is an unique gospel which does not tamper with your station in life, distract you from your duties, disturb your faith, nor lure you away from the path you have chosen, but illumines your path and strengthens your faith. Its proclaimed object is to free you from worry and anxiety, to protect you from yourself - your own lower self, full of unruly desires and unjustified prejudices, deluded by ageless ignorance and therefore haunted by meaningless fears of imaginary calamities.

Is it possible in the modern world to live a life of peace and joy, free from tension and anxiety, fear and frustration? Yes! The Bhagavad Gita illumines that possibility.

Here is the story of the Mahabharata in brief. Two brothers, Dhritarashtra who was born blind, and Pandu who was born anemic, had a hundred wicked sons and five pious respectively. The wicked sons of the former were keen to 'take over' their cousins' share of the kingdom, and tried by all means, fair and foul, to achieve their ambition. God's Grace, however, rescued the sons of Pandu from peril to peril. The wicked hundred contrived to banish the pious five from the kingdom for a period of thirteen years, and when they returned after successfully completing the period of exile, the wicked ones flatly refused to give them their rightful share of the kingdom.

Sri Krishna, who was a friend of the pious five, made a last minute attempts to avert the armed conflict, which however became inevitable. The impartial Lord Krishna offered to help both the parties; they could choose between Himself and His vast army. The wicked hundred chose the army, and the pious five were happy that they could have Him on their side. Sri Krishna served as the charioteer of one of the pious five, Arjuna.

Dhritarashtra, the blind King, was complacent that his sons' superior might, the numerical superiority of their army, and the presence on their side of Bhishma of unparalleled valour - who could not be slain against his own will - would ensure their victory. However, on the tenth day of the battle, Bhishma fell. The blind King's faith was shaken, and he called upon his intuitive-sighted Minister, Sanjaya, to narrate the events of the war to him.

Now read on ...

Prayer at Begin - GITA DHYANAM

Om parthaya pratibodhitam bhagavata narayanena svayam vyasena grathitam purana munina madhye mahabharatam advaita 'mrta varsinim bhagavatim astadasa 'dhyayinim amba tvam anusamdadhmi bhagavad gite bhava dvesinim

1. Om. O Bhagavad Gita, with which Partha (Arjuna) was illumined by lord Narayana himself and which was composed within the Mahabharata by the ancient sage Vyasa, O divine mother, the destroyer of rebirth, the showerer of the nectar of advaita (oneness) and consisting of eighteen chapters - upon thee, O Bhagavad Gita, O affectionate mother, I meditate.

namo 'stu to vyasa visala buddhe phulla 'ravinda 'yata patra netra yena tvaya bhārata taila purnah prajvalito jnanamayah pradipah

2. Salutations unto thee, O Vyasa of broad intellect, and with eyes like the petals of full-blown lotuses, by whom the lamp of knowledge, filled with the oil of the Mahabharata has been lighted.

prapanna parijataya totravetra 'ka panaye jnana mudraya krsnaya gita 'mrta duhe namah

3. Salutations to Krsna, the parijata or the bestower of all desires for those who take refuge in him, the holder of the whip in one hand, the holder of the symbol of knowledge and the milker of the nectar of the Bhagavad Gita.

sarvo 'panisado gavo dogdha gopala nandanah partho vatsah sudhir bhokta dugdham gita 'mrtam mahat

4. All the upanisad are the cows, the milker is Krsna the cowherd boy, Arjuna is the calf, men of purified intellect are the drinkers, the milk is the great nectar of the Gita.

vasudeva sutam devam kamsa canura mardanam devaki parama 'nandam krsnam vande jagad gurum

5. I salute lord Krsna, the world teacher, the son of Vasudeva, the destroyer of Kamsa and Canura, the supreme bliss of Devaki.

bhisma drona tata jayadratha jala gandhara nilotpala salya grahavati krpena vahani karnena velakula asvatthama vikarna ghora makara duryodhana 'vartini so 'ttirna khalu pandavai rana nadi kaivartakah kesavah

6. With Krsna as the helmsman, verily, was crossed by the Pandava the battle-river whose banks were Bhisma and Drona, whose water was Jayadratha, whose blue lotus was the king of Gandhara, whose crocodile was Salya, whose current was Krpa, whose billow was Karna, whose terrible alligators were Asvatthama and Vikarna, whose whirlpool was Duryodhana.

parasarya vacah sarojam amalam gitartha gandhotkatam nanakhya 'nakakesaram hari katha sambodhana 'bodhitam loke sajjana satpadair ahah ahah pepiyamanam muda bhuyad bhārata pankajam kali mala pradhvamsi nah sreyase

7. May this lotus of the Mahabharata, born in the lake of the words of Vyasa, sweet with the fragrance of the meaning of the Gita, with many stories as its stamens, fully opened by the discourses on Hari, the destroyer of the sins of Kali, and drunk joyously by the bees of good men in the world, day by day, become the bestower of good on us.

mukam karoti vacalam pangum langhayate girim yat krpa tam aham vande parama 'nanda madhavam

8. I salute that Krsna, the source of supreme bliss, whose grace makes the dumb eloquent and the cripple cross mountains.

yam brahma varune 'ndra rudra marutah stuvanti divyaih stavair vedaih sanga pada kramo 'panisadair gayanti yam samagah dhyana 'vasthita tad gatena manasa pasyanti yam yogino yasya 'ntam na viduh sura 'sura gana devaya tasmai namah

9. Salutations to that God whom Brahma, Varuna, Indra, Rudra and the Marut praise with divine hymns, of whom the Sama-chanters sing by the veda and their anga, in the pada and krama methods, and by the upanisad, whom the yogi see with their minds absorbed in him through meditation, and whose end the hosts of the deva and asura know not.

Om Namah Bhagavate Vasudevaya

Om Namah Sivanandaya

Om Namah Venkatesaya

Om Namah Shivaya

Om Tat Sat

Prayer at End - GITA MAHATMYA

gri ganesaya namah! sri gopala krsnaya namah! dhara 'vaca bhagavan paramesana bhaktir
avyabharini prarabdham bhujyamanasya katham bhavati he prabho

1. The Earth said: O Lord! The supreme one! How can unflinching devotion arise in him who is immersed in his worldly life, O Lord?

sri visnur uvaca prarabdham bhujyamano hi gita 'bhyasa ratah sada sa muktah sa sukhi loke
karmana no 'palipyate

2. Lord Visnu said: Though engaged in the performance of worldly duties, one who is regular in the study of the Gita, becomes free. He is the happy man in this world. He is not bound by karma.

maha papadi papani gita dhyanam karoti cet kvacit sparsam na kurvanti nalini dalam ambuvat

3. Just as the water stains not the lotus leaf, even so, sins do not taint him who is regular in the recitation of the Gita.

gitayah pustakam yatra yatra pathah pravartate tatra sarvani tirthani prayaga 'dini tatra vai

4. All the sacred places of pilgrimage like Prayaga, etc., dwell in that place where the book, the Gita, is kept and where the Gita is read.

sarve devas ca rsayo yoginah pannagas ca ye gopala gopika va 'pi narado 'ddhava parsadaih

5. All the gods, sages, yogi, divine serpents, gopala, gopika (friends and devotees of lord Krsna), Narada, Uddhava and others (dwell there).

sahayo jayate sikhram yatra gita pravartate yatra gita vicaras ca pathanam pathanat srutam
tatra 'ham niscitam prthvi nivasami sadai 'va hi

6. Help comes quickly where the Gita is recited and, O Earth, I dwell at all times where the Gita is read, heard, taught and contemplated upon.

gita 'sraye 'ham tisthami gita me co 'ttamam grham gita jnanam upasritya trimllokan palayamy
aham

7. I take refuge in the Gita and the Gita is my best abode. I protect the three worlds with the knowledge of the Gita.

gita me parama vidya brahma rupa na samsayah ardha matra 'ksara nitya sva 'nirvacya
padatmika

8. The Gita is my highest science, which is doubtless of the form of Brahman, the eternal, the ardhamatra (of the sacred monosyllable om), the ineffable splendour of the self.

cidanandena krsnena prokta sva mukhato 'rjunam veda tray! parananda tattva 'rtha jnana
samyuta

9. It was spoken by the blessed Krsna, the all-knowing, through his own mouth to Arjuna. It contains the essence of the three veda, knowledge of the reality. It is full of supreme bliss.

yo 'stadasa japen nityam nara niscala manasah jnana siddhim sa labhate tato yati param padam

10. He who recites the eighteen chapters of the Gita daily, with a pure, unshaken mind, attains perfection in knowledge, and reaches the highest state or supreme goal.

pathe 'samarthah sampurne tato 'rdham patham acaret tada go danajam punyam labhate na
'tra samsayah

11. If a complete reading is not possible, even if only half of it is read, he attains the benefit of giving a cow as a gift. There is no doubt about this.

tribhagam pathamanas to ganga snana phalam labhet sadamsam japamanas to soma yaga
phalam labhet

12. He who recites one-third part of it achieves the merit of a bath in the sacred Ganga, and he who recites one-sixth of it attains the merit of performing a soma ritual.

eka 'dhyayam to yo nityam pathate bhakti samyutah rudra lokam avapnoti gano bhutva vasesc
ciram

13. That person who reads one chapter with great devotion attains to the world of Rudra and, having become an attendant of lord Siva, lives there for many years.

adhyayam sloka padam va nityam yah pathate narah sa yati naratam yavan manvantaram
vasundhare

14. If one reads a quarter of a chapter or even part of a verse daily, he, O Earth, retains a human body till the end of a world-cycle.

gitayah sloka dasakam sapta panca catustayam dvau trin ekaih tad ardhm va slokanam yah
pathen narah candra lokam avapnotii varsanam ayutam dhruvam gita patha samayukto
mrtomanusatam vrajet

15,16. He who repeats ten, seven, five, four, three, two verses or even one or half a verse, attains the region of the moon and lives there for ten thousand years. Accustomed to the daily study of the Gita, the dying man comes back to life again as a human being.

gita 'bhyasam punah krtva labhate muktim uttamam gite 'ty uccara samyukto mriyamano
gatim labhet

17. By repeated study of the Gita he attains liberation. Uttering 'Gita' at the time of death, one attains liberation.

gita 'rtha sravana 'sakto maha papa yuto 'pi va vaikuntham samavapnoti visnuna saha modate

18. Though full of sins, one who is ever intent on hearing the meaning of the Gita, goes to the kingdom of God and rejoices with lord Visnu.

gita 'rtham dhyayate nityam krtva karmani bhurisah jivanmuktah sa vijneyo deha 'nte paramam
padam

19. He who meditates on the meaning of the Gita, having performed a lot of good actions, attains the supreme goal after death. Such a man should be known as a jivanmukta (sage liberated while living).

gitam asritya bahavo bhubhujo janaka 'dayah nirdhuta kalmasa loke gita yatah paratn padam

20. In this world, taking refuge in the Gita, many kings like Janaka and others have reached the highest state or goal, purified of all sins.

gitayah pathanam krtva mahatmyam naiva yah pathet vrtha patho bhavet tasya srama eva by
udahrtah

21. He who fails to read this Glory of the Gita after having read the Gita, loses the benefit thereby, and the effort alone remains.

etan mahatmya sahyuktam gita 'bhyasam karoti yah sa tat phalam avapnoti durlabharn gatim apnuyat

22. One who studies the Gita, together with this Glory of the Gita, attains the fruits mentioned above and reaches the state which is otherwise very difficult to attain.

suta uvaca mahatmyam etad gitaya maya proktam sanatanaatn gitante ca pathed yas to yad uktam tat phalarnlabhet

23. Suta said: This greatness or Glory of the Gita which is eternal, as narrated by me, should be read at the end of the study of the Gita and the fruits mentioned therein will be obtained.

iti sri varaha purane gri gita mahatmyam sampurnam

Thus ends the Glory of the Gita contained in the Varaha purana.

Om Namah Bhagavate Vasudevaya

Om Namah Sivanandaya

Om Namah Venkatesaya

Om Namah Shivaya

Om Tat Sat

Conclusion

This is a glimpse of the gospel of Lord Krishna - simple, direct, yet profound. It is not one of pessimism or escapism, but is full of robust common sense. And if it sometimes seems to be puzzling, it is because common sense is so uncommon in the complex world of today.

You may be quite certain that one direction is east and the opposite direction west. But, if you move a little, you suddenly discover that east and west meet you! You are the divider, and from another point of view, you are the meeting point. In fact, it is the mind that creates all this duality which multiplies into endless diversity, creating conflicts and confusion all the way through.

There is only oneness and cosmic unity. There just cannot be two infinities or two omnipresences. The origin of the perception of diversity is enshrouded in mystery - maya. But Krishna boldly assumes responsibility for even that! "I am seated in the hearts of all; from me are memory, knowledge, as well as their absence," says He.

The manifest universe is the body of God, and the supreme spirit is the indweller. Even this distinction was made to suit human analogy and to satisfy the duality-ridden intellect. We make an arbitrary distinction between our body and our spirit which seems to be justified because at one stage - death - the spirit leaves the body. This, obviously, does not apply to the Lord and His Body, for He is eternal and infinite, and does not leave His Body.

What a sublime vision! What a world-uniting doctrine! What a fountain of love! What a soft blow to shatter all distinctions and differences! What a divine cord of love to unite all mankind in oneness - divinity!

Swami Venkatesananda

Om Tat Sat

At this stage in the Gita we are on the threshold a revolutionary concept of religion. In the popular mind, throughout the ages, religion means church-going, hymn singing, cloister-life, fasting and feasting. World and work are considered somehow opposed to reality and religion. Krsna delivers a stunning blow to this misconception. He would prefer service without religion to religion without service!

In the life of the former there is a void, a vacuum, which will be filled sooner or later with God, whereas the latter is full ... of nonsense ... and even the corrective influence to restore the proper balance between religion and service, may have to await a complete degeneration of the pseudo-religion. Only God can restore this balance - and he does, by periodically manifesting himself on this earth-plane. Two such manifestations rule the hearts of humanity today - Krsna and Christ. Are they two?

Do not even the names and similar? And their lives ... and their teachings ... ?

Christ was born in the manger; Krsna in a prison-cell.

Both were whisked away to a far-off place immediately after nativity.

The former, for fear of Herod; the latter, for fear of Kamsa - both of whom were the rulers of the country.

Both of them sought early in their lives to effect far-reaching reform in the modes of worship.

Both of them had control over the elements.

Both of them exalted the power of faith - Christ said faith could move mountains, and Krsna demonstrated it by lifting a mountain with his little finger.

Both of them taught wonderful ethical and spiritual lessons. The Sermon on the Mount and the Bhagavad Gita contain the same gems of truth.

Both of them were glorified by some as God and ridiculed by others.

Both of them were killed.

Both of them blessed their tormentors.

Christ forgave them; Krsna insisted that his killer should go to heaven first.

Even the legend which says that lord Krsna married over sixteen thousand wives might mean no more than this: every Christian nun is considered the bride of Christ, and it is possible that even at the time the biography was written, there were over sixteen thousand of them.

Are they two or one? Historians charm us with well-reasoned arguments to prove Christ lived two thousand years ago, and Krsna (if at all) nearly four

or five thousand years ago. In prehistoric calculations, thousands of years are but hours in contemporary history! Could it be that Christ lived a little earlier and Krsna a little later than at present believed? Could it be then, that we are talking about the same person, some calling him Christ and others, Krsna?

There is a 'missing period' in the life of Christ. Some are endeavouring to fill it by surmising that he must have travelled east. It is just as possible that some of the stories connected with Krsna's early life could also have been 'fillers' to link up the missing period.

Any guess is hazardous. But if God reveals the truth, may it not unite us all - Hindu and Christian - in the realisation that we are all truly brothers and sisters, worshipping the same divinity?

3 - Karma Yoga **The Yoga of Action**

The Subtle Middle Path

III:1 - Arjuna said : If you think intelligence is better than fruitive work, O Krishna, why then urge me to engage in this terrible action?

III:2 - With these ambiguous words you confuse my mind; therefore, tell me that one way for certain by which I may attain bliss.

The pendulum swings from one extreme to the other - that is its nature.

The subtle middle path where the opposites blend is elusive and the gross mind refuses even to believe in it or see it. We all know what is activity. We all know what is knowledge. With us knowledge is in the mind and action flows from the limbs. We do not even feel it necessary to find their point of contact, or the subtle middle path where God meets man, where the divine meets and blends into life, forming divine life. In it there is no contradiction between knowledge and action. On the contrary, knowledge is action.

In the absence of true understanding, confusion is quite natural; it is inherent in the very nature of the mind, but the vain ego always tries to blame it on others! Krsna did not confuse Arjuna; the confusion is in Arjuna's own mind. This is extremely difficult to see in the initial stages of our spiritual progress.

The disciple (Arjuna) is yet keen on attaining sreyas (the ultimate good).

Whenever we are on the horns of a dilemma (even a real one), we should look for the path that will lead us to our ultimate spiritual good, the sreya-marga. Much of our misery is due to the fact that very often we are satisfied with superficial solutions which yield immediate satisfaction, though it may be temporary and unsatisfactory in the long run. The sincere spiritual aspirant has his eyes riveted on sreyas.

Knowledge And Action

III:3 - The Blessed Lord said : In this world, O sinless one, there is a twofold path, as I said before : the path of knowledge of the sankhyas, and the path of action of the yogis!

This is a truly Krsna-like statement!

There are not two paths, the path is a synthesis of the two, it is twofold! The path to God-realisation is twofold; in fact the statement need not be restricted to refer to the path to God-realisation! In this world, the path taken by anyone and everyone is of this twofold nature! Krsna does not exclude anyone in this world.

The sankhya or the 'philosophers' speculated about the reality. The yogi were busy living a life of service and rituals. The former did not interest themselves in living. The latter did not ensure that the service or the ritual had the light of knowledge to illumine and enliven the spirit in it. The two drifted apart; the philosopher and the yogi specialised in their own fields, and built their own empires which in course of time actually became antagonistic! If they are exclusive of each other, there is conflict and confusion, knowledge becomes hypocritical and action becomes destructive and self-aggrandising. Thus, the two which sound very healthy and wholesome, actually produce contrary results. Krsna reconciles them. On another level, neglect of this 'wholesome' approach is fraught with danger. Modern science bears witness to this. The so-called 'true science' generates knowledge of nuclear forces and of genetic mutations. Applied technology creates dangerous weapons - for which neither accepts responsibility. A 'wholesome' (holistic) approach will bring them together - and avoid dabbling with destructive forces.

The path is twofold. The two (knowledge and action) must blend in every one of us. As we shall presently see, the one implies and includes the other: a philosopher is no philosopher if he refuses to act on his philosophy - obviously he is not sure of it! A yogi is not a yogi if he does not know what he is doing! Blind action and lame philosophy must unite to march forward to the goal of divine life. This is Krsna's yoga - buddhi yoga.

Thought, Word And Deed

III:4 - Not by the non-performance of actions does man reach actionlessness; nor by mere renunciation does he attain to perfection.

III:5 - Verily none can ever remain for even a moment without performing action; for, everyone is made to act helplessly by the qualities born of nature.

The vicious circle has to be broken. It is the self-perpetuating momentum of karma. Action produces reaction, and the reaction serves as action producing its own reaction. Cause gives birth to result which serves as the cause for another chain-result. It is like the seed and the plant, the egg and the hen - one leads to the other in an endless chain.

Shall we sit quietly then, and refuse to have anything to do with this? This view of actionlessness appeals to some, but not to Krsna.

Action is threefold - thought, word and deed. Action is performed by the individual at various levels of his consciousness, on different planes of his inner being. It is ignorance to think that we live only on the periphery of our personalities. Deep within are the springs of real action. Whether they take gross, subtle or causal forms, they are actions still, enough to keep the wheel of karma in motion. For, refusal is an action, as firmly based on the false ego as the performance of action. 'Action for material achievement' and 'refusal to act believing that only thereby one can achieve salvation' are both equally deceptive mental conditioning. This conditioning is bondage - neither action nor what one believes to be inaction.

As we shall see, the whole creation is the body of God and individuals live as part of his nature. The qualities of his nature will function, independent of individual will; to try to stop this is as easy as it is to chew up the stars!

Krsna's solution to this is the yoga of the Bhagavad Gita. It is true transcendence (nais-karmyam) in which the ego is stripped of its mask. All action is seen to be life, and the self is realised to be divine - Divine Life.

Neither Suppression Nor Licence

III:6 - He who, restraining the organs of action, sits thinking of the sense-objects in mind, he, of deluded understanding, is called a pretender.

III:7 - But whoever, controlling the senses by the mind, engages himself in karma yoga with the organs of action, without attachment, he is excellent.

Krsna's yoga is karma yoga or buddhi yoga; the yoga that does not discourage activity, but, on the contrary, insists on intelligent dynamism. The man who refuses to do his duty vainly rebels against God's will. There is activity in his mind; if the mind is not active, he would cease to live. Even the mind's recognition of the position of one's own limbs is the result of wrong identification of the self with the body which is part of the world! Foolish suppression of mental activity will only result in an explosion which could take the form of a simple mental aberration, a criminal tendency or lunacy. What is vital is a direct perception of the conditioning which generates aspirations and aversions which in turn taint one's mental and physical activity. Such perception dispels the psychological conditioning and its offspring (the ego), and reveals the divine as the source and the goal of all life. Krsna's ideal is one of self-controlled participation in the divine will, which is karma yoga. Control is not suppression or repression. In any field of life, suppression only means compression which, sooner or later, leads to explosion. We see this happen in the life of a man, of society, of communities and of nations. Control, on the other hand, is right expression - neither suppression nor licence. This is the middle path of the Buddha, the buddhi yoga of Krsna, the Christian way, and the Divine Life of our Master. An excellent parallel is seen in the expression - "Mr. So-and-so has good control of the car." He knows when to stop or to start, which way to go and at what speed. The enigma of this yoga lies in its simplicity.

Making Sacred

III:8 - Perform your bounden duty, for action is superior to inaction - even the maintenance of the body would not be possible for you by inaction.

III:9 - The world is bound by actions, other than those performed for the sake of sacrifice; do you, therefore, O Arjuna, perform action for that sake for sacrifice alone, free from attachment.

Krsna has the divine genius of going at once to the root of the problem. What binds man to the wheel of action-reaction, or more simply, sin and suffering? Selfish desire and attachment! Removal of these two liberates us from it.

On the other hand, if we stubbornly and ignorantly refuse to take part in the world's activity, we lose the best way to understand the nature and strength of the chain that binds us. It is the ego, the 'me'. It is the ego that suggests that inaction is liberation. The approval and adulation of ignorant people stiffens and strengthens the ego of the pseudo-sage who has 'renounced the world'! Covering filth with a Persian carpet cannot remove it. Therefore, Krsna advocates positive action and vigilant effort at self-purification.

We are bound to the wheel of karma by selfish desires. These must be sacrificed, and our actions should be our sacrifice at the altar of the omnipresent God. 'Ya' (that) 'jna' (knowledge) - that action which is of knowledge and leads to knowledge. If yajna means 'animal sacrifice', the animal to be sacrificed is not outside, but within us. That animal is the personality full of selfishness, lust, hatred and egoism - in a word 'me'. But if sacrifice means 'offering' then we should offer all our actions to God as sacrifice. If sacrifice means 'to make sacred', then everything (all our actions, experiences, and even the ego) should be offered to God to be made sacred. Self-sacrifice, selfless service will not bind us, but liberate us.

But even these should be performed without attachment to the actions (the feeling that we do or do not do) and their rewards.

Sacrifice

III:10 - In the beginning of creation, the Lord of all creatures sent forth generations of men and devas (gods), along with sacrifices for Vishnu, and blessed them by saying, 'Be happy by this yajna (sacrifice), because its performance will bestow on you all desirable things.'

III:11 - 'Nourish the Gods with this, and may the Gods nourish you; thus nourishing one another, you shall attain to the highest good.'

The spirit of sacrifice was created by God. It is God himself. Hence we find that the seed dies to give birth to the plant, the mother suffers birth-pangs to create new life. Metaphysically even creation is the supreme self-sacrifice of God - the one who has become many. It is this spirit of sacrifice that promotes life and well-being here.

In this sense it is not a 'slaughter of a victim' (as 'sacrifice' is translated by the dictionary), but a mystical, magical, divine transmutation of all substances and of all activities inherent in life. In this there is no loss, but fulfilment. The fulfilment of a seed growing into a tree, the fulfilment of motherhood, and the fulfilment of all life by the realization of potential divinity. With the sacrifice of self-limitation, the self realises its oneness with the cosmic being, the drop shines as the ocean in supreme cosmic love. Thus sacrifice is pure love in which there is no sin, no sorrow.

Which Gods do we nourish by sacrifice? If the above injunction is read with the commandment in the Taittiriya Upanisad that we should treat our parents, teacher and guest as god, it is clear that the god is our neighbour in the Christian sense. In other words, we should all serve one another; and the word yajna or sacrifice reminds us that we should not have the slightest trace of selfishness. Our charitable acts should leave no egoistical trace behind, even as ghee poured into fire is totally consumed.

We make one another's life miserable here only on account of selfish desires, greed and inferior motives. When the spirit of self-sacrificing service governs the actions of man and when he learns to rejoice in the happiness of his neighbour, then we will have paradise on earth and everyone's desires will be fulfilled. This doctrine of self-sacrificing, selfless service is truly the wish-fulfilling cow.

Thoughts Are Things

III:12 - The gods, nourished by the sacrifice, will give you the desired objects. But he who enjoys these gifts without offering them to the devas in return is a thief.

This is a great psychological truth. When the spirit of yajna or sacrifice rules the heart of man and becomes the content of his thoughts, words and deeds, even the gods are pleased and man obtains the desired objects. He is peaceful, happy and prosperous.

Who and where are the gods? They are the subtle forces or powers that animate the whole of creation. They have their seats in the various organs of the body, too. Thoughts and emotions have a tremendous effect on these. Anxiety grips the stomach. Anger alters the colour of the skin and the eyes. Fear chokes the throat. Thoughts are things! Good thoughts can favourably influence the gods presiding over the organs of our body. The selfless man's face is bright and cheerful. Compassion flows from his eyes. His speech is honeyed and sweet. His gait is soft. The vibrations that emanate from him are holy and beneficent. People readily pick them up and also react favourably. The selfless person is not deliberately setting an example for other to emulate - any such motivation would re-activate, however subtle it may be. But people may be inspired.

Thus the selfless man's limbs are strong and healthy. He thinks well, speaks well and acts well. He achieves the desired objective; the gods presiding over his limbs enable him to do that. The gods residing in all, and in the very atmosphere, also help him in every possible way.

The man who is selfish, who grabs, is a thief. A society composed of such people can obviously not be prosperous. Selfishness is the most deadly virus which is highly contagious. In no time one man's selfishness expands to epidemic proportions. It destroys one's vision one's intelligence. If you observe yourself and the world you live in, you can see for yourself the havoc it can cause.

'The Other' Of Others

III:13 - The righteous, who eat of the remnants of the sacrifice, are freed from sin; but those sinful ones, who cook food only for their sense enjoyment, verily eat sin.

Not the ritual called 'yajna', but the simple universal daily act of cooking food itself is regarded as yajna or sacrifice here. It is symbolic and illustrative, but not descriptive and exhaustive. Even so, all our actions should be acts of self-sacrificing, selfless service - always for others, never for ourselves. We are 'the other' of others!

That settles once and for all this futile wrangling over ethics - what is good and what is evil? Self-sacrificing, selfless and desireless service is good; selfish action is evil. It does not matter what the action appears to be externally - an act of selfless service is good. It does not matter how grand and philanthropic it looks - a selfish action is evil.

The spirit of sacrifice was woven into the very fabric of our life, so that we were almost compelled to feed our fellow-men and animals and insects before we ate. Self-sacrifice is our religion. Charity is our supreme duty. Our prayer to the Lord is that everyone should be happy; all beings should enjoy peace, happiness and prosperity. Balidana (popularly, an animal sacrifice or its symbolic equivalent) is the culminating point of yajna. According to Bhagavatam, King Bali gave everything to and eventually offered himself too, in an act of supreme self-sacrifice. True Balidana is total sacrifice of our whole being, our very soul, at the altar of God so that in the full and direct realisation that full and direct realisation that the 'I' is and has always been a non-entity, a shadowy dividing factor, even the thought 'I do this' or 'I enjoy' or 'I suffer' is no more in our heart. Charity involves sacrifice. Sacrifice leads to self-sacrifice. We are freed from sin.

Prosperity

III:14 - From food come forth beings; from rain food is produced; from sacrifice arises rain; sacrifice is born of action.

III:15 - Know you that action comes from Brahma, and Brahma proceeds from the Imperishable. Therefore, the All-pervading ever rests in sacrifice.

Sacrifice produces rain! It is asserted by some that the smoke that rises from the sacrificial (homa) pit brings about the necessary change in the atmosphere to induce the cloud to rain.

Even subtler than this is the power of good thoughts. There is a proverb in Tamil which says that if there is one good man in the village, the entire village will be blessed with sufficient rain to ensure its prosperity. The selfish man is more concerned with destroying the prosperity of the neighbour than with building his own, for he wants to shine as a superior person, one better than the neighbour. When all are selfish, the whole atmosphere is full of vicious thought-currents; ill-will fills the whole place and the mood of destruction prevails. The very elements respond to such thought-vibrations and we have famine and pestilence.

On the other hand, if there is self-sacrificing selflessness in the heart of man, then there is prosperity. It is easy enough to see that with that selflessness in his heart, man will ever try to promote the prosperity of others. His actions will be pure and prosperity-promoting. Such pure action is divine, rooted in the imperishable, the eternal law that has created and that sustains the whole universe.

This is the law of the divine. Man should live a self-sacrificing, selfless life of service to all. Sacrifice is born of action. It is action, it is life. A life of sacrifice is therefore a full and dynamic life. Sacrifice knits knowledge and action into the fabric of divine life.

Charity

III:16 - He who does not follow the wheel thus set revolving, who is of sinful life, rejoicing in the senses, he lives in vain, O Arjuna.

The first principle of the Gita-way of life is introduced here.

The whole of creation is constructed on the law of reciprocal self-sacrificing service. Charity characterises God's good world. Charity is not a good policy, or a privilege or even a meritorious act; it is the law of life!

Life is one and universal. It is the very nature of cosmic being - God. The recognition of this truth - that all are indivisibly though not visibly one - is love. The expression of this love is service, charity and reciprocity. Not in a condescending attitude, but ... there is no choice.

Look at God's good world. Between the plant and the mineral, between the plant and the human, there is reciprocal service. What man gives out, including his outgoing breath full of carbon-dioxide, is food for the plants. Whatever the plants give, including the oxygen that they 'breathe out', is food for man. One is not doing charity to the plants by breathing out carbon dioxide! One will die if one refuses to do so. Neglect of charity is starving the soul.

No tree eats its own fruit. On the other hand, trees live and propagate themselves by giving off their fruits to man. Man cultivates them, not for their sake, but for the sake of the luscious fruits!

He eats them and then plants the seed, helping the plants to perpetuate themselves. Even so, charity will enable us to live well in society, grow and perpetuate the human race. He who rejoices in the pleasures of the senses, refusing to serve others, is like the tree eating its own fruits! It is sin. He destroys himself ultimately. He transgresses the law of God. He is a thief.

The Happiness Of Others

III:17 - But for that man who rejoices only in the Self, who is satisfied in the Self, who is content in the Self alone, verily there is nothing to do.

III:18 - A self-realised man has no purpose to fulfill in the discharge of his prescribed duties, nor has he any reason not to perform such work. Nor has he no need to depend on any other living being.

As long as you yourself are dependent on others, so long as your happiness and well-being are dependent on the services of others, serve and be good.

These two verses both have a philosophic import and offer practical advice.

Is this not a common failing of man? He expects others to serve him and work for him. He wants to enjoy all comforts himself at the expense of fellow-men.

He will cheat those dependent on him, but will moan and grumble if he himself is let down. Here is Krsna's sweet warning. As long as you expect others to serve you and to promote your prosperity, as long as your own happiness depends on what others do to you, take a deep interest in the happiness of others too. It is the re-statement of the golden rule: "Do unto others as you wish them to do unto you."

However, there is a state of being where the sage rests in the self. He is not obliged to do or not to do. But what is the self in which the sage rests? Self is awareness - the all, the indivisible - not the fragmented thought-born personality which we selfishly call the self. Self is the 'choiceless awareness' in the words of Ramana Maharsi, 'witness consciousness' of Gurudev Sivananda, and 'observation without an observer' of Krsnaji. When it is veiled, another self (the ego) arises apparently, not really, and thinks (the mind) that it is dependent or independent of others. Awareness being self does not have a self to generate selfishness. The sage who rests in the self alone is unselfish! The entire universe is his body. He is like the sun: by his light he illumines all. He is one with all and thus does everything through everyone, though he might apparently be inactive; yet, he does nothing, though the body and mind might be busy, for the fragmented ego has vanished with the lifted veil.

Duty

III:19 - Therefore, without attachment, always perform action which should be done; for, by performing action without attachment, man reaches the Supreme.

Krsna is not in favour of our abandoning our 'duty'. Various expressions are used; niyatam karma (action in accord with the cosmic order) karyam karma (action that should be done) or sva karma (one's natural action). And these are used as synonyms for sva dharma (one's own duty). Duty holds society together. My duty is your privilege and vice versa. Action performed with this ideal in view is dharma. It holds people together in love and harmony.

Both selfish action and the performance of another's function (obviously taken over through selfish desire) are to be abandoned, but not one's own duty. Not even a monk should renounce his own duty; Krsna gives a revolutionary definition even to samnyasa.

Our scriptures give us several instances of yogi attaining perfection while leading their normal household lives in the right spirit, i.e. without desire and without attachment. An exaggerated value of worldly objects creates desire in the mind. This desire gives rise to attachment to the actions calculated to secure the desired object and the reward too. This attachment is the source of all sins; it itself is sin. Renunciation of attachment is the surest way to attain perfection. The world is not a hindrance. Work is not a hindrance either. But attachment is a definite hindrance on our path to perfection.

What is popularly known as 'detachment' is not the true opposite of or antidote to attachment: that is another form of attachment - attachment to self-interest, self-esteem and the adoration of one's ideology, and aversion to others. Non-attachment is the discovery of the truth concerning attachment itself. Even so with 'duty'. It is the discovery of what is 'natural' to oneself, not some injunctions and prohibitions prescribed or proscribed by others.

A Double-Edged Sword

III:20 - Janaka and others attained perfection verily by action only; just for the sake of educating the people, you should perform your work.

III:21 - Whatever a great man does, that other men also do; whatever he sets up as the standard, that the world follows.

Yet another reason why one should not abandon one's duty is given here.

People are fond of imitation and a sinful action is more readily copied than a virtuous one! Even a sage like king Janaka, therefore, persisted in the performance of his duties. People blindly follow their leader and if the leader is even slightly negligent in his duties, the followers totally abandon theirs!

So, then, firstly as a kind of reciprocity in return for the benefits that the yogi enjoys in this world, and secondly in order to set the right example for others to emulate, one should engage oneself in the performance of one's duty, even though he has nothing to achieve thereby. This is a double-edged sword and has to be handled wisely. If the only motivation is to be an exemplar, it might give rise to hypocrisy; but rightly understood, even a initial hypocritical example might lead to right action.

Again, the sage who has cut off all attachment and who lives in complete dissociation of even his own body, will let the body exhaust its own karma and the past momentum. He does nothing; it is the body and mind that function in the world of matter. Why will he prevent them from doing so if he is unattached to them? True, he will not supply them with fresh fuel to gain more momentum. He is unattached, desireless and egoless, but if he even forcibly restrains them, he comes into contact with them and identifies the self with them. The worldly man is a slave of the senses, the ascetic holds them back, but they are both in contact with them. The sage is not.

Glorious Examples

III:22 - There is nothing in the three worlds, Arjuna, that should be done by me; nor is there anything unattained that should be attained; yet I engage myself in action.

III:23 - For, should I not ever engage myself in action, unwearied, men would follow my path, Arjuna.

III:24 - These worlds would perish if I did not perform action; I should be the author of confusion of castes and destruction of these beings.

God, when he incarnates himself here in this world, also engages himself in unwearied action. That is as it should be. Saints and sages are seen to engage themselves in unwearied action for the welfare of mankind. The unselfish man is more active than the selfish one. The former's service is spontaneous, enthusiastic and zealous, free from procrastination and postponement which characterise the half-hearted service of the calculating man of lust and greed. The unselfish man has more time and energy to work because he has no worry about profit and loss.

We have the glorious examples of saints before us, but we do not follow them. (Do we ever follow anyone's good example?) Even in their lives we try to pick out only defects as excuses for our own indulgence. We discover human weaknesses in their personalities, and we turn our blind eye on the vital spiritual truths illustrated in their lives. It is the worst tragedy. We are the real losers. The moment we realise the emptiness and the sorrowfulness of our own pleasure-seeking life, we shall desist from evil, and without seeming to and without effort, follow the example of the good.

"One should try to live for a hundred years, doing one's duty". - Isavasya Upanisad.

The Inward Spirit

III:25 - As the ignorant men act from attachment to action, O Arjuna, so should the wise act without attachment, wishing the welfare of the world.

The verb is the most important word in this verse, and it is often overlooked. The tone is not optional but obligatory. The wise man is left with no choice; in fact the very validity of his wisdom would be questioned if he did not abide by the commandment contained in this verse.

What is ignorance? Identification of the self, which is but the witness consciousness, with the body and the world, which constantly change. What is wisdom? Realisation that the self is but the witness of this world-process and world-activity. The wise man will, therefore, not interfere with the course of nature, either by positively providing fuel for it by his own desires or cravings, or by negatively holding it back by refusing to let his body function as part of the world, which it is!

The world is maintained by God's energy and the world includes the wise man's physical being, too. He is part of the whole, and his egoistic withdrawal from life will confuse the minds of others on the field.

In order, therefore, to ensure the welfare of the society in which he lives and to set an example for others to follow, the wise man must do his duty in this world, and what is more important, do it as if he were as interested in the affairs of the world as the ignorant (so that the ignorant man has no excuse to avoid following the wise). The difference is not in external appearance or behaviour, but it is the wise man's inward spirit of nonattachment.

Is it possible for one to deceive oneself and others that he lives in this spirit? Surely it is. Deceiving others is waste of time. Self-deception is a misnomer - surely, the wise man is free from pretension. His wisdom is luminous enough to keep away the darkness of attachment born of ignorance.

Proselytisation

III:26 - Let no wise man unsettle the minds of ignorant people, attached to action; he should engage them in all actions, himself fulfilling them with devotion.

This is the basis and the sanction for all the different cults and religions in the world. They are all one in their aim and they lead all men to the same goal, but people differ in their temperaments. Their beliefs will be in accordance with their temperaments.

Proselytisation has always meant demoralisation! Once a man's faith is drastically disturbed, it is nearly always difficult for him to find stable ground to stand on. Once a man is told that what he and his forefathers firmly and devoutly believed is myth and nonsense, it is wellnigh impossible to make him believe entirely and wholeheartedly in what is dished out to him by the proselytiser. He may accept it as a temporary expedient, but the slightest provocation is enough to uproot the new belief!

Krsna does not encourage even premature revelation of what he considers as the ultimate truth. Even if we find that our brothers are ignorant of it, even if we find them engaging themselves in what appears to us to be fruitless activity or misguided spiritual effort, our duty is not to shake their faith but to fulfil it. This is a more delicate operation than brain or heart surgery - neither the organ itself nor any part of the healthy tissue should be affected in the least. Extreme care is called for to ensure that the fundamental faith is not disturbed. Even harmless superstitions are allowed.

However, in God's good time, the man himself will realise the fictitiousness of false beliefs, and when he is mature and 'awake', he will drop all beliefs (II:52,53). It is then that faith arises in him. Faith is not a 'religious denomination' or 'belief', but it is the reflection of God in the heart of the godly. It is, as it were, the penultimate stage to God-realisation or self-knowledge.

'Good And Evil' , 'Right And Wrong'

III:27 - All actions are wrought by the qualities of nature only. The mind, deluded by egoism, thinks it is the doer.

III:28 - But he, O Arjuna, who knows the truth about the divisions of the qualities and their functions, knowing that the gunas as senses move in the middle of the gunas as the sense-objects, is not attached.

III:29 - Those deluded by the gunas are attached to the functions of the gunes. A man of perfect knowledge should not unsettle the one of imperfect knowledge.

What is nature? It is God's nature. In accordance with God's will, the qualities in his nature are constantly active. We are also part of his nature. We are all cells, as it were, in the cosmic body of God, but we assume to ourselves an independent personality on account of ignorance.

This individuality is a mystery. It is truly indivi(sible)-duality. We are all truly indivisible, one in him. We are all together the body of God. To realise this is wisdom. To forget it is ignorance.

In our own body, for instance, at every moment millions of cells are performing various vital functions. They work in harmony, in accordance with the dictates of the single unified life-force that commands all of them. There is, therefore, harmony and health in the whole body. In the same way, if all of us feel and realise that we are the body of God and carry out his will, there will be peace and prosperity in this world; but the foolish ones assume false egoism and thus create disharmony and disaster.

Expressions like 'good and evil' , 'right and wrong', lose their significance in this light. But the wise man will not disturb the mind of those who believe in them!

Centred In The Self

III:30 - Renounce all actions in Me, with the mind centred in the Self; fight, free from hope, free from egoism, free from mental fever.

The commandment to fight should not be taken literally! Arjuna was a warrior and his duty was to fight a righteous battle. In other words, it is a commandment that we should all do our duty, in the spirit of this verse. 'Renouncing all actions in me' (that is, God); the Sanskrit word is 'nyasya' which is difficult to translate. It also means 'placing all your actions in God', or in other words 'feeling that all actions are done by God'. The actions of a foolish man seem to have their roots in him, but the wise man knows that his actions spring from God.

He whose mind is wayward, swayed by the storms of desires and cravings, and whose mind is, therefore, not centred in his own self, thinks that he thinks, he sees, he works and he speaks. His actions are egoistic. He arrogates to himself the power to do, not to do and to undo, which in fact he does not possess!

His actions are naturally directed towards a selfish, base and worldly goal or hope. Hopeful of attaining the desired goal and at the same time afraid of not being able to reach it, this egoistic man is constantly torn by the two opposing forces of attraction and repulsion. This tension is referred to as mental fever here. The wise man is free from this tension or mental fever. He knows that God's will is done here; he is free from personal hopes. He is centred in the self or atman. He is free, peaceful and blissful.

But he is not self-centred in the sense of selfish even if taken to mean he is interested in doing his duty. Self is not an object. It is the universal subject. The mind does not know it. Thought ... and attention... and lastly awareness seek the self, the centre, the subject. This is meditation. This is 'mind centred in the self'.

A Scientific Approach

III:31 - Those who constantly practise this teaching of Mine with faith and without cavilling, they too are freed from actions.

III:32 - But those who carp at my teaching, and do not practise it, are to be considered bereft of all knowledge, befooled, and doomed to ignorance and bondage.

The idea is quite clear and plain. He who practises this buddhi yoga, feeling that he is one with the entire creation, that one cosmic consciousness pervades all and in that consciousness he is one with all - is instantly freed from ignorance and from all karma which give rise to birth and death. Renunciation of egoism destroys the 'bundle of karma' (sancita) waiting to fructify; these 'effects' of past actions, not yet ripe for fructification, are deprived of the ego-centred body on which to spend their force. Even prarabdha karma or karma which has already begun to work itself out in this birth through the present body, is deprived of its 'sting' since the yogi does not identify himself with the body and its experiences of pleasure and pain, etc. The actions that he now performs (the agami or kriyamana) are not performed by his ego; his mind is centred in God and therefore there is direct realisation that the actions spring from the divine. Hence they do not affect him in the least. He is liberated from karma (the law of action and reaction, cause and effect). When the body falls, he is totally absorbed into the infinite. Only the faithful man will practise this, but its effectiveness does not depend on faith - in the sense of belief! It is not a naive doctrine to hypnotise the gullible, but a scientific approach to divine life. Nor is there a suggestion that it is the only path! There are other means to freedom - 'they too are freed'!

Self-knowledge or self-surrender (surrender to the divine) is common to all religions. All religions encourage the seeker to surrender himself to the divine or to seek and discover that there is no self independent of the totality or God. Regardless of what the religion is called, it will lead you to this freedom.

Civilization And Tradition

III:33 - Even a wise man acts in accordance with his own nature; beings will follow nature. What can restraint do?

III:34 - Attachment and aversion for the objects of the senses abide in the senses; let none come under their sway, for they are the foes.

Your physical body (and mind) and the senses are part of the cosmic nature of God and hence not 'yours'. They function in accordance with the nature of the energy or power they possess. The eyes see illumined objects. The ears hear sounds. The tongue tastes. These things happen even in the case of the wisest of men, so long as there is life in the body. As long as the mind is linked with the body, the senses will function naturally.

There is a vibratory correlation between the senses and their particular objects. It is like wavelengths and the broadcasting systems. When you tune the radio, at a particular point the receiver picks up certain wavelengths (short, medium or long) and not others. The vibratory and sight, sound and ear, smell and nose, scale of light and sight, sound and ear, smell and nose, etc., are identical, and so they mutually react. This reaction is either favourable or unfavourable, in accordance with whether the sensation is pleasant or unpleasant. Up to this point, the process is automatic and mechanical. If the mind is introverted and the intelligence is united with the self, there will be equilibrium within oneself even though the senses might continue to react naturally. But if the mind (through thought) registers a pleasant experience, for example, likes it, revives it as memory and hope, and desires a repetition, the chain-reaction towards self-destruction is set in motion. (II:62,63).

The Krsna-approach should not be missed. You cannot assume what nature is, and what is natural. Man's mind has suffered terrible pollution over thousands of years with what we call civilization and tradition. To be natural is to live as the image of God!

Equanimity

III:35 - Better is one's own duty, though devoid of merit, than the duty of another well discharged; the duty of another is fraught with danger.

This is the natural corollary of the basic teaching of the Bhagavad Gita that all life is sacred, that there is nothing high or low in life's activities, and that our actions should not be motivated by private desires. Why and when does one switch from the discharge of one's own duties to take on the duties of another? More often than not (i.e. when it is not as part of the natural evolutionary process) when he is tempted by an earthly reward, or by self-aggrandisement.

Even today the amateur who is not really qualified to do a job and does something out of his way, gets a lot of publicity! This desire for name and fame and perhaps the material benefits accruing from them, attracts people, tempting them away from their own duty into the provinces of others.

The professional does his work with a calm mind. The amateur torments himself day and night. The glare of the limelight makes him lose his head. The natural public criticism depresses and annoys him. These are the emotional states which Krsna expressly asks us to avoid.

The central ideal of the Bhagavad Gita is equanimity above all. Anything that disturbs the inner equilibrium is fraught with fear and danger. We must attain that equanimity and then never let anything in the world disturb it.

Total tranquillity of the mind is indispensable for enabling us to look within, to study the nature of mind and thought, to see our conditioning and the source of fear, to realise what true love is and to recognise its caricature with which we are familiar, as also to realise what our real nature is and how perverted it has become. This awareness is the first step towards the enlightened life that Krsna reveals to us.

The Inner Motive Or Attitude

III:36 - Arjuna said : O Krishna, by what is one impelled to sinful acts, even unwillingly?

III:37 - The Blessed Lord said : It is lust, Arjuna, which is born of contact with the material mode of passion and later transformed into wrath, and which is the all-devouring, sinful enemy of this world.

The question is extremely pertinent; if nature (God's nature) is responsible for all actions, and if it is inevitable that the senses should automatically respond to the stimuli from the sense-objects, then how is man responsible for any evil that may proceed from such response? Why is it said that a particular action is sinful and a particular person a sinner?

Krsna goes straight to the root of the problem and reveals the true culprit. Desire is sin. Anger or hate is sin. Raga (likes) and dvesa (dislikes) are sinful. When man is prompted to perform an action by desire or selfish motive, he sins.

If the inner motive or attitude alone is the governing factor, then can we stretch this rule to cover our sins? Obviously not. For we should never forget that we shall know our duty truly only if our mind is tranquil and our intelligence united with God. Ordinarily, we should adhere to accepted moral standards. Such acceptance immediately leads to inner tranquillity. When there is tranquillity, insight is bright, unagitated. Desire arises when insight is veiled and when there is unawareness. When insight becomes aware of the arising of desire, the distinction between natural urges (like hunger and thirst) and unnatural craving is realised; the unnatural does not happen and the natural is not translated into 'my desire' by thought. Thus the way for unawareness and lack of insight to encourage pursuit of pleasure and the formation of likes and dislikes is not paved.

Desirelessness

III:38 - As fire is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror by dust, and as an embryo by the amnion, so is This enveloped by different degrees of this lust.

III:39 - Arjuna, wisdom is enveloped by this constant enemy of the wise in the form of desire, which is unappeasable as fire.

By 'desire' is meant selfish desire, which is neither natural to life (as desire for food) nor the uncaused desire for God which is accompanied by wisdom and unselfishness and which naturally leads to its own extinction in God-realisation. Desire and anger are two sides of the same coin.

Smoke hides fire and brings about darkness where there should be light. Similarly, desire envelops wisdom and brings about evil where there should be divinity.

The mirror is hidden by dust and cannot function. Similarly, desire nullifies wisdom and puts it out of commission. Even the wise man under the influence of desire is unable to see his own face! Hence our life is a song of regrets and remorse.

But there is one saving feature. Desire encloses wisdom but is unable to overwhelm it, dissolve it or even dilute it, just as the amnion envelops the foetus in the womb, but the child is not adversely affected by it.

It is possible to fan the flame to dispel smoke. It is possible to wipe the mirror and to see one's face in it. It is possible for the child to be delivered, untainted by the amnion. Even so, it is possible for wisdom to be fanned by right living and by right meditation; it is possible to wipe desire off wisdom by selfless service; it is possible in samadhi (perfect absorption of the mind) to deliver wisdom from the clutches of desire and to enjoy divine communion.

Desire to be desireless is indeed desirable. But it can be deceptive. Hence the need for the utmost vigilance - and even more, God's Grace.

Instinct - Impulsiveness - Intellect

III:40 - The senses, the mind, and the intellect, are said to be the seat of desire; through these it deludes the embodied soul, and veils the wisdom.

III:41 - Therefore, O Arjuna, controlling the senses first, kill this sinful desire, the destroyer of knowledge and wisdom.

Responsiveness to sense-stimuli is inherent in the senses, mind and intellect. All these are the material half of divine nature. Water dissolves salt but not stone. Fire burns dry firewood but not a plantain stem. There is a responsive relationship. This responsiveness is instinct in the senses, impulsiveness in the mind and judgement in the intellect. The same power is given a different attribute when it operates from its different seats. Thought converts these natural responses into pleasure which gives rise to desire, or craving which veils wisdom.

Wisdom refers here to the right knowledge of the nature of desire and also the nature of the witness consciousness within. The effort to curb instincts and impulsiveness and also to restore saner values is meaningful only because the self is forever untouched by desire. This is wisdom.

This wisdom is veiled by the turbulent senses, impure mind and unwise intellect ridden by false values. It is as if we are looking at the bed of a lake through the disturbed surface of muddy water which covers the pearl as also pebbles on the bed. A start must be made somewhere. The desire-aggravating activity of the senses must be curbed first; of course, this is only another way of denoting control of the mind. When the mind and senses are calm, the intellect must be made to abandon its false values.

"With what and by whom is the mind controlled?" is a question that does not admit an easy answer. The desire to give up desire arises in the mind, but when it is rightly understood there is awakening of an intelligence other than the mind.

Divine Scale Of Values

III:42 - They say that the senses are superior; superior to the senses is the mind; superior to the mind is the intellect; and one who is superior even to the intellect is He - the Self.

III:43 - Thus knowing oneself to be supernatural to material senses, mind and intelligence, one should control the lower self by the higher self, and conquer this insatiable enemy with giant strength.

The subtle has greater power over the gross which cannot limit the former, even as the prison-wall cannot limit one's thoughts. The senses, the mind and the intellect are like the brick, mortar and plaster of a house in which the master (the self) dwells. They have no freedom to act and they depend on one another and ultimately on the self or pure awareness.

We are not really slaves of the external world. All the beauty in the world is nothing to a blind man. The most delightful orchestra is silent pantomime for the deaf. The senses are superior to the objects.

What can the senses do if the mind switches off the inner controls? When you are intently listening to a soft whisper of your beloved, you do not see the person standing in front of you. The mind is superior to the senses.

Husband, wife and child walk past a department store. The man remembers only an amazing new piece of electronic equipment - he is an engineer. The wife remembers only a new dress, and the child saw nothing but a toy! The intellect provided the scale of values; the mind, acting on this, directed the senses to 'work on' the scene in front. The intellect is the governor!

Behind even this 'light' that illumines our inner world, there is the light of lights, the self or spark of God, in whose borrowed light the intellect shines. If we learn to appeal to him in meditation, he will so illumine the intellect that it will present the divine scale of values for the mind and senses to act upon. The self restrains the self on account of its indivisibility.

Om Tat Sat

Thus in the Upanishad of the Bhagavad Gita, the Science of the Eternal, the Scripture of Yoga, the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, ends the third chapter entitled: Karma Yoga - The Yoga of Action.